PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 153

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-EIGHTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1988-89

COMPRISING PERIOD
15 MAY—26 MAY 1989

ISBN 0 10 681153 3

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COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER—Mrs. J. Garbutt

POSTMASTER—J. Arnold

TRANSPORT MANAGER—R. H. Hyde

THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 25 JUNE 1987]

THIRTY-EIGHTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 153**

TWELFTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1988-89

House of Commons

Monday 15 May 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

ENERGY

Energy Efficiency

1. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his Department's most up-to-day estimate of the energy savings that would accrue if the latest standards of energy efficiency in buildings were implemented.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Michael Spicer): The Building Research Establishment has estimated that the proposals for amending the requirement in the building regulations for the conservation of fuel and power would improve the energy efficiency of new buildings by about 20 per cent. compared with existing regulations.

Mr. Griffiths: Is the Minister aware that if the Government were to back a scheme of energy conservation along the lines either of the Eurisol report or that of the Milton Keynes' energy cost effects, we could cut CO_2 emissions by between 39 million and 43 million tonnes a year? Does he think that that would be an extremely good investment for the Government because at a stroke they would reduce those emissions and energy costs, and cut the need to build so many more power stations?

Mr. Spicer: The Government are in favour of energy conservation measures, but we must balance the position by accepting that, even taking account of energy conservation measures, on most estimates there will be a continuing increase in the demand for electricity. If one is interested in CO_2 emissions, as the hon. Gentleman is and as we are, the issue is how to get balanced fuel production which will reduce CO_2. That is why we are in favour of nuclear energy and why we are surprised that the Labour party is not.

Mr. Holt: Does my hon. Friend agree that a great deal of energy is lost through the windows of our homes? How much longer will it be before he prevails on the Secretary of State for the Environment to have double glazing as an integral part of new build houses? That is needed as much as damp courses. If double glazing were installed at the beginning, it would save all the conversions which must take place later and it would be an enormous saving of energy.

Mr. Spicer: I shall certainly draw my hon. Friend's remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, who is responsible for building regulations. Only about 1 per cent. of building stock is replaced every year, so taking the 20 per cent. figure that I mentioned in my original answer, the potential savings are 1 per cent. of 20 per cent. The matter must be seen in context.

Mr. Hardy: Does the Minister admit that the Government's record on energy efficiency and insulation during the past decade has greatly worsened and is most unsatisfactory, particularly compared with the rest of western Europe? Does he accept that if we reach those standards we would not need to build any more nuclear power stations?

Mr. Spicer: Speaking from memory, we are above the European Community average for energy conservation and efficency.

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Cecil Parkinson): Five per cent. above.

Mr. Spicer: My right hon. Friend says that we are 5 per cent. above the EC average. If one takes CO^2 emissions as a proportion of electricity generated, our position has greatly improved.

North Sea Wells

2. **Mr. Arbuthnot:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many exploration and appraisal wells have been drilled in the North sea since drilling began.

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Cecil Parkinson): Up to the end of April 1989 a total of 2,114 exploration and appraisal wells had been started on the United Kingdom continental shelf since drilling began in December 1964.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the reserves are much higher than orginally envisaged? does he accept that it is an encouraging sign that applicants are now finding viable much smaller fields than the large fields that were orginally viable?

Mr. Parkinson: Yes, I can confirm that the past two years have been extremely good years in the North sea with record exploration, good finds and record investment. It is now clear that we shall be a substantial producer of oil and gas for at least the next 25 years.

Mr. Robert Hughes: As the Secretary of State has accepted that there may be some danger to safety in the North sea if the geomagnetic survey comes to an end and as his Department has accepted that there are circumstances in which he may be prepared to pay a contribution for the continuation of that programme, will he consult the Secretary of State for Education and Science and ensure that funding continues beyond 15 July so that a package of finance can be put together?

Mr. Parkinson: Yes, Sir. I will.

Mr. Hannam: Do not those welcome figures show that the tax regime following the Budget is about right? Can my right hon. Friend tell us how developments are proceeding in the North sea and whether our self-sufficiency will extend into the years ahead?

Mr. Parkinson: Yes, Sir. In the last year, not only was there a great deal of activity and exploration, but 24 developments, representing an investment of more than £3·2 billion, were approved by my Department. It is now clear that our reserves will last considerably longer than anyone originally dreamt. That is no reason why we should not take action to find more and to conserve what we have, but the picture is promising.

Mr. Doran: The Secretary of State is rightly encouraged by the rate of development in the North sea, but he will be aware that the rate of discovery is still much less than the rate of production. Can he give us a precise date for the latest estimates of our self-sufficiency, and what measures has he taken to extend the period of self-suficiency?

Mr. Parkinson: I cannot give those exact figures. It is clear that 1988 was not a good year for discovery as compared with exploration, but this year is much better. There have been seven discoveries in the first three and a half months of the year, and it is clear that the rate of production in the future will tail off much more gently than we had expected.

West Burton Power Station

4. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to receive firm proposals for starting construction of the proposed West Burton 1800 MW coal-fired power station.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend is still waiting for Nottinghamshire county council, Bassetlaw district council and the CEGB to sign agreements. When he receives them he will decide whether to give his consent to construct the station. The timing of construction is a matter for the applicant.

Mr. Haynes: The Secretary of State usually answers this question, but today he has put up the junior Minister. What does he think he is playing at? Before the election, he said that we would have a station at West Burton. Look at him laughing and grinning all over his face! He has used the excuse of planning problems and problems with the CEGB, but those problems are now out of the way. Why does not the Minister pull his socks up and let us have this station? It would be in the interests of jobs and power for Nottinghamshire and the nation. The Secretary of State should be ashamed of himself for laughing when I am putting this serious problem to him. Come off it! He should get up at the Dispatch Box and tell us that we are going to have that power station.

Mr. Spicer: Somewhere in there was a question trying to get out. I shall answer it in these terms. Tripartite agreement between the local authorities and the CEGB on the main conditions has been reached, although several minor issues on highway matters are outstanding. I believe that the signed agreements will be with us shortly, after which my right hon. Friend will be able to decide whether to hold a public inquiry.

Mr. Andy Stewart: I am delighted by my hon. Friend's answer to the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes). We and everyone else in Nottinghamshire know that the 25 per cent. reduction in real terms in the cost of raw materials to the CEGB was due to the increase in productivity by the Nottinghamshire miners, who can guarantee a secure supply to the new power station. Will my hon. Friend bring that fact to the attention of the authorities who will decide when the station is built?

Mr. Spicer: My hon. Friend is right. The nation and the electricity consumer owe a great deal to the Union of Democratic Mineworkers, for whom I think he was speaking. The Opposition would do well to think about that occasionally. The area boards, which will be a key determinant in the future of West Burton, believe that it is a good site for a coal-fired power station. Their precise needs will be determined by their obligation to supply and by the estimates that they make of future demand for electricity.

Mr. Wallace: If a coal-fired station is built at West Burton, can the Minister estimate what percentage of the coal burn will be imported coal? Does he propose to introduce regulations covering the sulphur content of imported coal, bearing in mind the low sulphur content of much of the coal mined in the United Kingdom, not least in Scotland?

Mr. Spicer: There are strict regulations covering SO^2 emissions, and the intention is that SO^2 will be reduced by

60 per cent. by the year 2,003. We have always made it clear that there are no import controls at present and that there will be none in the future. Unlike many Opposition Members, we are completely confident that the core business of the British coal industry will be the production of electricity. We believe that that is evidenced by the vast amounts of money that we have been putting into the industry and the response that we are getting from the work force.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Does my hon. Friend agree that a station of that size will be commissioned only if the generator has a long-term contract to supply? Does he further agree that the reverse side of that is that the generator will need a long-term contract for the supply of the basic fuel? I suggest that such long-term security will come about only if the coal used is coal produced by British Coal, and that may involve the Government knocking a few heads together. May I ask my hon. Friend, therefore, whether he feels in an aggressive mood?

Mr. Spicer: My hon. Friend makes some extremely good points about the reasons why a British electricity industry would wish to buy from an indigenous supplier such as British Coal, especially as the industry has very good coal at its disposal. My hon. Friend asked me to join the negotiations that are taking place between British Coal and the electricity industry. I have to say, on behalf of the Government, that we wish those negotiations to be conducted freely between the two sides. That is why it was quite wrong for the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) to run round town this morning saying that we have predetermined plans for British Coal.

Mr. Blair: Then perhaps the Minister will answer the question that he failed to answer this morning. Is it the case that, as matters stand at present, the electricity industry will order 15 million tonnes less from British Coal next year, despite being offered it at market prices? Even if the Minister feels no concern about the effect that that will have on jobs, on the balance of payments, on the midlands economy and on the future of electricity supply in his capacity as an Energy Minister, does he not feel even a twinge of conscience, as a member of the Conservative party, towards those UDM members whose support the Government was happy to exploit during the miners' dispute and whose reward may now be a P45?

Mr. Spicer: It is a matter of great interest to the Government that the hon. Gentleman should suddenly discover the UDM. It is a little rich for Labour Members suddenly to be defending the UDM. I have already made it quite clear to the House—I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would join me in this—that the nation owes a great deal to the UDM, and we do not need to be taught that lesson by the hon. Gentleman.

The hon. Gentleman asked about our responsibilities for the future of energy in Britain. We have an interest in this matter, and we take a balanced view of it. We have an interest in ensuring that electricity prices are as low as possible—and that involves fuel prices—and at the same time in ensuring that we have a thriving indigenous coal industry. That is why we have spent £2 million every working day on developing our coal industry.

Electricity Privatisation

5. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about his proposals for employees in the electricity industry being offered a stake in their own companies.

Mr. Parkinson: There will be attractive terms to ensure that employees can acquire shares in the successor companies. Decisions on the details of the offers that will be made to employees will be taken nearer the time of the sales.

Mr. Thurnham: When allocating shares, will my right hon. Friend give every encouragement to employees to take up their full individual entitlement, to spread the benefits of share ownership as widely as possible?

Mr. Parkinson: We think that it is very important for individual employees of the industry to have their own shareholding. We therefore intend to put together a package of discounts and encouragements which we hope will encourage more than 90 per cent. of employees to take up their shares, as has happened with previous privatisations.

Mr. Foulkes: However welcome the proposal may be in principle, will this not remain merely a cosmetic exercise unless the Secretary of State is willing to ensure that the majority of shares go to people who have staked their lives in the electricity industry, rather than to big business, which happens to have the capital to put into shares but which has no real long-term interest in the industry?

Mr. Parkinson: I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman is seriously suggesting that the rest of the nation should make a present of something up to £10 billion to the 131,000 people who work in the industry. It is a national asset. The employees receive a proper wage and salary, but we want them to have the chance to have a stake in the industry and we intend to ensure that they do.

Mr. Mans: I welcome my right hon. Friend's reply on this matter. Has he given any thought to setting up employee share ownership plans trusts—ESOPS trusts—as part of the offer for sale of the companies as a way of ensuring that employee share ownership is ongoing?

Mr. Parkinson: That is a possibility that has been put to us. I have not taken a final decision nor have the companies, but we are slightly dubious about collective ownership in this case. We believe that, initially, the employees should become individual shareholders in their own right.

Mr. Pike: Rather than just giving the employees a stake in the industry if it must be privatised, why does the right hon. Gentleman not take the opportunity, while the Bill goes through the House, to enable them to have a say in the industry by making provisions for employee participation at board level on the various boards? The right hon. Gentleman could do that and he could ensure that the employees are allowed to elect their own representatives on to those boards.

Mr. Parkinson: We do not believe that trade union representation is necessarily the same as representation by the labour force. We do not believe in the institutionalised representation of the work force on the board. We want

individual members of the work force to have shareholdings, to go to the AGM and to use their votes to vote on to the board directors of their choice.

Carbon Dioxide Emissions

6. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the level of emissions of CO_2 by the Central Electricity Generating Board's power stations in 1970 and 1987; and what was the amount of electricity supplied in the same years.

Mr. Michael Spicer: CEGB emissions of carbon dioxide in 1970 and 1987 were 184 million tonnes and 182 million tonnes respectively. Over the same period electricity supplies by the CEGB rose by 23 per cent.; The amount of CO_2 emitted by the CEGB per unit of electricity production has fallen over the period by 20 per cent.

Mr. Amess: Can my hon. Friend confirm that the CEGB has no plans to increase emissions of carbon dioxide by 25 per cent., as rumoured in some quarters?

Mr. Spicer: Yes, Sir. I can give that assurance. A number of predictions have been made about future CO_2 emissions, but they depend upon what assumptions are made about demand or the future make-up of electricity generation. For instance, a continuing switch from coal to gas or an increase in nuclear power will reduce CO_2 levels considerably.

Mr. Anderson: Surely the best way of reducing CO_2 is by conservation, by alternative energy means and by ensuring that we can green our cities and plant trees on derelict land to fix the CO_2 in the biomass.

Mr. Spicer: As we discussed earlier, undoubtedly one way to reduce CO_2 emissions is to engage in conservation measures. We certainly intend that that should be the case. Our main policy to combat CO_2 emissions however, has been to encourage a variety of non-CO_2 emitting fuels, such as nuclear and renewables and reduced CO_2 emitting fuels such as gas and clean coal technologies. Since the Opposition oppose most of those measures, especially nuclear power, it is fair to ask them what they propose to do about it.

Mr. Rost: In order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, can my hon. Friend confirm the rumour that the Government are, after all, to introduce amendments in the other place to the Electricity Bill to strengthen the obligations to improve energy efficiency and to provide incentives for the production of electricity combined with the marketing of the heat?

Mr. Spicer: My hon. Friend has been pressing the case for combined heat and power for many years and with increasing effect. He will know that a number of measures associated with the Bill greatly improve the chances of CHP and will particularly ensure that it has a fair and even playing field in comparison with other forms of electricity. That is the only assurance—it is a good one—that I can give my hon. Friend about the terms of the Bill.

Mr. Morgan: Some 10 days ago a seminar was held at 10 Downing street on the greenhouse effect. Can the Minister or the Secretary of State confirm that if the Government chose to use the argument that the only way to hold back the greenhouse effect is to switch to nuclear power, 24 nuclear power stations would have to be built by the year 2020—something the British planning process could not possibly provide? Do they agree that it is shocking that when the alternative proposal, supported by most scientific and technical opinion—that energy conservation is a far better way to hold back the greenhouse effect—needs to be pressed on the Prime Minister Jimmy Goldsmith, a friendly neighbourhood billionaire, must be called in and asked to use his influence with the Prime Minister, rather than the Secretary of State?

Mr. Spicer: The hon. Gentleman answered his own question about the planning constraints involved in the construction of 24 nuclear power stations. We envisage that there will be four new PWRs and that each one, with a capacity of 1·2 GW, will reduce CO_2 emissions by about 6 million tonnes per year, or about 3 per cent. of the total emissions. That is pretty good.

Dr. Michael Clark: Is my hon. Friend aware that there seems to be a notion about that if a Labour Government come to power, coal will be burnt extensively without any adverse effect on the atmosphere? Will he confirm that 1 million tonnes of coal burnt will produce 3 million tonnes of carbon dioxide, whether a Conservative or Labour Government are in power, and that chemistry is impartial in terms of politics?

Mr. Spicer: My hon. Friend's logic is impeccable as, I am sure, are his figures. Certainly, the logical implication of the Labour party's policy is that, for the foreseeable future, it intends to base the entirety of our energy on coal technology. That will have a grave impact on CO_2 emissions.

Nuclear Power

10. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if his Department has plans to increase the size of its nuclear power programme.

Mr. Parkinson: No, Sir.

Mr. Evans: In view of the fact that the Prime Minister is apparently determined to rely entirely on nuclear power in the future to combat the greenhouse effect, would it not be more realistic to start installing flue scrubbers in coal-fired power stations such as Fiddler's Ferry as an additional weapon in our fight against the greenhouse effect?

Mr. Parkinson: At the end of last week, the Prime Minister repeated the Government's position, which is that we wish to see four PWRs built to replace the Magnox stations that will be phased out between now and the year 2000. The Prime Minister also said—and it is a remark that I have repeatedly made in the House—that she believes that the argument is gradually turning in favour of nuclear power. Therefore, that number may turn out to be the minimum, but the Government's present plans envisage four PWRs being built.

Mr. Morgan: Oh, a minimum?

Mr. Parkinson: I have said that before, too. The hon. Gentleman should listen occasionally. The first orders have been placed for Drax and we are committed to a reduction of 60 per cent. in sulphur dioxide emissions by

the year 2003. That will mean more retrofitting and it is for the CEGB and its successor companies to decide which stations will be retrofitted.

Mr. Jack: In view of my right hon. Friend's previous and excellent answer, what specific measures is the Central Electricity Generating Board taking to ensure that the existing, advanced gas-cooled reactors give the maximum output?

Mr. Parkinson: A Labour Government originally ordered them and we have presided over their development. Therefore, it should be encouraging to all hon. Members to know that at long last the AGRs appear to be working better. Last year was their best year for production. Torness and Heysham B have every possibility of being successful, therefore, good progress is being made.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Has the Department made any real assessment of the cost to the consumer of its programme of nuclear energy? Is the Secretary of State aware that Torness, which came on stream in Scotland on Saturday, led to £2 billion debts for the South of Scotland electricity board which, along with the servicing of that debt, will pass on to the consumer a bill of about £170 per year? Does the Secretary of State accept that nuclear energy is unwelcome to the population, and that Saturday was an example of the great white empress opening a great white elephant?

Mr. Parkinson: I congratulate the hon. Lady on thinking up that well-thought-out remark so spontaneously. We believe that nuclear power has justified its existence in this country on at least three occasions in the past 15 years: during the oil price explosions and during the miners' strike. I did not notice the critics of nuclear power complaining that their lights came on even though the NUM did its best to turn them off. There is a price to be paid for security, and we are prepared to pay it.

Sir Ian Lloyd: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the most dangerous things we can do when judging the greenhouse effect and its policy implications is to oversimplify the whole matter? If world reductions of carbon dioxide are to be achieved in the amounts that science suggests, we shall need every contribution we can get, not only from energy conservation and efficiency and a reduction of demand for electricity, but from nuclear power, too.

Mr. Parkinson: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. No one suggests that nuclear power is an alternative to conservation or that we should stop conservation. No one suggests that there is only one answer.

Our record on improved energy efficiency is extremely good, so we say exactly what my hon. Friend said. The world cannot afford to turn its back on any means of reducing carbon dioxide emissions, because they present a major threat to us all.

Mr. Barron: If the Secretary of State has no plans to increase nuclear power, is he happy that his diversity argument will also be used now about foreign coal? The question that we asked earlier is important. We understand that negotiations are going on for 15 million tonnes of foreign coal. Is the right hon. Gentleman's Department happy that that should take place in the next two months—yes or no?

Mr. Parkinson: I am not in a position to settle the negotiations between the CEGB and British Coal; they are going on now. Opposition Members do not realise that they are being used by proponents of one side of the argument to prevent proper negotiations from taking place. We have given the two sides permission to negotiate freely and we have made it clear that we shall not dragoon them. We have also put the British coal industry into a better position in which to compete than ever before and we believe that, based on its recent performance, it will get most of the business. We do not accept that British Coal can find customers only if they are dragooned into buying from it.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend agree that Opposition Members are talking a load of scientific nonsense and that it is high time that Labour Members learnt from Socialist France that nuclear power is a positive and effective way of generating electricity?

Mr. Parkinson: I cannot see why my hon. Friend felt it necessary to qualify his "nonsense" remark with the adjective "scientific".

Offshore Installations

12. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many offshore installations have shut down in the last 12 months; and what was the total loss of production of *(a)* oil and *(b)* gas.

Mr. Parkinson: Seventeen million tonnes of oil production has been deferred, not lost, as a result of the Piper Alpha disaster and other accidents in the past year. Apart from Piper Alpha, the operators expect the majority of fields currently out of production to be back on stream by the end of this month and the remainder by September. The loss, or deferment, of gas production was minimal; the total capacity of the North sea and Morecambe bay remained well in excess of demand.

Mr. Doran: That is an appalling record. Does not the Minister think it ironic that the Tern Eider field is being opened almost as we speak, yet these fields are being shut down because of the closure of the Brent pipeline system? Given the serious consequences of these failures of safety —the loss of life and the effect on the economy—does he accept now that safety in the North sea is far too important to be left to the Department of Energy?

Mr. Parkinson: That exciting list of statements led nowhere, but it allowed the hon. Gentleman to run one of his favourite hobby horses at the end, which was interesting. No one could draw his conclusion. Until the day after Piper Alpha, not a single Labour Member had ever asked me a question about North sea safety, and I was never asked about the better performance of Norway, for the simple reason that its record until that time was a great deal worse than ours.

There are lessons to be learnt and we intend to learn them. My inspectors take their jobs extremely seriously.

Mr. Foot: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the Health and Safety Executive and Commission have a pretty good record of work generally? That being so, why, after all these incidents, does he resist so strongly extending their powers properly to cover this whole area?

Mr. Parkinson: I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman remembers that our present arrangements were the direct result of a study by the Burgoyne committee set up by his right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). That committee reported to us and recommended the arrangements that we now have. The arrangements were put in place as a result of the study by an independent committee. We have already made it clear that if Lord Cullen of Ashbourne feels that he wishes to make any comments on those arrangements and to express a view about seeing them changed, we shall be happy to consider it.

Mr. Hind: My right hon. Friend will be aware that the accidents in the North sea bring home to consumers the question of interruptible supplies of gas. Will he consider suggesting to our right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster that if we are to retain a horticultural industry the increase in gas prices as a result of the recent Monopolies and Mergers Commission report should be looked at again? Will he have discussions about that matter with the chairman of British Gas?

Mr. Parkinson: As I am sure my hon. Friend knows, my Department has no standing in this matter. It is now a matter between British Gas, the regulator and the Department of Trade and Industry which is responsible for consumer affairs.

Mr. Haynes: Who is responsible?

Mr. Parkinson: Not the hon. Gentleman, thank God. I note what my hon. Friend has said and I shall bring the matter to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Rees: Will the Secretary of State consider that the Burgoyne report was issued 14 years ago? The Labour Energy Minister at the time decided not to bring energy and oil work within the scope of the Health and Safety Commission. That was a long time ago, and in view of the accidents that have taken place, is the Secretary of State saying that he is completely happy with the arrangement made following Burgoyne? Would it not be better to think again?

Mr. Parkinson: I think that the right hon. Gentleman will find that Burgoyne was 10 years later than he suggests. The arrangements have not been in place since 1971. I think they have been in place since 1981. We have already made it clear that we are not interested in defending the status quo. We are interested in North sea safety. Lord Cullen is looking at the whole background to the Piper Alpha disaster, and if he makes any recommendations we shall take them very seriously indeed.

Nuclear Fusion

13. **Mr. Fishburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information is currently available to his Department on low-temperature nuclear fusion.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Different groups of scientists claim to have observed nuclear fusion in simple apparatus at room temperature. Experiments are under way by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, and in laboratories and universities worldwide, to reproduce and understand the effects that have been reported.

Mr. Fishburn: Will my hon. Friend consider diverting some of the huge amounts of Government money that are spent on research into high-temperature fusion into low-temperature or cold fusion, on the understanding that although there is no clear result yet, any such result would unlock a source of energy which would be vastly cheaper, safer and more usable for future generations than the present nuclear fusion?

Mr. Spicer: We have yet fully to assess the findings of Professors Pons and Fleischman. However, I understand that early attempts to reproduce any form of nuclear reaction have been disappointing. Some explanations suggest that the two scientists created a chemical rather than a nuclear reaction. Scientists at Harwell have yet to give their conclusions on the matter and until they do it is difficult for me to argue that any extra resources should be diverted to this research project.

Nuclear Power Stations (Decommissioning)

15. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many nuclear power stations he envisages being decommissioned in the next five years; and what provision is being made for the eventual demolition and disposal of the constituent parts.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Decommissioning of nuclear power stations is an operational matter for the CEGB. The board makes appropriate provision for decommissioning in its annual accounts. This amounted to £568 million at 31 March 1988.

Dr. Clark: Does my hon. Friend agree that, inevitably, when power stations are decommissioned there is radioactive waste, and that it is only logical that Conservative Members who support nuclear energy should also support the creation of repositories for nuclear waste? So that new orders can be placed for further power stations, will my hon. Friend ensure that a site for a repository is found quickly, so that it can be built without any undue delay?

Mr. Spicer: Like my hon. Friend, we recognise the need for progress to be made in the development of a repository, but I am sure that he will agree that this must be on the basis of a proper assessment of the safety and environmental factors. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment confirmed on 21 March that the Government have accepted Nirex's recommendations that the repository should be in the form of a mine under the land, and that further investigation should be carried on at Sellafield and Dounreay. This work is expected to take about 18 months to complete and until then, Nirex will not be in a position to submit proposals or to seek the necessary approvals through the normal planning procedures.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Parliamentary Questions

57. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on how many occasions since his appointment he has answered oral questions in his capacity as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. Tony Newton): By the time that I have finished this sentence, two.

Mr. Cohen: Should the Chancellor be abolished as obsolete, or would he prefer more questions to be addressed to him—for example, questions about the appointment of magistrates to enforce the poll tax? will not his JP appointee be making large sums out of the poll tax while clipping the wages and benefits of, and perhaps sending to prison, people who will lose hundreds of thousands of pounds? Is not the best way forward the abolition of both the Chancellor's post and the poll tax?

Mr. Newton: I am not sure that I would welcome more questions like that one. I would welcome any assistance that the hon. Gentleman cares to give me in fulfilling my duty and my clear purpose in ensuring a fair and balanced administration of justice, and in appointing magistrates, in the areas for which I am responsible.

Mr. Marlow: I am sure that my right hon. Friend is very jealous of his Duchy. Can he explain to the House how it is that the European Community has acquired competence over the quality of water in Blackpool? I should have thought that this was a matter for the people of Blackpool, if they want to secure a decent tourism trade, or, if not, for this House. Could my hon. Friend tell the House how we are to get that competence back?

Mr. Newton: I should perhaps first make it clear that it is not my Duchy but that of Her Majesty the Queen, who is also the Duke of Lancaster. As to the quality of water, I would regard my interest as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster as being the same as that of anyone concerned with any other part of the country, which is to ensure a high quality of water. That is the aim of the Government's policies.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Women Employees

58. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, how many women are employed by the Church Commissioners.

Mr. Michael Alison (Second Church Estates Commissioner, representing the Church Commissioners): There are 139 women on the Church Commissioners' staff.

Mr. Marshall: Is there not scope for women to serve the Church in other ways? Is it not high time that a decision was made over women priests, especially as women are effective preachers and are likely to be even more conscientious than men in their pastoral duties?

Mr. Alison: I have great sympathy with my hon. Friend's championing of the cause of women in the Church of England ministry. He will know that there are already about 500 women deacons in post in the Church of England, and they do marvellous work. However, the ordination of women measure is unlikely to come before the General Synod until 1992, which will be after the next General Synod is elected in 1990.

Employees

59. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what is *(a)* the salary of the highest paid official employed by the Church Commissioners, *(b)* the average per capita salary of employees and *(c)* the average clerical stipend.

Mr. Alison: The highest salary paid to a full-time officer of the Church Commissioners is currently £50,600, equivalent to Civil Service grade 2. The average salary of the Commissioners' 350 full-time employees is £14,800 and the average stipend of clergy of incumbent status in the Church of England is £8,900 plus largely tax-free benefits in kind averaging around £5,750.

Mr. Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is some inequity? Bearing in mind that the Archbishop of Canterbury is paid £31,870 and the Bishop of Durham £22,745, plus palace—[HON. MEMBERS: "Too much."] Some of my colleagues say, "Too much." Will my right hon. Friend undertake to persuade the Church Commissioners to examine these matters with a view to considering whether they are using their assets equitably and fairly, bearing in mind that the parishes alone will pay the new general secretary of the Synod £50,000? What about setting up advice centres for bishops such as the Bishop of Aston, who has fallen on his nose in a rather tragic way while trying to organise a visit for Archbishop Tutu? Should not the Bishop of Aston have help and could not the commissioners provide such help?

Mr. Alison: My hon. Friend must keep these matters in reasonable proportion. It costs about £400 million a year to keep the Church of England running. That sum is largely contributed by people from the parishes, as well as past donors and benefactors. The scale of renumeration for the top administrators, either in the General Synod or the Church Commissioners, is not out of scale given the extent of their responsibilities and the budget that they have to administer.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

Commission Meetings

60. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission when the Commission last met; and what was discussed.

Sir Peter Hordern (Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission): The Commission last met on 6 December when, as I have previously informed the House, the main business was consideration of the estimates of the National Audit Office and the Northern Ireland Audit Office for 1989-90. The House may wish to know that the Commission's next meeting will be held tomorrow.

Mr. Allen: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that, at the request of the Public Accounts Committee, the National Audit Office is examining the Government's advertising expenditure and the abuse or use of money to further the Government's aims. I now read in the newspapers that the National Audit Office is considering an advertising campaign to polish up its own image. Will

the hon. Gentleman ensure that the National Audit Office campaign is better value for money for the public than the current Government campaign?

Sir Peter Hordern: I cannot comment on the Government's publicity. I understand that the National Audit Office has recently engaged the services of consultants to give advice on its external communications strategy, especially to assist in its recruitment effort in a highly competitive market. If I may say so, it is essential that the National Audit Office should be able to call upon good and qualified staff in the same way that every other major organisations can.

Mr. Tim Smith: Can my hon. Friend confirm that when he or the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee receives any communication from whatever quarter suggesting a matter for inquiry by the National Audit Office, or making allegations of fraud, corruption, bribery or anything else, it is absolutely the standard practice on receipt of such communications for them to be referred directly to the NAO? Does my hon. Friend agree that when *The Observer* attaches such great importance to allegations sent by a senior privy councillor to the NAO about commissions paid as part of the Tornado contract, it wildly exaggerates the significance of something that the Chairman of the PAC does with every allegation of this sort that he receives?

Sir Peter Hordern: I can only confirm that all serious matters concerned with fraud and allegations of that sort are referred to the National Audit Office and the Comptroller and Auditor General. I have no knowledge of the specific matters that my hon. Friend has mentioned and they would seem to be more matters for the Chairman of the PAC.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the hon. Gentleman ask that the issue of articles that appear in *The Observer* relating to the proceedings of the Public Accounts Committee be placed on the agenda of the Commission? Is he aware that *The Observer* has fabricated articles about the proceedings of our Committee? It has been warned that what it is saying is inaccurate yet it has persisted in printing. Even as late——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is this a matter for the PAC or the Commission?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The Commission, Mr. Speaker. We are talking about the credibility of the Committee.

Even as late as yesterday *The Observer* published a leader which reiterated mistakes and falsifications that it has published previously.

Sir Peter Hordern: I do not like to disappoint the hon. Gentleman, but I fear that the Public Accounts Commission deals with very mundane matters such as salaries, terms and conditions of the staff of the National Audit Office, and so on, whereas the exciting things go on in the Public Accounts Committee of which the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) is Chairman, and who is in a better position to answer such questions than I am.

Mr. Marlow: Subsequent to the second question asked by the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen), does my right hon. Friend agree that if by spending money on advertising the sale of privatisation share issues, the price of those issues is increased by more than the cost of the advertising, that is good marketing? If the hon. Member for Nottingham, North is against marketing, why does he sport that wretched red rose all the time?

Sir Peter Hordern: Such matters are far outside the very mundane considerations with which the Public Accounts Commission has to deal. However, I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House heard my hon. Friend's question and will answer it in due course.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Private Members' Bills

61. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Lord President of the Council how many private Members' Bills presented *(a)* as a result of a Member being in the first 20 in the ballot for private Members' Bills and *(b)* behind the Chair have been enacted in each of the past five Sessions; what were the figures for 1979-80 and 1969-70; and if he will make a statement.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): As the full answer is in the form of a table and contains a number of figures, I will, with permission, arrange for it to be published in the *Official Report*. I would add, however, that in each of the Sessions mentioned in the question the number of private Members' ballot Bills enacted has exceeded the number enacted following introduction under Standing Order No. 58.

Mr. Greenway: Has not the time come to devolve more power to the Back Benchers of this House, bearing in mind that there are about 4,000 laws on the statute book, almost exclusively contributed—if that is the right word—by the Government? In particular, could the private Members' Bill procedure be more open, and would my right hon. Friend support the requirement that those right hon. and hon. Members who object to private Members' Bills stand in their place and say "I object" loud and clear?

Mr. Wakeham: Procedural changes such as my hon. Friend suggests are for the Select Committee on Procedure to examine and it is not for me to make off-the-cuff suggestions at the Dispatch Box. Objection at 2.30 pm on Friday, which is contentious, is objection to a Bill being given a Second Reading without debate. That point is significant and should be borne in mind.

Mr. Burns: Does my right hon. Friend agree that more private Members' Bills would stand a chance of progressing on to the statute book if non-contentious, non-party-political Bills having all-party support—such as the Control of Litter (Fines) Bill—were not objected to on Second Reading by the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook), who is a member of a political party that says it cares about the environment?

Mr. Wakeham: Yes. I appreciate my hon. Friend's disappointment, but the procedures are well known to right hon. and hon. Members, many of whom accept that no one should object if a Bill dealing with a contentious matter is opposed at 2.30 pm on a Friday, when its principles have not been debated. However, I feel sure that right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House

would be supportive of any measures to tackle the problems of litter—as are the Government, subject of course to consideration of their practicalities.

Mr. Dobson: Will the Leader of the House confirm that the bulk of Bills to which objection is made from a sedentary position every Friday are objected to by a Government Whip who is deployed to do that—usually the hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones)? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree with his hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) that it would be better if right hon. and hon. Members were required to rise and declare their identity when objecting to a Bill?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman seeks to squeeze in a party point where there is no party point to be made.

Mr. Dobson: The hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) did so.

Mr. Wakeham: That is right, but I expect the behaviour of right hon. and hon. Members on the Opposition Front Bench to be different from that of right hon. and hon. Members who are disappointed that their own Bills will not pass. I can confirm to the hon. Gentleman that the procedure for objecting to Bills under the present Government is exactly the same as it was under the Labour Government.

The information is as follows:

	Ballot Bills	*Bills presented under SO 58*[1]
1969-70	5	4
1979-80	5	3
1983-84	10	1
1984-85	11	4
1985-86	11	7
1986-87	6	5
1987-88	9	2

[1] Not including Lords Bills taken charge of under SO 58(3).

Private Bill Procedures

62. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he now has any plans to recommend changes to the private Bill procedures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: We had a useful debate on this subject on 20 April, during which I said that the views expressed would require detailed and considered reflection. As a result I will be considering with the usual channels and others the scope for an agreed package of procedural changes which might be brought forward in time for the next Session.

Mr. Skinner: Will the Leader of the House bear in mind that it is recognised on both sides of the House that there is now widespread abuse of private Bill procedure to get through legislation that would otherwise fall foul of planning laws and inquiries at local government level? In some instances, junkets are being arranged. Members of Parliament—on one occasion, many Tory Members—are called upon to vote and then go to a beanfeast. Almost the entire Cabinet went into the Lobby to support the Associated British Ports (No. 2) and North Killingholme Cargo Terminal Bills, including the Prime Minister, who turned up in her carpet slippers at 10 o'clock.

Surely when there is that kind of widespread abuse it is high time that things were altered. Is it not true that the right hon. Gentleman was preparing to give some consideration to the matter in our debate a few weeks ago, but the Prime Minister coincidentally answered a question about 10 minutes before he rose to speak and he changed his brief?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman should not believe everything that he reads in certain newspapers, but, having done so, he should have read the correction that appeared a few days later.

I think that the hon. Gentleman misunderstands the private Bill procedure. I know that he popped in for only a few minutes on the occasion that he mentioned, and therefore did not give the matter his usual careful attention. Any private Bill would fail if it sought to give additional powers to the Government, because it would no longer be a private Bill; a private Bill that seeks to give additional powers to a commercial undertaking is a matter for the House to decide. The Government see no case for opposing such a Bill unless it conflicts with Government policy, which does not apply to the Bills referred to by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Rowe: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, in the case of a private Bill to be introduced reasonably soon, there is considerable disquiet at the possibility of compulsory purchase procedures being used for the purchase of more land than the proposers strictly need? There is a danger of that land being sold on at a profit, when any profit rightly belongs to those whose land has been compulsorily expropriated. When he considers private Bill procedures, will my right hon. Friend take that carefully into account?

Mr. Wakeham: I take my hon. Friend's point, but the Bill that he has in mind will probably be debated at length and he will no doubt make his point then.

Mr. Spearing: Does the Leader of the House accept that the debate to which he referred revealed widespread agreement on both sides of the House about three matters: first, that a private Bill's preamble must be approved; secondly, that it must not raise issues relating to public policy and purpose; and, thirdly, that preliminary proceedings of an appropriate kind should be completed before the Bill is presented?

Is there no possibility of such criteria being incorporated in the Standing Orders for private business? Would that not have the advantage of avoiding future legislation on the matter? Will the right hon. Gentleman consider looking at the Standing Orders with a view to implementing what I consider to be a widespread view on both sides of the House?

Mr. Wakeham: I agree with part, but not all, of what the hon. Gentleman has said. I have already said that I will consider those matters. I agree that there have been instances of promoters trying it on, but that is not to say that I think that the private Bill procedure should never deal with planning matters. When statutory changes are to be made, it seems to me sensible that some planning matters associated with them should be dealt with at the same time.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the private Bill procedure is more democratic than

any planning inquiry? Does he consider it significant that Opposition Members wish to give up powers and cede influence to planning inspectors?

Mr. Wakeham: I would not like to draw a comparison, but those who say that the private Bill procedure is necessarily less fair than a planning inquiry are selling the private Bill procedure short. I believe that by and large it does a very good job.

Mr. Foot: Since it seems to be part of the right hon. Gentleman's original complaint that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) turned up a little late on one of these occasions, could he not arrange that we would never start private Members' business without my hon. Friend being given the chance to be here to assist in the proceedings?

Mr. Wakeham: That is one of the most constructive suggestions that the right hon. Gentleman has made in the House for a long time.

Mrs. Clwyd: Surely the Lord President agrees that in the case of the Felixstowe dock Bill the whole thing was a fix. The promoters of the Bill were very large contributors to the Tory party. The Member of Parliament for the area was then the chairman of the Tory party. The champagne reception at the end was quite clearly organised as a treat for those who supported the Bill. Surely the Lord President agrees that our Joint Committee on Private Bill Procedure said that there was widespread abuse of the system, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) pointed out. Apart from any other consideration, objectors to Bills are at a grave disadvantage compared with the promoters. Furthermore, the taxpayer is losing vast sums of money. The promoters are being charged only a very small amount of money for bringing their Bills before the House instead of the £10,000 that each promoter should be paying, as recommended by the Committee.

Mr. Wakeham: To take the hon. Lady's last point, which is the only point on which I agree with her, the charges need to be looked at. That is one of the recommendations in the Select Committee's report. I reject entirely her other suggestion. One of the reasons for the Select Committee's report was that it was inconvenient for certain hon. Members to serve on Private Bill Committees. That presented us with a problem. I think that the hon. Lady knows about the point to which I refer.

Rose Theatre, Southwark

3.31 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey) *(by private notice:* To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the future of the Rose theatre.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): Archaeological work on the site of the Rose theatre has been in progress for some five months. This work has been financed by the developers, Imry Merchant Developers plc, under guidance from English Heritage and the Museum of London. It has become clear in the light of the most recent discoveries that the remains are of greater importance than was previously thought.

As a result, the developers and their architect have been working urgently on possible ways of ensuring that the excavated remains are properly preserved and displayed to the public. I invited them to a discussion this morning, together with English Heritage, which has advised us throughout.

I am very glad to tell the House that Imry has agreed to delay work on the theatre site for up to one month. This is to enable it and its architect to work with English Heritage and with us on the various options. The roof will go back over the site immediately so that the excavated remains are fully protected while these discussions continue.

English Heritage, assisted by the Government, will be contributing financially to the cost of the delay.

Mr. Hughes: I am grateful for and welcome the Secretary of State's statement. However, I should like to ask him about additional matters that still give cause for concern.

Is the Secretary of State in a position now to schedule the site, as he has been asked to do? Has he insisted that when the developers redesign the building they should avoid pile driving on the site, through the theatre itself, so that the theatre may be preserved intact? Has he agreed with the developers that from the time the building is redesigned and built there will be public access to the site of the Rose theatre so that people will continue to be able to see it?

As of this moment, the concerns are the guarding of the site, the activity on the immediately neighbouring site—which, I ask the Secretary of State to accept, is literally within inches of the edge of the Rose theatre—and the belief that the redesigned building must be agreeable not just to English Heritage but to the archaeologists of the Museum of London. I should be grateful if the right hon. Gentleman could give those assurances.

This morning, the people and the developers reached an agreement. I hope that the people, the developers and the Government will again be able in a month's time to reach an agreement that will preserve the Rose theatre intact for all to see.

Mr. Ridley: It would be inappropriate to take the question of scheduling any further as it is a matter for English Heritage. However, in the words that the hon. Gentleman used in his Adjournment debate:

"A breathing space is needed for. . .the planners in Southwark and English Heritage"—[*Official Report*, 9 May 1989; Vol. 152, c. 838.]

That is exactly what we have provided. It would be inappropriate not to allow a period during which, we hope, a satisfactory result can be achieved.

The breathing space also applies to the hon. Gentleman's two other points about pile driving and public access to the theatre. Obviously, those will be vital matters in the pending discussions, although I cannot forecast any decisions. I cannot give the hon. Gentleman any assurances about the outcome of the discussions. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said last week, we all hope that not only will the theatre be preserved—there was never any question about its preservation—but that it will be made permanently available to the public. I cannot forecast whether that emerges from the time that the Government have bought to allow the options to be considered, although I hope that it will be the case.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): Although my right hon. Friend's intervention is to be warmly welcomed, is he aware that all who care for our English heritage have been gravely disturbed by what has happened in the case of the Rose theatre? Does he agree that a month is not much time in which to reach a satisfactory conclusion? During that time, will he bend his mind to devising some effective and lawful way of ensuring that when such ruins are uncovered during development work they can be properly preserved rather than hidden beneath a mountain of earth and concrete?

Mr. Ridley: My right hon. Friend is a little hard on the existing arrangements. During the past year, developers in various parts of the country have spent £14 million on facilitating archaeological investigations and the recording of what has been found. The short period that has been bought will not only save money but will concentrate minds on finding the best solution—although I cannot forecast what it may be—as quickly as possible. I am sure that it is possible for all that it is necessary to do to be done within that time.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): Although I welcome the one month allowed for a solution to be found, does the Secretary of State recognise that what he has told the House today does not constitute a solution but is merely a buying of time? The Under-Secretary said last week that the Government's policy on conservation was to bulldoze the site and cover it with hardcore and sand, which would preserve the site for future generations. I trust that that is no longer the Government's policy and that what they now mean by "conservation" is very different.

Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that people throughout the country find that the market forces of building yet another office block on the site to be wholly at odds with the preservation of a unique part of our theatrical culture, and that the two are incompatible? Will he visit the site in the company of myself and the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) so that he may see it and feel its historical importance? Is he aware that hon. Members on both sides of the House will say clearly to him that, although the delay of one month is welcome, the country expects and demands of the Government that the site be preserved, not for one month but for future generations?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman is labouring under some misconceptions. The backfilling was never intended

[Mr. Ridley]

to commit the site to below the basement; it was intended as a means of preserving it while plant and other necessary machinery moved across it. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that, because of the one-month delay, backfilling will not commence. I believe that there is dispute about it, but many archaeologists believe that the best way to preserve the site for the short and temporary period of construction is to immerse the remains in sand, which will be removed later.

The hon. Gentleman is not right to ascribe the situation to market forces. It might well be that the great prosperity that the Government have brought about has caused far more development and, therefore, far more exposure of sites; but that is not a charge to lay against economic success. The developers have behaved with impeccable propriety. They have delayed a long time already and are prepared to delay further—at great expense to themselves. They have co-operated entirely with the archaeologists and with my suggestion this morning.

I shall certainly visit the site, but, if I may, I shall choose my time and my company.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the buying of time is extremely important and should be warmly and unreservedly welcomed by everyone? Will he acknowledge the significant part that has been played behind the scenes by our hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden)? Does my right hon. Friend agree that this important ruin stands a much better chance of being well protected for posterity if it is sheltered and shielded by the umbrella of a strong building and is not exposed to the elements, as is suggested by some thoughtless people?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I acknowledge the role that my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) has played in this matter, and I am grateful to him. I strongly support what my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) says about the fragility of the remains and the need to protect them from rain, frost and snow. I am certain that the best answer is to have a solid roof over them for their preservation.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): I welcome the breathing space. What options will be considered during this time?

Mr. Ridley: That is not entirely a matter for me. It is a question for the developers and their architect. They must try different designs and different ways of treating the finished product, so to speak, so that access, marketing and presentation of the ruins can be well arranged, and work in conjuction with English Heritage, which will give the architectural advice they need. What the result of that will be, and whether it can be 100 per cent. successful, I do not know, but it may well cost more money than the present scheme. In that case, I suspect that the public may like to consider whether they want to contribute so that the scheme can be altered in such a way as to enable the site to be preserved.

I should make it clear that the Government's commitment finishes with this statement.

Mr. Michael Marshall (Arundel): My right hon. Friend will be aware of my interest as a member of The Theatres Trust. I associate myself with the representations that he has received. I am sure that we all want to express our appreciation for the breathing space. The work done by my right hon. Friend, his ministerial colleagues, the Minister for the Arts and hon. Members on both sides of the House has been constructive and helped to point the way ahead. Finding an answer to an urgent national problem to preserve our heritage is a challenge to public and private sources.

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I strongly agree with what he has said. There is an opportunity here. The move was necessary because greater knowledge of the site has been obtained literally in the past two or three days. Recent discoveries make the site more important than was previously thought. It is for that special reason that, on this one occasion, it seems right that the Government should finance the delay so that the forces that are determined to preserve the site have an opportunity to do so.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): Let us hope that the Secretary of State is not like Oscar Wilde, who believed that where archaeology begins art ends. The right hon. Gentleman's remark that his Department will not be involved in any further financial commitment suggests that he knows the price of everything and the value of nothing.

Mr. Ridley: I claim dissimilarity from Oscar Wilde in more than one respect. My statement pledges Government money for the delay which I have announced, but it goes no further than that.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): The House will welcome my right hon. Friend's statement. Does he agree that over the centuries the rich history of Southwark has been lost largely because of property development and changes in the pattern of society, but latterly especially by the policies of Southwark council which have almost obliterated the history of that area, not least by its intransigent reaction to the application to build a replica Globe theatre? Is it not an important discovery, and will my right hon. Friend give earnest consideration to classifying the remains of the Rose theatre as a national monument?

Mr. Ridley: The rich history of Southwark has been found rather than lost by the developers there at present. It is not right to condemn Southwark council, because I believe and hope that it will co-operate, as it will be asked, in the month's "window" that we now have to find a solution. I am sure that Southwark council will do that. The time has not yet come to consider the status of the monument or what might be done to preserve it. We must allow a scheme to be found first.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Is the Secretary of State aware that his first answer this afternoon was the best statement I have ever heard him make in the House? *[Interruption.]* Well, it was a bit better than most of his statements. However, the right hon. Gentleman cannot now decide that the Government have no responsibility for the site. Surely, if the site is part of our English heritage, which obviously it is, the Secretary of State as an artist —and a very fine artist in painting—must recognise that we have to preserve in every possible way the arts of the nation. Therefore, the preservation of a fine, original theatre is vital in the interests of the cultural development of the nation for our children. I ask the right hon.

Gentleman to reconsider his reply about the Government's role in preserving the site and the financial aid that they must give in order to do that.

Mr. Ridley: If today's statement was the best statement the hon. Gentleman has heard me make, he cannot have been here very much. I shall make sure that the hon. Gentleman is given an oportunity to subscribe to any fund which might be set up for this purpose.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): We are talking about the theatre as if it were a building, and it is not; we are talking about the site as if it were ruins, and it is not—it is footings. Is not the life of the theatre composed of actors? Is not the living theatre more important? If every time the footings of some building that experts tell us was a theatre, a brothel or anything else had to be preserved, London would still be composed of Roman ruins. Are we not concerned with the living and the living theatre? If we have £10 million or £20 million to spend, let us spend it on the living theatre and not on the footings of something that looks like a disused mine.

Mr. Ridley: This is not art, but archaeology, which is a different but equally important science. If we were to deny archaeology, we would deny Stonehenge. It is not a living theatre, but at least it is a monument which my hon. Friend would respect, although it is even older than the Rose theatre.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): The House will welcome the Secretary of State's late, reluctant intervention, but it will also be deeply worried that he has said that he no longer intends to be involved in this matter. The House has ways of bringing him before it to ensure that he remains involved.

What other country would be prepared to bury the heritage that we link to Shakespeare's name—a name which is famous throughout the world and throughout time? The only answer that the Secretary of State has is two of sand and one of cement.

If the Secretary of State had followed the spirit of the 1987 report of the Select Committee on the Environment, he would not have been forced to intervene as a result of the all-night activity of actors, the constituency Member for Parliament and members of the parliamentary Labour party; he would have initiated the action himself. Will he do so in future?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman does not seem to realise that it was only in the past few days that English Heritage advised that the quality of these remains was far greater than it originally thought. That has changed the position. It is right to respond to my advisers at English Heritage on a matter of this sort. I did not say that the Department would not be involved. The Under-Secretary of State and I will certainly remain involved. I said that the statement did not go beyond the financial commitment to the delay. That is all.

I would never take on the hon. Gentleman as a builder's labourer. If he did one of cement and two of sand, he would be wasting cement on an unprecedented scale.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Today is for private Members' motions, and we must move on.

Kurdish Refugees

3.51 pm

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a matter which is urgent, specific and important and which should have precedence over the Orders of the Day, namely,

"the arrival yesterday at Heathrow airport of three planes containing Kurdish refugees fleeing from Turkey, and the Government's response."

Between 8 million and 10 million Kurds in Turkey are not, effectively, officially recognised. They live in a war zone. The Kurds who arrived yesterday are asking for asylum on the ground of increasing personal and political persecution which has taken place since the military coup in 1980. Since August 1984, the Turkish security services have engaged in counter-insurgency activities against the Kurdish Workers' party. In addition, vast numbers of Kurds are threatened by deforestation, damming and flooding as part of a programme against them by the Government.

The refugees who arrived yesterday, together with hundreds who have arrived in the past 10 days, have all been directed by the Home Office to the London borough of Hackney and to one address in Kingsland road. It is a bizarre operation about which the chief executive has written to Sir Clive Whitmore, permanent under-secretary at the Home Office.

The need for an urgent debate is fivefold. First, we want to discuss how the Government intend to handle and expedite the applications for political asylum.

Secondly, we want to know why a major international crisis is being directed by the Home Office on to one borough and what resources it intends to provide local churches, community groups, the Kurdish Workers Association and Hackevi to deal with this major emergency. The council could be bankrupted within months in trying to deal with the impending homeless crisis.

Thirdly, the leaders of refugee groups have told me that the Home Office voluntary service unit is being unhelpful. They believe that Ministers are using the crisis as a prelude to introducing visa controls for people from Turkey.

Fourthly, we need to discuss the absurdity of allowing Turkey into the European Economic Community while thousands are fleeing the country for want of democracy. Ozal and Evren need to be told what democracy is about.

Fifthly, we need a wider discussion in the House on the Kurds, including the chemical warfare and genocide in Iraq, which is being turned on them by the hated dictator Saddam Hussein.

For those reasons, Mr. Speaker, I hope that you will allow this application.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the arrival yesterday at Heathrow airport of three planes containing Kurdish refugees fleeing from Turkey, and the Government's response."

I have listened with concern to what the hon. Gentleman has said, but, as he knows, my sole duty in considering an application under Standing Order No. 20 is

[Mr. Speaker]

to decide whether it should be given precedence over the business already set down for this evening or tomorrow. I regret that the matter which he has raised does not meet the requirements of the Standing Order and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn *(Islington, North): On a point of* order, Mr. Speaker. I do not challenge your ruling, but I am sure that you will be aware that many of the Kurdish asylum seekers have suffered the most appalling repression at the hands of the Turkish forces and have suffered massacres of their families. They are justifiably seeking asylum. Many of them live in the constituencies of my hon. Friends the Members for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) and for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott), as well as in mine.

Is there some way in which, later this week or next week, we can obtain an answer from the Government about the support that they are prepared to give, as humanitarian aid, to people who have suffered the most appalling privations and who are looking for help from the people of this country? Some help has already been offered to them in their present plight by ordinary people in Hackney and Islington.

Mr. Speaker: I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern about those unfortunate people. There are opportunities to raise such matters during the parliamentary week—perhaps at Prime Minister's Question Time tomorrow—and there is always the opportunity, if the hon. Gentleman can take it, of an Adjournment debate. I do not underestimate the importance of the matter, but I have already ruled on the application made under Standing Order No. 20.

The Observer Newspaper

3.57 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will have noted the leading story in *The Observer* yesterday alleging that seven Members of this House had signed an early-day motion attacking *The Observer* for publishing fabricated stories on British arms deals at the behest of the newspaper's proprietor.

As custodian of the Order Paper, Mr. Speaker, will you confirm that that leader in *The Observer* is a falsification and that it grossly misrepresents the proceedings of Parliament? Will you confirm that early-day motion 801, which I tabled, accuses *The Observer* of falsely claiming that an inquiry into bribes for Tornado had been set up by the National Audit Office? It also accuses *The Observer* of inventing a sequence of events leading to that so-called inquiry. It also accuses *The Observer* of deliberately misleading its readers by suggesting that a Privy Councillor had submitted evidence to the National Audit Office backing the newspaper's allegations. That is a blatant untruth. An anonymous letter was received by the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee and was passed on to the National Audit Office. That anonymous letter made no substantiated allegations and included no evidence.

Will you confirm, Mr. Speaker, that, contrary to what the leading article says about the failure of any signatory to consult the Public Accounts Committee or the National Audit Office, several of the signatories consulted the Chairman of the Committee and the National Audit Office during a deliberative session of the Committee on Wednesday 22 April? On that occasion we were told that an inquiry had already been set up, going back as far as Sir Gordon Downey's time as Comptroller and Auditor General and before *The Observer* had made the allegations. That inquiry was completely unaffected by the allegations in *The Observer*.

I stand by early-day motion 801. It is the truth, and *The Observer* persists in telling lies.

Mr. Speaker: I am not privy to what goes on in the Public Accounts Committee, but I confirm that early-day motion 801 was in order or it would not have been on the Order Paper.

Transport

3.58 pm

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling): I beg to move,

That this House congratulates the Government on the increase in spending on roads by 57 per cent. in real terms since 1979 and on rail by over 75 per cent. over the last five years; notes the substantial and continuing pressure by the public for further measures to be taken up to and after 1992 to relieve road congestion; further notes that additional significant increases in public spending of 25 per cent. on roads and nearly 50 per cent. on rail are planned up to 1992; applauds the encouragement being given to the private sector to develop a role in our roads programme; believes that the privatization of British Rail would improve the service for the customer in the years beyond 1992; notes the improvement in the quality and quantity of bus services following de-regulation, and the privatisation of the National Bus Company; believes that there is a need to take further in the years up to 1992 and beyond the steps already taken by the Secretary of State for Transport in liberalising air fares and routes in the interests of the travelling public; congratulates the Secretary of State for Transport on the steps he personally has taken to promote public discussion of radical as well as conventional solutions to these problems; and urges the Government to continue its efforts to identify ways of mitigating and resolving these challenges in the years up to 1992 and beyond, the cost of which can now be supported because of the success of this Government's economic policies.

I must observe in passing that millions of our fellow citizens have been subjected to appalling inconvenience and disruption by today's strike action. Although that is not the subject of the debate, it is perhaps appropriate that it should be taking place today. In moving the motion, I am supported by a number of my hon. Friends who hope to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, and who will develop a number of themes that my motion seeks to highlight.

I am grateful, too, for the opportunity that winning this place in the ballot provides to draw attention to a matter of great concern to my constituents. The motion seeks to draw attention to the Government's many successes in this important area of activity since 1979, in terms of deregulation, privatisation, investment and the removal of red tape. That record is there for everyone to see but in addition, my motion draws attention to the formidable challenges that we face, on which our constituents expect decisive action and a clear policy.

The solutions remain primarily with the public sector. The excellent state of our public finances, as a result of the success of the Government's economic policy, means that the necessary funds do not elude us. We should be clear that, while the Government have, in part, established a reputation for eliminating wasteful, unnecessary and imprudent public expenditure, the converse is equally the case where good schemes require public funding and provision. The Government have been more responsive and supportive with taxpayers' money than any previous Government.

The challenge does not lie—as it has so often under previous Governments—in how to find the money that we require. It lies in the use of the funds that are available to the maximum advantage in meeting our transport infrastructure requirements. Our geographical position on the edge of the EC makes that all the more important in the run-up to 1992, to which my motion draws attention.

I would also underline what I believe to be the personal contribution that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made in identifying ways of resolving the difficulties and moving transport infrastructure issues up the political agenda. He has given specific encouragement to the private sector to come forward with ideas and proposals. He has promoted an important debate about the future shape of British Rail, and the liberalisation package of late-1987 on air transport and related matters clearly emanated from him. He has done much to focus public attention on the things that need to be done.

Let me deal briefly with the current position of British Rail and the challenges that it faces for the future. It is right to note that under Sir Robert Reid British Rail has made substantial progress in recent years. In the past year, 20,600 million passenger miles have been travelled—the highest figure for 27 years—and £1·7 billion of passenger income has been received by British Rail. At the same time, there has been a 27 per cent. diminution in the support required from the taxpayer to run British Rail. Those are significant figures and accompany the significant investment that has been made in renewing and improving the rail network. No less than £2·5 billion has been spent since 1983 on 30 major investment programmes and many minor ones.

It is precisely because British Rail has made such progress that its return to the private sector can now be discussed as a serious option.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): Suppose that British Rail had not been so successful in generating internal investment. Would such a lack of success have meant that management was so bad that British Rail would have to be privatised anyway?

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman misses the point about privatisation entirely. If a business can stand on its own feet and thrive and flourish in the private sector, it should do so. I am merely pointing out that British Rail fulfils those important criteria. The case for, and objective of, privatisation can only be the extent to which it will assist and enhance British Rail's service to customer and improve its efficiency.

The case for rail has never been stronger. We must respond to rapidly growing passenger demand. British Rail must woo freight off the roads. It is in a unique position to respond to a number of environmental concerns. Above all, it must continue to improve the quality and standard of its service. I believe that British Rail is most likely to achieve those objectives if its long-term future rests in the private sector. I shall not discuss what method of privatisation might be the most appropriate although some of my hon. Friends will wish to refer to that.

Let me mention one local matter of immense concern to my constituents—the future of the midland main line. British Rail, and many hon. Members, have recently received the midland main line strategy study, a document commissioned by a number of the counties affected. It is a positive and helpful document. The approach that British Rail is taking towards the midland main line is a good one. Many improvements are to be made later this year. Last year, I had the opportunity to travel in the cab of a train and to see for myself some of the improvements that need to be made, which are now to be made as a result of representations from a large number of people. The importance of upgrading the line to provide for greater speeds and of straightening out the bends is well known and the more sympathetic timetabling that BR has produced for my constituents' benefit is welcome.

[Mr. Mitchell]

It is essential for the region that British Rail accepts unquivocally the long-term case for electrification. I do not accept the argument that it is too far off to comment. Investment opportunities and inward investment in Nottinghamshire require investors to know that the region will have a first-class service linked to the Channel tunnel and the European rail network in the 21st century. That is why it is so important for British Rail's management to state publicly that it is committed to enhancing and improving the midland main line. On electrification, the issue is not "if" but "when". Anything that the Minister has to say on that will be reviewed and acknowledged with great interest when the Nottinghamshire authorities and my constituents have examined his comments.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): I hope that the hon. Gentleman realises that many hon. Members sympathise with and support his view about electrification. I hope that we shall sustain the cross-party nature of the campaign, as electrification is vital for our region. Does not the hon. Gentleman feel, however, that a chance was missed in the debate on the King's Cross Railways Bill last week, when a number of hon. Members refused to allow evidence to be taken in Committee, which would have opened up the debate? For example, it would have allowed the very good study to which the hon. Gentleman referred to be considered, along with other items. Does he agree that that was a missed chance?

Mr. Mitchell: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his comments. He and I have made similar comments publicly in Nottinghamshire. I do not want to take up his comments about King's Cross, because that Bill is not strictly relevant to the debate.

The second subject covered by my motion—air travel—is also of great concern to our constituents. Their concerns are specific and refer to costs and delays. The agreement in Europe, which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State did so much to promote at the beginning of last year, has made a considerable difference. Fares to major European capitals have been cut, more routes have been opened up and new services made available to the public. There has also been steady progress in bilateral agreements.

Having said that, far more needs to be done. It is not right that some airlines should receive state subsidy while others, such as British Airways, do not. There should be access for competitors on routes and destinations. The travelling public, and not cosy cartels reinforced by Government intervention, should determine the nature and quantity of air services. It is the Government's job to arrange safety and regulation; it is not their job to interfere unnecessarily in the market process.

In particular, we should have three specific measures: all EC air routes should be open to free competition; there should be major controls on Government subsidies to airlines; and there must be clear and precise rules for route licensing.

Our regional airports, too, have started to take much of the strain in terms of delays. There has been a huge increase in traffic—nowhere more so than at East Midlands airport which was the fastest growing regional airport in the country. Over the weekend, we heard dire and, I hope, alarmist warnings about holiday air traffic. One commentator said that this year it would be

"finely balanced between muddling through and total melt-down."

I sincerely hope that that will not be the case this year. I believe that regional airports have a major role to play in helping to solve some of the problems.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is absolutely deplorable that an increase in the number of transatlantic flights landing at Manchester—an important regional airport—has been blocked because of the failure to negotiate an international agreement on that?

Mr. Mitchell: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his supportive comments on some of the themes of Government policy, which have attempted to liberalise the arrangements and make life a great deal easier for the travelling public by offering them much more choice.

Since buses and coaches have been deregulated the public have seen more services, more operators and tremendous innovation. Minibuses now operate in 400 areas, often where traditional buses cannot penetrate, competition is flourishing in more than 100 areas, but operating costs have been reduced by more than 30 per cent. and tendering for services has saved local authorities £40 million. Have we seen any of the dire effects prophesied by Opposition Members? I am delighted by the presence today of my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo). Everything that he told the people of Nottingham before the previous election has come true. The service that suffered 50 years of decline and decay, accompanied by mounting subsidies from the taxpayer and diminishing satisfaction to the consumer has been transformed. It now thrives and flourishes, it is competitive and it is responsive to the consumer.

Mr. Snape *rose*——

Mr. Mitchell: I am happy to give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Snape: It was pretty rich, even for the hon. Gentleman, to dismiss the latest report which refers to a drop in bus mileage since deregulation; in fact, the hon. Gentleman did not refer to it at all. He also dismissed the disastrous impact of deregulation on the bus industry in one nonsensical paragraph from a prepared written speech.

Mr. Mitchell: I do not know where the hon. Gentleman has been since bus deregulation, but I can hardly have dismissed a document that I did not even mention.

Mr. James Arbuthnot (Wanstead and Woodford): The Labour victor at the by-election at Pontypridd described himself in a recent sitting of the Standing Committee on the Atomic Energy Bill as a late convert to the idea of bus deregulation. It is delightful that some modern members of the Labour party are late converts to that idea, and it is a pity that there are not more of them.

Mr. Mitchell: My hon. Friend makes the point beautifully, but, as always, there are at least two divisions within the Labour party—those who have come into the modern world and those for whom it is still a distant glimmer on the horizon.

The problems associated with roads are apparent to all of us. As hon. Members return to their homes on Thursday evening or Friday morning and as they come up to London on Monday morning, they see for themselves the appalling difficulties and congestion on our major arterial roads. It is interesting to note, en passant, that while President Gorbachev is busy disregarding the queueing system as a mechanism of economic control, we run our roads policy on that basis.

I believe that significant action should be undertaken on three fronts. First, investment in our roads should be substantially increased; secondly, we need greater involvement by the private sector; and thirdly we need a radical approach to the problems of London. Those problems affect not only Londoners, but my constituents, who either visit or seek to do business in the capital city. My hon. Friend the Minister will know better than I where the new roads need to be, but it is clear even to the casual observer that we need another north-south link. We need to widen many of our major motorways, particularly the M1, and the technology exists to do that without disrupting the other six lanes. We need to enhance the inter-urban links. I could not fail to mention the A453 which links Nottingham to the M1. That is a dreadful and extremely dangerous road which needs to be significantly enhanced.

The increasing size of our motorways might only add to the thrombosis suffered in London. Therefore, we must acknowledge the importance of an outer-ring road. Given the territory that it would go through, that development, by definition, means major tunnelling which also relates to environmental considerations that I strongly support. Tunnelling is far more expensive, but, increasingly, it is a necessity. We must acknowledge that environmentally sensitive schemes for road development are essential. We must also do something about planning delays. It now takes nearly 15 years to build a road, which is far too long. We need to find ways in which to reduce that appalling delay.

It would be remiss of me not to mention a local matter of great concern to one corner of my constituency——

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way on roads?

Mr. Mitchell: If the hon. Gentleman will bear with me, I have more to say on that matter.

The Gedling bypass has been awaited for many years by my constituents. The traffic problems, which are mounting in Gedling, are worse than anywhere else in the county of Nottinghamshire—the county council has acknowledged that. We understand that the county council has other priorities and that it is currently conducting a review to consider what those priorities should be. On behalf of my constituents, I earnestly urge the county council to consider whether the Gedling bypass can now be scheduled in its capital programme. I pay tribute to the Government for their support, as they have considered this scheme to see whether it might be eligible for 50 per cent. transport supplementary grant. It is important to note that the Government regard it as a scheme

"with more than local significance".

I hope that my constituents, who have laboured for so long under this intolerable burden, will see some light at the end of the tunnel in due course.

With regard to the role of the private sector, in building roads, some progress has been made on two of the three pressing problems that it faces. In the past there was no little incentive for the Department of Transport if private sector schemes resulted in the departmental budget being effectively docked by the Treasury, but, recently, significant progress has been made in that regard. The private sector will not use its ingenuity if genuine progress is unlikely to take place, but recent efforts have been made to counter that problem. However, the private sector is still unlikely to come up with an idea and take it to the Department, only to see it go out to tender. I do not pretend that there is an easy solution to that problem because, above all, we must be competitive. Perhaps we could use the concept of intellectual property to see whether there is some way in which to encourage the private sector to use its ingenuity and thus develop new schemes.

The private sector can play a modest role in a number of ways, but I would not wish to overstate that role. My constituents note that the south-east is groaning under the weight of development. They are also aware that new roads are required to relieve the traffic, which is essentially commuter traffic. I do not believe that there is any reason why my constituents should pay for such development and I believe that toll roads could be the answer. Such a solution would bear all the hallmarks of a much more effective regional policy.

Private sector involvement must carry a level of risk or it is merely an exercise in who provides for the debt. The level of risk to some extent dictates the return. The Department must accept, however, that planning and bureaucratic delays, putting in bids and design preparations are part of the cost that the private sector must bear.

There are at least two ways in which the private sector can earn its return—through tolls and by planning gain. I believe that through the latter the private sector could come into its own with interesting ideas and innovative schemes.

4.18 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): It is especially appropriate that the hon. Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) should have introduced a debate on transport today. My colleagues and I have a great interest in this matter—[HON. MEMBERS: "Where are they?"] I was about to say that they are not here to express it; no doubt they are suffering from the transport problems.

My day started extremely early as I spent an hour on the picket line at the Holloway bus garage in my constituency. I went there because I wanted to talk to the bus drivers and conductors and to find out why they were taking industrial action today. Conservative Members should do the same, and talk to those people, although they may simply disregard my advice. Many of the people involved have given many years' service to London Transport, they have worked as drivers or conductors for many years, they are committed to public transport and they appreciate the value of the service. What they cannot cope with is being expected to give a donation to London Regional Transport year after year when they do not receive wage increases as high as the inflation rate, which they have not received for several years. They are also expected to suffer the growing trend of one-person operated London buses, which leads to a slower service, greater strain for the drivers and, I suspect, greater danger for other road users. They cannot tolerate having one

[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]

route after the other continually put up for sale, either through an internal mechanism in London Regional Transport or to an outside contractor. When outside contractors win the tender to use the route, they sometimes employ drivers on incredibly long hours who have already been declared medically unfit by London Regional Transport.

Conservative Members might praise the virtues of the market economy, but when it leads to danger, as it has on the railways, Tubes and buses around the country, they should think again very carefully. The root of London's transport problems is the Government's obsession with reducing, year on year, the subsidy to London Regional Transport. They say that it should be able to make a workaday profit knowing full well that no public transport undertaking anywhere in Europe does that, or is likely to do so. The Government are also obsessed with promoting the use of private cars and road building as a solution to London's transport problems.

If Conservative Members found London a bit crowded today, it was as nothing compared to how crowded it will be if the Department of Transport gets its way on the road assessment studies and other major road building solutions. The House must face up to the fact that we cannot solve this country's transport problems by endlessly building more and more motorways, which attract more cars, create longer traffic jams at each end of the motorways and ruin the places to which the motorways were originally directed. I advise those who think that that is the solution to consider what has already happened in London and other major cities whose hearts have been torn out to make room for car-borne traffic. The communities' characters are destroyed. If we wish to preserve our urban environment and to protect the nicest parts of our countryside, we will not be best served by building major roads and relying on road transport as the basis of the transport industry.

I often travel on the Euston to Birmingham and Manchester line, on which there is a stretch where the railway runs beside the M1. As I sit in the train travelling in relative comfort at between 70 and 100 mph, I realise that it is a fast and efficient way to travel. As I look out on to the M1, I can see a sea of traffic going north and a sea of traffic going south. In it, I can see the tense expressions of people driving themselves to early coronaries as they tear along the motorway at 80 mph, flashing their lights and blaring their horns at the drivers in front of them as they desperately try to get to Nottingham, or wherever it may be, five minutes earlier. Part of the reason that so many of those people and freight vehicles are travelling on the motorway is simply that British Rail's pricing structure discriminates against rail transport in favour of road transport.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Will the hon. Gentleman explain how he can see the tense expressions on the faces of the people in their cars beside the railway lines if he is whizzing along in the train at 90 mph?

Mr. Corbyn: That is a clever intervention. Sometimes I see drivers breaking the speed limit and driving at 90 mph because they are trying to keep up with the train. That drives them to an even earlier coronary than they might otherwise have suffered.

I shall return to the substantive point that I was trying to make. Essentially, the Government discriminate against rail and in favour of road transport by continually reducing their subsidy to the railways, which, compared to that in other European countries, is very low. Therefore, the fares are very high. That means that railways are available for those who can afford to travel on them and are increasingly operating as a mass commuter transit system in the south-east or expensive business-class travel elsewhere. They are not seen as a popular form of transport, as they are in France, Italy, Germany and most other European countries.

There is also the increasing pressure on road building, which comes from the Freight Transport Association, which is ably represented in the House by the hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller), many other such organisations and the construction companies, which want the road building contracts. I want a good transport system for this country, and I believe that its achievement will be based on the improvement and development of the railway system rather than on the development of more motorways.

Problems occur in urban areas at the end of motorways. I represent a densely populated urban constituency in north London. It has a low level of car ownership compared to the London average, which is lower than the average for the country. In some parts of the constituency, only 40 per cent. of households have access to cars, which, by national standards, is quite a low rate.

There is a vast volume of through traffic in my constituency which comes through the Holloway road, down Seven Sisters road and through Tottenham from the north. There are continually, enormous traffic jams which pollute the environment and affect the health of many of my constituents.

One might say that the solution to all that would be to build more roads. However, there is zero—I mean zero —support in my constituency for building more urban roads in London to solve the transport problems. For a long time, my constituents have recognised that the solution to London's transport problems lies not in building more roads, but in improving public transport, removing commuter traffic from the roads and persuading people to use the railways and buses.

During 1981-82 when the GLC introduced the Fares Fair structure, and before it was outlawed by the High Court, there was an increase in bus and Tube traffic and a reduction in road traffic and road accidents. With the increase in fares came an increase in commuter traffic, and the old problems returned.

Through their road assessment studies, the Government are quite simply studying a series of road building options throughout London. There is no support of which I know from ordinary Londoners anywhere for this ludicrous idea to go back to the outdated notion of motorway ring roads around London. The east London assessment study, which involves my constituency, will ruin part of Highgate wood and the Archway road area by the building of a grade separated road. According to the Minister for Roads and Traffic, we must not use the word motorway to describe it because it is not one.

Another series of options includes building a toll road along what is now a beautiful stretch of park known as the parkland walk, from Highgate and Finsbury park. It is a two-mile stretch of disused railway which is a delightful piece of open space, particularly for children living on the

housing estates nearby, who have no parks and very little open space in which to play. That is apparently fair game to be made into a toll road so that commuter motorists can speed through and destroy that bit of park.

The opposition to that proposal is strong. A few weeks ago we had a march along the length of that stretch, down to Camley street natural park at King's Cross. Even if the Government were to succeed—I hope that they never do, and I shall do everything to stop them—in building the Archway road or the parkland walk motorway route, or in widening Holloway road to take more traffic, the traffic will merely build up at Highbury corner, St. Paul's road and Balls Pond road through Hackney to give the inexorable pressure of more and more traffic, attracted on to the roads because new roads have been built. That will destroy more and more homes, businesses and what remains of London's open spaces and natural environment to make way for yet more vehicles to travel through London.

I hesitate to use the word crossroads lest that be taken as showing support for road building solutions, but we are at a crossroads of planning for London. The only solution to London's tranport problems is a resolute commitment to improving and increasing the number of staff on public transport so that it is a safer and cheaper to use and that means greater subsidy, which will reduce the number of people travelling by car in and out of central London. It also means reducing the size of the major lorries that use London as a delivery point.

London, like other cities, is grinding to a halt. It is an unpleasant, dirty and extremely polluted environment. I want London and other cities to be the precise opposite. The Government's policies are disappointing because they do not face up to the real needs of the mass of the people. Only 18 per cent. of London commuters' journeys are made by private car. Eighty-two per cent. are made by public transport, but one would think, judging from the amount of money that the Government propose to put into road building solutions in London, that it was the other way round.

A small minority of commuters travel in and out of central London by car, compared with the vast majority who are forced to travel like cattle on their way to market on the Tube or overcrowded buses. That is not good enough, and the people of London are heartily sick of it and long for change. Any politician who underestimates the strength of feeling in London against major road building and in favour of public transport should have a careful look at his majority in the last election and consider what it might be in the next.

I notice that many Conservative Members are not rushing to welcome the Government's plans. On the contrary, they are asking for an end to road building solutions in London because, like me, they realise that they are nonsense.

As the hon. Member for Gedling mentioned it, I shall close by discussing the role of the private sector in road and rail building. The private sector seems to be slipped in all the time—as though somehow or other it will help to solve the country's transport problems. But it is not involved in road or rail building or anything else as an act of charity, despite being presented to us sometimes under that guise. It is involved because it is a business, and ultimately the public will pay more, not less, because of the private sector's involvement. I am appalled at the idea of having privately built toll roads and privately built railways; presumably, the latter herald the break-up of the railway system.

We have the basis of a good transport infrastructure in this country in the shape of the rail system. It is underfunded and underinvested in and it needs more money. Instead, the Department of Transport seems to favour major road building proposals, to which there is enormous opposition.

This subject is important and it is regrettable that more hon. Members are not here to discuss it. One can only assume that they are stuck in traffic jams. If so, I hope that they will carefully consider solutions to London's problems which do not lie in providing more roads to bring in more traffic. That is not the way forward. The way forward lies in better, cheaper public transport in which there is proper governmental involvement.

4.34 pm

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): It is a great privilege to be called to speak in the debate.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) on at least being here. The Opposition Benches are singularly empty this afternoon. I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) on his choice of subject. Transport policy after 1992 is a highly relevant topic, bearing in mind the years of distinguished service as a transport Minister that my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell), who also happens to double as my hon. Friend's father, gave the Government and Parliament. Clearly, my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling is a welcome chip off the old block and I sincerely congratulate him on all that he had to say.

Most of my hon. Friend's remarks concentrated on road and rail investment and on the privatisation of British Rail and the National Bus Company. I also welcome what he had to say about the liberalisation of aviation in Europe. I shall concentrate my remarks on the aviation sector, because my hon. Friend covered the other areas so well.

It is safe to say that any debate on civil aviation should take place at the height of the summer when the problems to which I shall refer are evident. The lovely sunny weather that we are enjoying this month does not mean that summer has arrived early. We shall know when it is summer because there will be a rash of strikes and go-slows at continental airports, air traffic controllers will take action and, once more, we shall see the sad sight of holidaymakers stranded at airports.

It is amazing that the British will put up with almost any inconvenience in pursuit of the sun. Britons of all classes have come to regard a holiday abroad as an inalienable right. As a nation, we are used to queueing, we accept some delays, but how would we react if we were told that only a finite number of holidays was available? The Romans rioted and overthrew their emperors when deprived of bread and circuses, so the party in power when departures to Benidorm are curbed may expect a similar fate.

Last summer, we got through the air traffic chaos with a combination of good luck and good management. We may do so again this summer, but I want to look ahead to 1992 and beyond and to consider how we might cope with a possible doubling of the number of passengers using

[Mr. Michael Colvin]

London's four airports by the year 2005. Do we have the air space and airport capacity to meet this demand without endangering the public, because safety must always be the overriding consideration?

Nationally, there is no particular problem—at least not in theory. There are plenty of underused airports, particularly military ones, and some of our regional airports are crying out for business. But the trend is away from linear routes, as passengers and operators favour the so-called hub and spoke system, in which there are feeder services into major international airports for onward movement of passengers and cargoes overseas. Passengers now prefer frequency to price advantage, so the demand has been for more, rather than larger, aircraft.

This all means that the pressures exerted on London's airports have made the London area quite different from the rest of the country. However, even in the south-east there are enough terminals and runways, and there is sufficient air space. Why, then, is the average delay for aircraft outbound from the United Kingdom 15 minutes, which is exactly twice that in the United States of America? Unfortunately, the answer is that we impose artificial constraints on our capacity to handle these aircraft. For example, we underinvest in air traffic control, so that our air space is underused—it is thought by some—by as much as 40 per cent., and it may even be more. We impose planning restrictions on our airports and bans on night flying. Given the lead times for the construction of new facilities—runways, terminals and air traffic control systems—it could be said that we are already running into a self-imposed problem of undercapacity in the south-east, especially with regard to air space.

There are two possible responses. First, we can treat air transport as a resource of fixed capacity, and control demand through pricing. I reject that option, as, I imagine, would the House. We should favour the alternative: to use investment in technological advances to expand capacity while reducing unit costs.

It was in the light of these problems that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport asked the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority to advise him on traffic distribution policy for airports serving the London area and on airport and air space capacity. The motion gives us the opportunity to debate the Civil Aviation Authority's response. I hope that the advice that we give to the Secretary of State will, to use his own words,

"be fundamental in helping to fashion civil aviation policies taking us through the 90s and beyond the end of the century."

In its consultative document, CAP 548, the Civil Aviation Authority said that: By the year 2005 the number of passengers at London's four airports will have more than doubled to 123 million from 58 million that there were in 1987. Heathrow will be handling 55 million passengers, Gatwick 30 million and Luton 5 million. Stansted could be handling about 60 per cent. of London's longhaul traffic but only if an additional runway and terminal were to be built. Of course for that we have to come back to Parliament to get permission. Secondly, the CAA says that: Regional airports will increasingly handle the growth in air traffic as Heathrow and Gatwick become saturated. Although we would not disagree with that, none of us would want to see Heathrow and Gatwick saturated. There must be scope for expansion. The CAA also suggested that an extra London runway will be needed by about the year 2000 and that planning should begin now if it is to be ready when needed. That is a most controversial suggestion, probably the most controversial of all the CAA's recommendations, and it is a pity that so much emphasis has been placed on it.

The CAA also recommends that charter traffic should not be forced away from Gatwick by giving priority to scheduled services. I am delighted to see that recommendation and I hope that the British Airports Authority will take it on board.

Lastly, the CAA says that business and private aircraft should continue to be restricted to Heathrow and Gatwick and that these restrictions should be extended to their use of airways. The authority also concluded that no additional measures would need to be taken now to affect traffic distribution. It says that it is lack of airport capacity by 1995 that will present passengers with problems.

I agree with the Civil Aviation Authority that the interests of airline passengers will best be served if major decisions on traffic distribution are taken by the airlines rather than through intervention by the CAA or the Government. In effect, that means a continuation of the present system, but there are two rules held in reserve by the Secretary of State which could be abandoned. At Heathrow route frequency capping could go. This is the system whereby instructions can be given to reduce the number of flights that airlines operate on a specific route. It is a way of limiting their slots in order to encourage them to invest in larger aircraft. The second reserve rule relates to Gatwick and it is that preference be given to scheduled services over charter services. That rule should also be abandoned.

Several people have suggested that if demand needs to be managed the preferred option would be for restrictions on small aircraft. But they must have somewhere else to go which still enables them and their passengers to interline with the main hub airports.

We need a pricing structure for the use of air space that will encourage airlines to invest in larger aircraft which, of course, make more effective use of available air space and airport capacity. The present weight-related price structure, which favours small and slow aircraft, should be changed to a pricing structure based on movement-related charges which would encourage the use of larger aircraft. We all want to see that.

In the short term, we must look at ways of speeding up the improvements to our air space capacity, particularly in the London traffic management area, which is known as the LTMA. The CAA has already unveiled its plans for the so-called central control functions, the CCF, under which aircraft will fly one-way tunnels in the sky, each aircraft and tunnel safely separated from all the others. That will reduce the controllers' workload and enable them safely to handle 30 per cent. more traffic. Work is now beginning on CCF, but why do we have to wait until 1995 for it to be fully commissioned when the matter is so urgent?

Similarly, the new all-route centre, the NERC project, is only at the conceptual stage. Eventually it will introduce greater use of automation and other new controlling techniques which are already regarded as essential in the United States of America. I refer to such things as four-dimensional navigation, the traffic alert and collision avoidance system, or TCAS, which is already mandatory in the United States, the use of satellite communications, global positioning systems and data-linked air traffic control.

It is to be hoped that these improvements will all be part of the CAA's £600 million investment programme for the next decade. Will it be too little and too late? In view of the high priority that the Government are quite clearly now giving to road and rail transport and to which my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling referred, it would be sad if civil aviation turned out to be the poor relation. Surely these programmes for investment in better air traffic control systems should be speeded up. TCAS alone would increase air space capacity by a further 30 per cent. by enabling the separation and intervals between aircraft to be safely reduced.

It is, of course, quite possible that the United Kingdom could increase its capacity to handle more aircraft movements in the south-east and yet be unable to find slots at European airports for the aircraft to land. Therefore, it is very important that the initiative taken by the Government in setting up flow control management via Eurocontrol should be extended to take in measures designed to increase European capacity overall. Changes in European national systems should then be co-ordinated through Eurocontrol in order to make them completely compatible. Eurocontrol should also be given greater executive power to specify common equipment standards and operating methods and to rationalise the European air traffic control systems.

I was discussing all this only last night with Mr. Jock Lowe, who is general manager, operations control, of British Airways, as we flew back from Washington in Concorde. He was keeping his hand in as a pilot on that occasion. He raised the important matter of manpower and stressed the need for recruitment and training programmes to ensure that we have enough air traffic control officers available to man the improved and expanding systems that we want to see.

There is a greater chance of having these improvements operative sooner if National Air Traffic Services, or NATS, were separated from the Civil Aviation Authority as a plc in its own right. Although the CCF project has been given some priority by the Civil Aviation Authority, it is increasingly evident that the greater handling capacity of CCF will require en-route ATC sectors to be replaced by an entirely new facility which is called LATCC II which is planned to commence operating in 1996 and to provide the foundation for developing and further expanding ATC services into the next century. Why can we not speed up this proposal? We do not even yet know where LATCC II will be situated.

So much for air space. I should now like briefly to comment on airports. Having looked at the figures and assuming that current trends will continue, I see that we will get not only a higher frequency of aircraft movements in future through improved ATC but also larger aircraft. We shall require more terminals rather than more runways in the first instance. Although an additional runway at either Heathrow or Gatwick would be welcome now—by everyone except my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel), who has just entered the Chamber——

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): And many others.

Mr. Colvin: —I am not convinced that the case for either is overwhelming. My hon. Friend and I agree on that. It would be a mistake to start the planning process for either until the evidence in support is overwhelming. I see my hon. Friend nodding, and I am glad that we agree on that.

One measure that we could take immediately is to provide a taxiway at Luton airport, where there is not one, which would improve capacity there. We should also consider moving business aviation and small aircraft away from Heathrow either to Northolt where there is a lot of capacity, or even to a new runway, which could be built on land available for it between the A4 and the M4 north of Heathrow, where it could easily interline with the main hub.

The south-east could run out of terminal capacity by the mid-1990s, which is even before the date at which the CAA identifies the necessity for a new runway. I think that it has got its priorities wrong here. The most obvious solution is s fifth terminal at Heathrow, on the site of the Perry Oaks sludge farm. With the privatisation of the Thames water authority, there will be an opportunity for British Airways to buy that site, which will enable it not only to develop its own unit terminal—it is extraordinary that British Airways, as our most important national airline, does not have one—but to become one of the biggest retailers of fertilisers for roses. That is an application I should like to see go in.

I know that the Government have said that they are not prepared to give a commitment about the fifth terminal at Heathrow, and they they are keeping the matter under review. However, the time has now come for that commitment to be made so that work can start on planning adequate surface access.

Mr. Jessel: Is my hon. Friend aware that what he has just suggested would be most strongly opposed and hotly resented by hundreds of thousands of people living around Heathrow in the eight or 10 parliamentary constituencies that already have to suffer, every day, 750 or 800 flights, which disturb people's peace and quiet in their gardens and homes?

Mr. Colvin: I accept my hon. Friend's strong feelings on this matter, but he must not be a Luddite about airport development. Other areas would be only too happy to see their local airports expand. Heathrow is uniquely placed to become an important European hub. Aircraft are getting bigger, which means fewer aircraft movements, and are getting quieter. The noise footprint made by aircraft is much less than it used to be. Furthermore, if my hon. Friend took the trouble to question everyone in his constituency, he would find that many are dependent upon the jobs and prosperity offered by Heathrow, and would be reluctant to see that airport reduced in size, rather than expanding as the rest of us would like.

These improvements at Heathrow would enable it to retain its status as a major international hub, bearing in mind that the Charles de Gaulle airport outside Paris is already bigger than Heathrow and Gatwick combined. It will soon have four runways and will be capable of handling 100 million passengers a year, and one will be able to travel straight from there to London in two and a half hours by the high-speed railway link, if we can agree on the route for that. Therefore, it will be a real competitor for transatlantic traffic. To beat the French, the Dutch at Schipol and the Germans at Frankfurt for this European hub business we need to be competitive.

[Mr. Colvin]

That raises the question of the British Airports Authority. Sir Norman Payne, as chairman of the BAA, is a dynamic and effective leader, and he makes the best use of the structure of British Airports Authority plc that Parliament, in its wisdom, gave him. However, I question whether BAA has the right structure to enable true competition to take place. In the paper that my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South (Mr. Bright) and I wrote on the privatisation of British airports, we suggested three separate plcs for the three London airports. I still think that that would have been a better structure. However, we were assured in Committee that there would be no cross-subsidisation and that each airport would act independently and commercially. I wonder whether that is happening and whether there is not some cross-subsidisation. I know that, from a legal point of view, it is probably too late to "demerge" the BAA into its three separate component parts, but I wonder whether there is a case for referral to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to see what it has to say.

The BAA is not the only company that may be acting against the public interest. As we consider the liberalisation of air fares and routes in Europe in the run-up to 1992, we should perhaps give European politicians a few lessons on how to retire from owning and running airlines and how they might be made profitable if they were sold to their electors. It is good to know that Britain has been in the forefront of denationalisation, and the move to deregulate European civil aviation. In most European countries, one would have difficulty finding three airlines operating international scheduled services. In Britain, at the last count we had over 20, and that excludes those who are providing purely charter services. Britain can and should take the lead in the liberalised European aviation market, and by that I do not just mean the EC.

Our eventual goal should be an open skies policy where any European airline can fly any route it chooses within the boundaries of the continent of Europe. We want to see airlines free to set the fares that their customers are willing to pay, just like any other supplier, and not to have them regulated by Governments. We want to see an end to restrictions on how many EC airlines can fly a particular route, or how many flights or seats an airline may offer, and an end to the many exemptions that apply to the present EC airlines rules. We must get our European house in order pretty quickly and do it in a way that enables us to unite in negotiating future traffic rights with the United States, which is where the great competition will come from.

The United States has always dealt with Europe on a basis of divide and rule and, as a result, the internal domestic air routes of the United States, wherein over half the world's airlines fly, remains barred and shuttered to those very airlines with whom the United States seeks the right to compete in the skies of Europe. This must end, but I fear that unless the rights of United States airlines to operate within Europe are argued from a common standpoint, the United States may continue to operate a successful policy of divide and rule.

Civil aviation in Europe will grow as fast as the economies of those countries, but there is another factor. People need to travel further in business and they want to travel further on holiday than ever before. In the United States, only one person in 10 has a passport. When the American people suddenly realise that there are other places to see, or they have to travel on business—they will have to come to Europe as it expands following 1992—there will be a great explosion of air travel. I have spoken in an attempt to ensure that Britain is uniquely placed to capitalise upon that explosion, and that London's airports will provide the hub for Europe that we all want to see.

4.57 pm

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): I shall not follow the arguments advanced by the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin), who has skilfully made in this debate the speech that he would have made about the second motion on the Order Paper. I intend to concentrate on the points in the speech of the hon. Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) and in the motion. I welcome the opportunity to debate transport matters, although I do not agree with much of what was said by the hon. Member for Gedling or with what is in the motion.

We need to do much more for the regional airports —I agree with the hon. Member for Gedling about that. If this nation is to make the fullest possible use of regional airports, we must do two things. First, we must solve the problems of those who live in the regions and who find it unacceptable to travel to London if they wish to fly to the continent, America or elsewhere and of those who have to come into the country via London. Secondly, we must alleviate the problem of the fifth terminal at Heathrow to which the hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) referred in his intervention. The construction of that terminal could be delayed. The air traffic problem in the London area could be considerably alleviated if we were to use regional airports to their maximum potential. Surely there is great growth potential for regional airports.

The arguments that I am advancing apply to regional airports generally but I shall refer specifically to Manchester International airport, which is local-authority owned, controlled and developed. Massive investment is still taking place to ensure that the airport remains a major international gateway for the future. At the beginning of May the new terminal A was opened for domestic traffic. That is only part of the investment programme that is taking place to ensure that the airport continues to serve the needs of the region.

Mr. Mans: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it was a tragedy that when the new terminal at Manchester was opened on 1 May it was not ready for use as a result of an electricians' strike? The conditions for passengers going in and out of the airport were appalling. That is an example of what happens under local authority control.

Mr. Pike: That is an outrageous statement. The important factor is that development is taking place and will continue to take place. The fact remains that Manchester International airport is a major and successful airport.

One of the problems that faces Manchester International airport is the internationally fixed agreements on which airlines can fly where. We want more liberalisation and an end to restrictions. If an airline believes that it can successfully fly in and out of Manchester International airport, or any other airport, it should be able to do so without becoming involved in all the red tape and the various agreements that now apply,

which make negotiations so difficult. In Manchester there have been continuing discussions for the past couple of years that involve new companies that want to operate services in and out of the airport. They have been unable so far to make much progress. I hope that further progress will be made. Some new routes have been agreed within the past three years, but others, especially those involving flights to north America, are still blocked.

We have to go a long way yet before passengers are offered the services and fares to which they are entitled when travelling to other parts of Europe. Fare levels for European flights are exceptionally high in Europe generally when compared with fares for transatlantic flights. That is another area in which we want to see progress.

The hon. Member for Gedling referred to bus transport and claimed that local government has saved about £40 million in subsidies following the deregulation of bus services as a result of the Transport Act 1985. I do not dispute that figure but the way in which the saving has been achieved is unacceptable. Those employed in the industry have a worse package of pay and service conditions now than before privatisation and deregulation. [HON. MEMBERS: "Nonsense.] I hear what hon. Members are saying in interjections. They will have the opportunity of addressing the House if they catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The majority of those working for what were municipal undertakings and parts of National Bus, including those who work in the great conurbations, have inferior conditions of service compared with those which they enjoyed as an overall package before deregulation. If that is what deregulation and privatisation mean, I do not want them. It is unacceptable that working people should be given a worse package of conditions in 1989. We should remember that deregulation has yet to be introduced in London.

Some of the consequences that we feared as a result of the implementation of the 1985 Act have yet to be experienced, but I have no doubt that there will be continuing reduction in service levels in many areas and that some of the things that we said would happen will happen. Undertakings are changing hands rapidly. For example, Ribble has been taken over by a Scottish undertaking. The Government said that they did not want massive undertakings and that National Bus had to be split up. Now smaller undertakings are being taken over by larger ones. In parts of south Wales, for example, only one company is operating a service. Caerphilly is a specific example. There is no longer an alternative service. That was not the intention of the 1985 Act. There have been many failures and I think that we shall see more problems rather than fewer as the years pass.

I accept that there has been a tremendous improvement in many respects in British Rail over recent years. The present management seems generally far more determined than its predecessors to maintain and improve the rail service. However, there are still many problems within British Rail. The greatest problem is that Government investment and subsidy has been cut in many directions. There must be more investment if the rail service is to meet the needs of the nation. From an energy and environment point of view, the railways offer a far better way of travelling long distances within this country than any other means of transportation. We should be encouraging them. We should also be encouraging more freight to be carried by rail.

The Channel tunnel offers British Rail the greatest opportunity that has come its way this century. It will never get such an opportunity again for many years. It must seize the chance to get freight back on to the railway system and to secure the investment programme that we want. That should be accepted by hon. Members on both sides of the House. I see no reason why goods going to the continent or coming from the continent should be taken by lorry to London or Folkestone and the Channel tunnel itself. We want railways services running direct to the continent from the major regions of the United Kingdom, whether the destination is Germany, Italy, France, or wherever. That must happen.

I voted against the Second Reading of the King's Cross Railways Bill, which was introduced on behalf of the British Rail last week, because there was a refusal to accept a direction that the freight needs and passenger requirements of the regions should be examined within the context of the Bill. I am far from convinced that the King's Cross proposals will meet the needs of the regions. That is regrettable. It seems that there will not be an acceptable solution. Because of the existing connections for Channel tunnel traffic that bypasses London it will take almost as long to reach the tunnel from Manchester, for example, as it will from France to the furthest parts of the EEC. That is not acceptable to the north-west. We in the north-west want our export potential to develop for our manufacturing interests.

There is massive investment in the east coast line. The west coast line was electrified some years ago and when compared with the east coast provision it is beginning to look distinctly jaded. It is a much slower line and improvements must be made to bring it up to standard. We need fast links bypassing London and terminating at the Channel tunnel and far better services to the north-west than we currently have, and more must be done to ensure that InterCity services connect with local services better than they do now.

I refer finally to roads. I am by no means opposed to roads investment and recognise that it must be undertaken. I would criticise the Government for not investing enough. Certain sections of our motorway network are still being developed as two-lane highways when three lanes are clearly needed. That is not necessarily a criticism of Ministers because they come and go, whereas civil servants remain in office for longer and they have failed on occasion to take a sufficiently long-term view of future requirements. A number of motorways already suffer from under-capacity. On Fridays traffic on the M1, for example, is almost stationary all the way from its southern end to at least the M6 junction. People who daily travel along the southern section into London find themselves in traffic that crawls all the way, which is totally unsatisfactory.

In Manchester, the M63 bridge over the canal at Barton has recently been widened, but it is almost at full capacity even though the whole scheme has not yet been completed —another short-term folly. The Government agreed to linking the M65 westwards with the M6 and M61, and now that that improvement is back in the programme we hope that it will be completed as soon as possible. I believe

[Mr. Pike]

strongly that a second east-west crossing will ultimately be needed, with the M65 extending eastwards into Yorkshire, joining the M62.

We should not look to the privately funded sector for a road network. On the continent, there are toll motorways and autoroutes, and as someone who uses French autoroutes from time to time, I can tell the House that they are extremely expensive. The necessity to use toll booths itself causes massive hold-ups. French petrol is also dear, so the cost of motoring in France is extremely high. One could also argue that in Britain, road tax and VAT on cars and duty on petrol also mean that motorists here are heavily taxed and should not be asked to pay for travelling on a super-elite private road network.

The hon. Member for Gedling seemed to advocate that one solution would be the provision of some private roads within the network. I hope that neither the Minister nor the Government will adopt that line. In Britain, most towns are closer to each other than they are in many continental countries. In France, for example, all the autoroutes stop well short of Paris, Lyon and other such places. Were such a system to operate here, one would hardly get out of London before one was having to pay to use an autoroute to Coventry or Birmingham and then leaving it again. That is not a realistic option for Britain. The only people able to use autoroutes in this country would be those whose travel expenses are met for them, and the very wealthy. Nevertheless, the Government must improve the M1 and the rest of the motorway network. I agree with the hon. Member for Gedling that the time that elapses between agreeing and designing a motorway concept and the completion of its construction is far too long. Something must be done to speed up that process.

The debate has covered a wide range of subjects. I am glad of the opportunity to make points different from those of the hon. Member for Gedling, and I am pleased that he chose transport for the subject of his debate.

5.15 pm

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): We are all grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) for allowing the House to debate the subject of transport, and I am particularly grateful to him for his complimentary remarks about me and about the small role that I played as a Back Bencher in the Transport Act 1985 as it passed through the House.

I was not the only Member who was hammered by local authorities opposed to that legislation. I was subjected to a barrage of abuse both locally in Nottingham and in the shire. That abuse was backed by the spending of massive sums of public money by the city and county councils on a campaign to oppose the proposed changes. It is beyond question, that whatever criticisms remain, the prophets of doom were certainly wrong in respect of the city of Nottingham. It would be foolish to suggest that deregulation proved equally beneficial and successful throughout the country. I am sure that that is not so, but the House will forgive me if my remarks are relatively parochial and deal with how deregulation worked in my area and with the transport problems and policies that flowed from it.

One major campaign four years ago suggested that the Government's proposals would be detrimental to the interests of pensioners' and senior citizens' concessionary fares—that they would be abolished or that it would no longer be possible to provide them. I shall be interested to hear from any right hon. or hon. Member who can tell the House of any area of the country where pensioners no longer enjoy the concessionary fare schemes that existed before deregulation. However, the threat was made by the Labour party in my county—where, to the best of my knowledge, the concessionary scheme is as good as ever it was. In many respects, it is even better. It is shameful when political debate sinks to the lowest levels, with the Opposition usually telling pensioners, "If the wicked Tories get their way, you will not get this or that." Their screams of outrage are invariably proved false two or three years later. They get away with it almost every time, which is a matter of great sadness to me.

Another issue that concerned hon. Members in all parts of the House was quality control of public service vehicles. Prior to deregulation, it was said that traffic commissioners would not have the teeth to impose desirable levels of quality control—or, if they did, that they would not have the will to do so. I cannot speak for the rest of the country, but in Nottinghamshire the traffic commissioners are fulfilling the role that was set for them. Only recently, they ordered 35 public service vehicles used by one operator off the road because they failed to meet the desired standards. That operator was clearly incapable of bringing those vehicles up to standard, so in the public interest, rightly, they were taken off the road. Despite that major plank of Labour opposition, the traffic commissioners clearly have teeth and are prepared to use them.

Having made his little speech, the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) promptly disappeared. That is a pity, because he let the cat out of the bag by saying that Labour's fears had not materialised. How right he is. It is a shame that he is not here to tell us how many tens of thousands of pounds his local authority spent on telling us what a disaster deregulation would be. I hope that when he comes back, or when he reads *Hansard* tomorrow, he will have the courtesy to apologise to the House for that waste of public money.

Again, I can speak only for our municipal undertaking, but the running of the Nottingham company—and, I am sure, many others—is no longer bedevilled by the meddling of elected councillors who have other fish to fry. It is still owned 100 per cent. by the city council, but it is being run as a proper commercial undertaking with a sensible board. To our delight, the staff who have places on that board co-operate with the managers and directors to ensure that the undertaking is run properly. Now, believe it or not, Nottingham City Transport pays a dividend to the company's owners—the Nottingham ratepayers—instead of draining off hundreds of thousands of pounds each year to subsidise their work, money that could have been better spent on other services in our city.

Only about a fortnight ago, my hon. Friend the Minister of State, answering questions from me, expressed the hope that at some time in the future the staff of Nottingham City Transport—and, indeed, the staff of many municipal undertakings—would be given the chance of taking a real stake in the company by becoming shareholders. Since then I have talked to management and staff in Nottingham and encountered a genuine desire for such a course.

I intend to talk first to the minority Conservative group in Nottingham, who may be a bit more receptive to such

an idea than the controlling majority party, but I hope that even the latter will realise in the end that that is the right way in which to run a major, multi-million pound undertaking which is providing an excellent public service. I fear that it will not be an easy task, as the deputy leader of Nottingham city council has already been reported in the local press as saying that he wants to return to the old arrangement whereby the transport undertaking was merely a committee of the city council, and councillors could engage in their customary meddling, as they did four years ago. To ensure that that councillor never has his way, Conservative members must guarantee that we win the next general election.

Mr. Snape: I hesitate to burst the bubble of euphoria on the Conservative Benches, especially two years before the election. May I ask the hon. Gentleman, however, why it is, if councillors who take an interest in their financial undertakings are meddling, that when Conservative Members take directorships in business they are keeping in touch with the public?

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman's question follows from my remarks, but I think that he would be the first to admit that, for a variety of reasons which we all accept, in the main the quality of our councillors is not what we would wish. In effect, they are doing an unpaid part-time job, and not everyone has the time or the energy to become involved in local affairs. Many elected councillors get asked to go on this or that committee, and some used, unfortunately, to end up on the transport committee with no knowledge whatever of public transport and, probably, even less interest. Then they used to meddle. It was a case of, "The people in my ward would like an extra bus. We are in control: let us have it", irrespective of the merits of the case. That is what I meant by meddling, as I think that the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) knows very well.

The stake in the undertaking allowed to staff and management must be large enough to make worth while their individual and collective commitment to that undertaking. It must be large enough to deter any pirate or asset-stripping bidder who might wish to take control, and large enough for the shares to go to ratepayers as well as staff: it must exceed the magic 51 per cent. I am perfectly happy for the local authority to retain a large minority holding, though perhaps not as much as 49 per cent.—that might be a little dangerous—but perhaps 30 or 40 per cent. To free the company from the Treasury rules, however, the holding of the outside shareholders—staff, management, ratepayers or an even wider group—must be over 51 per cent.

It is not widely appreciated that a major company such as Nottingham City Transport cannot carry out its forward investment planning on the basis of its own commercial criteria; the investment is part of the local authority's borrowing requirement. If the local authority seeks to spend all its allowed borrowing on housing, for instance, unless the bus undertaking can fund its capital investment entirely out of cash flow—which would be unusual in the case of any major business—it will be defeated.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gedling has already referred to road infrastructure. I often travel up and down the M1, as I am sure he does as well. It is often described as the longest parking lot in Europe. Clearly something must be done, and I hope that the major statement from the Secretary of State that was rumoured in the Sunday press to be expected this week will give the glad tidings that he is about to put extra lanes on to the M1. They cannot come too soon.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling pointed out, however, it is no good having the main arteries unless there is access to them for the major cities along the route. As my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport well knows, the city of Nottingham has been banging on the Department's door since 1971 asking for something to be done about the southern link between Nottingham and the M1—the A453.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House, especially those representing urban areas—although, on reflection, I agree that this may apply elsewhere as well—will know that whenever someone wants to build a new road some people are bound to be disadvantaged, and there are screams of objection all round. The A453 is no exception. I shall not go into the details, but almost any option that the Secretary of State finally announces as his preferred option will be objected to, which means that there will have to be a public inquiry. All I am asking is that the Minister should make up his mind now. If it means a public inquiry, let us have it and get it over with. I do not want the southern route into the city of Nottingham to be dug up while I am in the middle of the next general election campaign.

5.29 pm

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): May I echo the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) and congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) on being successful in the ballot and choosing such a relevant and important subject for debate.

I welcome the motion, not only because it deals with transport policy after 1992 but because it calls on the Government to continue their efforts to identify ways of mitigating and resolving the challenges to transport in the years leading up to 1992.

The year 1992 will be a vital one for transport policy in particular because I hope and expect that in the parliamentary Session 1991-92, when we are in our fourth term of office, there will be a Bill to privatise British Rail. I assure you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that nowhere in these islands will the joy of the liberalisation of the commuters from the tyranny of British Rail be more overwhelmingly welcomed than in my constituency of Chelmsford.

Chelmsford is one of the largest commuting stations in this country, with over 12,000 long-suffering commuters travelling to work in London and arriving at Liverpool street station every morning. Quite frankly, they are fed up to the back teeth with the disruption, the delays and the poor service that Network SouthEast offers them. They are bored with sitting day after day in trains that have ground to a halt, usually outside Liverpool street station, and admiring the rather indifferent architecture of Bethnal Green railway station. My constituents are fed up with the cancellation of trains, with the running of trains behind time and with being herded like cattle into carriages where, all too often, there are not enough seats for them.

What is even more infuriating is that my constituents are having to pay through the nose for the privilege of this treatment. The record of Network SouthEast is altogether

[Mr. Simon Burns]

too depressing. Its punctuality target is 90 per cent. of trains to arrive within five minutes of their scheduled times. I would argue that that in itself is an extraordinarily lax target. Those figures seem, however, to be at odds with the experience of many of my constituents, even though they are, as I have said, a remarkably lax benchmark.

Overcrowding is a major problem. The targets for Network SouthEast are that, on average, load factors should not exceed 100 per cent. on slam door trains and 135 per cent. on sliding door trains. In both cases, passengers should not have to stand for more than a maximum of 20 minutes. However, the actuality is radically different from the targets. Average loading of trains in 1986 was 114 per cent. on slam door trains and 139 per cent. on sliding door trains. As a commuter before I was elected to this House, I know from bitter personal experience that many users of the Chelmsford to Liverpool street line have to stand for far in excess of the 20 minutes that is meant to be the maximum.

The national British Rail cleansing targets for carriages are a joke. My constituents constantly have to travel up and down the line on trains that clearly have not seen water or cleaning plants for far longer than a month. Carriages tend to be filthy. Only a small amount of inside cleaning is done to them. In the past, the excuse by Network SouthEast was the need to invest and to improve the antiquated rolling stock, points and signals along the line to Colchester. We have always been promised jam tomorrow, but tomorrow never seems to come for my constituents.

To be fair to Network SouthEast, I must admit that over the last year or two there have been some improvements; some new rolling stock has been bought. In the past, our part of Network SouthEast always used to get the rolling stock that had been used up on other parts of the network. It was then foisted on to this backwater of East Anglia—as though we would not notice that we were getting not second-hand rolling stock but third, fourth or fifth-hand rolling stock that was long past the age when it should have been put out to pasture.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard (Norfolk, South-West): Does my hon. Friend agree that, once that rolling stock has been abandoned as unsuitable for Chelmsford commuters, it is then put to use for commuters who travel to Downham Market and King's Lynn?

Mr. Burns: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's intervention. I am sure that she is correct. I have a great deal of sympathy for her point. I know how dreadful the rolling stock is when it is fobbed off on to my hon. Friend's constituents, before going to the knacker's yard or whatever yard railway rolling stock finally goes to.

However, there seemed to be light at the end of the tunnel earlier this year. We were assured by Network SouthEast that work on the new points and the new signals that are needed on the line would begin over Easter. Liverpool street station was to be closed not for one but for four whole days so that the work could be done. However, I am sad to have to tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that when Liverpool street station reopened after Easter Monday the disruption and the trouble on the line were worse than they had ever been.

British Rail had accepted that the work was to be done with equipment supplied by Westinghouse. What no one seems to have taken into account or to have looked into was whether the microprocessors on the trackside modules would be compatible with the overhead electrified lines. Needless to say, they were not. As soon as the line started up again, there were fuses and shorts left, right and centre, because the microprocessors were not fit for the job that they were meant to do.

The misery went on for a number of days before some bright person in British Rail found out that the equipment that British Rail was using at York—made by GEC, which is a major employer in my constituency—was compatible with the overhead lines. Therefore, they brought it down from York and put it into the Liverpool street trackside modules so that they could get the system to work. It is incredible that no one had considered at the tendering stage or at the testing stage whether the microprocessors would work. It is yet another example of Network SouthEast's short-sightedness, which once again did not help to raise the standard of service to my constituents.

Mr. Snape: Does the hon. Gentleman blame that chaos on the management, the staff, the public sector or the private sector, or even the Government?

Mr. Burns: I blame the disruption on whoever—I assume that it was Network SouthEast, or the British Railways Board—was responsible for placing the tender for equipment that clearly was not fit to serve the purpose for which it was put into the trackside modules.

My constituents found—to add insult to injury, yet again—it absolutely unbelievable when recently they read that, whereas they believed—and I support them in their belief—that when the disruption to the service had been caused not by vandalism or by inclement weather but by problems that can be laid at the door of British Rail, that British Rail refused steadfastly to give any refund to season ticket holders or purchasers of tickets. It is steadfast in its refusal to do so. As a sop to public relations, it says that if someone has lost some money, due to not being able to go, say, to the theatre because of disruption on the line caused in one way or another by British Rail, it will be prepared sympathetically to consider giving refunds. That is a great deal! Most of my constituents do not travel at 8 am to the theatre; they are travelling to work. When they return to Chelmsford in the evening, they are not usually going to the theatre, or anywhere else where they will have to pay out money. They are going home to enjoy the evening with their families. That does not have a price on it so that British Rail can then fulfil its promise sympathetically to consider making a refund.

I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to take the board of British Rail to one side and ask it to think again. My constituents and those of other hon. Members should be given sympathetic consideration when asking for refunds when they cannot get to work or when the disruption in service does not involve a particular financial loss for them. They often have to wait 20 minutes or even one or two hours for a train that long since should have taken them on their journeys. My constituents were especially irritated recently when they heard that British Rail had paid a £17 taxi fare for one of its drivers who could not get

home because of the work to rule by other drivers. My constituents think that that driver should have had to find his own way home, even by walking if necessary.

The privatisation of the rail network cannot come a day too soon. It will attract private companies that will have to pay attention to the wishes of their customers and provide a service that actually lives up to their claims. They will have to listen to their customers who want a decent journey to London and back again. That is not asking for a great deal because people pay a great deal of money to travel on the rail network. Year in and year out, fare increases are greater than the rate of inflation—with the hollow explanation that British Rail needs the extra money to reinvest to provide a better service. My constituents have not noticed a better service.

The time for Network SouthEast to pull up its socks has long since passed. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport will explain to it the facts of commercial life. After 1992, we will not have to worry about pointing out the facts of commercial life to a state-owned enterprise because it will, I hope, be privatised. I shall be returned to the House with an increased majority because I, like many of my hon. Friends, have identified the correct action necessary to obtain a better service for my constituents.

5.42 pm

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): I apologise to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and to the hon. Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) for not being present at the start of the debate. Towards the end of my 180-mile journey to the House today, I was delayed for an hour in west London because of traffic jams. That illustrates many of the major problems in the London area. We can quite quickly traverse large parts of the country, but when we reach the south-east corner it is difficult to make progress.

A mere three and a half years from now Britain will be transformed when it becomes part of the single European market. For the first time, it will be integrated into a true community with our continental partners, sharing with them both opportunities and challenges. Britain, like any member state, must prepare itself for changes in both business and the lives of its inhabitants. I regret that the Government's policies have done little to achieve that, especially in the transport sector. Placing advertisements such as "Europe Open for Business" alongside railway lines may raise public awareness of our role in Europe —and as such are to be welcomed—but they beg the question of what the Government have done. They have done virtually nothing about infrastructure investment, which is a serious matter for both businesses and people in Britain.

The south-east is suffering from severe congestion, which costs the country £15 billion a year. That is a great deal of money and it could be used in ways far better than on stationary vehicles needlessly using fuel. We can all imagine the environmental effects of that, and the cost to business of such delays is immense. Unless further investment is made in our motorway system, in another five years most motorways will have stationary vehicles along their entire length. The reason for that statement is clear. Twelve years ago there were 16 million cars on the roads; today there are 28 million, with 2 million vehicles being sold each year. With such a rate of mathematical progression, it is not hard to envisage traffic on most of our main arterial roads becoming stationary, especially on the motorway system. It is an immense challenge to any Government, whatever their colour.

Because of Britain's poor infrastructure, it will be largely cut off from the 280 million consumers on mainland Europe. We do not have an adequate transport system to cope with possible demand. The Government have not properly addressed the provision of an integrated transport system. They have neglected their responsibilities, especially in respect of funding. They are sitting back and watching the chaos develop around them. That is a destructive policy. They must surely realise that investment holds the golden key to our nation's economic future.

There are many anomalies, especially in the rail system. The Treasury requires British Rail to guarantee a 7 per cent. return on investment for each of its major projects. I understand that the figure is soon to rise to 9 per cent. Perhaps the Minister will either confirm or deny that when he replies to the debate. No other rail system in mainland Europe is required to produce such a high rate of return on a single investment. Indeed, SNCF of France takes into account the social benefits that might come from any investment. A 7 per cent.—or, even more horrific, the proposed 9 per cent.—return on investment in, for example, the electrification of lines simply does not add up when compared with the costs of motorway jams.

My party advocates investment in the future. We argue for a transport policy that cuts down wasted time and enables increased export earnings by using each means of transport to its best advantage. Where traffic is too scarce to justify railways or too heavy to accommodate passenger cars, the bus is the environmentally sound and cheap vehicle to operate. For the long-distance traveller, buses, local railways and passenger cars should feed into a network of electrified railways that offer the passenger a through service in a comfortable environment. Regional air services should complement such a system. If that were the case throughout the country, our motorways and city centres would not be clogged up with cars and heavy vehicles.

Britain has two busy airports—Heathrow and Gatwick —in the south-east, yet neither is linked to the other by rail connections. The airports are linked by rail to central London, but they are not linked to each other.

The integration of London area airports, the building of new ones and the integration of all existing airports into the national and European rail network is especially important. The French are investing in their rail structure to integrate Charles de Gaulle airport near Paris.

This must not be a matter for party politics. We need a high-speed through rail link that connects the regions with the Channel tunnel. That can be achieved only by building a rail bypass around London. Such a bypass would not be environmentally damaging as it could be linked to further investment in the M25 to widen it. The high speed rail link could be built by the side of the motorway at the same time. A rail link running in a semi-circle from south of Luton to the Maidstone area would join Heathrow and Gatwick airports and solve many of the problems associated with getting rail and road traffic from Scotland, the north, Wales and the west country to Europe.

London is already far too congested, and to bring more people and goods in from the Channel tunnel would make matters far worse. Such a course would present immense

[Mr. Richard Livsey]

costs to industry and to people who want to get from the regions and countries of Britain to the continent. This is one of the greatest challenges before the Government.

My nation of Wales will not even have an electrified rail link from Cardiff to London, let alone a direct through service to the continent, by the time the Channel tunnel is completed and working. The west country will not get such a link either, and nor will the far west of the west midlands. This is a very serious matter for industry, tourism and passenger traffic in those areas. There has to be a revolution in thinking about public and private transport.

Mr. Corbyn: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that there is considerable interest and pressure in the Republic of Ireland for upgrading the Crewe to Holyhead line so that more rail freight can be brought from the Channel tunnel to the Irish channel ports?

Mr. Livsey: I am aware of that because of the studies made in north Wales to get the north Wales line to Holyhead electrified so that the Irish can use what they call the land bridge to Europe. Unless the line is electrified, traffic from Ireland will be seriously disadvantaged. I should have thought that the European Community could help with improving such links.

When we compare investment in rail transport infrastructure in this country with that in France—they are starting to build a 114 km Paris bypass costing £1·7 billion—we can see how far behind we are getting. After the Channel tunnel is constructed, when we see the far better transport infrastructure on the continent, we will realise how seriously disadvantaged we are. The Government must rethink their strategy for connecting the regions and countries of Britain to mainland Europe.

On behalf of Wales, I plead for an assurance that the second Severn crossing will be completed by 1995, as the Secretary of State has promised. It is a vital link to the south-east of England and to the continent of Europe. Unless this investment takes place and a policy for an integrated transport system is pursued, Britain's future, in economic terms, the quality of life and the environment is dire indeed.

The Government must make it clear that money must never again come in the way of safety. We must regret that we have had a number of tragedies recently. The Government must realise that they have to sponsor investment in transport so that, by the end of the century, we have an industry which is safe, environmentally sound, efficient and which serves all parts of the United Kingdom.

5.55 pm

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): I am grateful to be called, and I should like to echo much of what has already been said about a decent economic transport policy that will encourage economic prosperity. It is important to have an internal and an external transport network.

I fully support what my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) said about Network SouthEast. I spent seven years commuting on Network SouthEast and I travelled more than 25,000 miles in the process. I assure the House that much needs to be done to improve it. I am convinced, as is my hon. Friend, that the way to improve it is to put it into the private sector. When in the public sector, British Airways suffered precisely the same problems that British Rail now suffers. Now that it is in the private sector, British Airways is second to none in the world.

We also need to improve our roads. One area where we can make an improvement now is the M40, part of which is yet to be built. One or two years ago, we talked of a 12-mile stretch of two-lane motorway. I understand that the specification has been increased to three lanes, but I submit that it might be an idea to think about four lanes now rather than to improve the M1 at some time in the future. In other words, it would be better to improve the M40 quickly to reflect the increasing rate of economic growth, because we can do something about it now as we already have planning permission for it.

Because of our geographical location, large seaports such as Liverpool were built up. It was a gateway to Europe and the rest of the world, especially the United States. The important point is the spin-off advantages of such development. Liverpool developed as a port, but many ancillary industries followed. That development had an effect on shipbuilding.

The same is true today of air transport. Once again, we are fortunate because of our geographical position. We are the gateway to Europe and a point of departure to the rest of the world. At Heathrow we have the most important hub in Europe. It is the result of our geographical position, but it is also the result of the deregulation of the past decade. It is the result of the privatisation of British Airways and the British Airports Authority and the fact that we have given aviation entrepreneurs an opportunity to develop air routes when the need arises.

That means that we are in a very good position to deal with a unitary market and the deregulation of air routes throughout Europe after 1992. But that position is now being challenged by airports on the Continent such as Frankfurt, Charles de Gaulle and particularly Schiphol, which already considers itself to be the third London airport. We cannot stand still, as we have to make certain that after 1992 the primary European hub of operations for air routes in and out of Europe remains in Britain and does not move across the Channel. The importance of that is clear. In the same way as we need to export products to survive, we should be able to export our air transport services. It is just as useful to sell an air ticket for an airline owned and operated in this country as it is to sell a motor car that is produced in this country.

How should we achieve that objective? First, we have to make certain that we have sufficient terminal capacity and ground facilities at our airports to cope with the increasing throughput of passengers. Secondly, we need to make certain that we have sufficient runway capacity at our airports. Thirdly, we need to tackle the problem of air traffic control delays.

The most immediate decision on terminals should already have been taken. There should be a fifth terminal at Heathrow. That must happen very quickly indeed. Heathrow has sufficient runway capacity, but it will not be able to deal with the extra number of passengers passing through the airport because of the larger aircraft that are increasingly being used by airlines.

We also need to examine those airports that remain the responsibility of local authorities. The best example of an airport that is not being run as well as it should is Manchester. I know that I struck a chord or drew blood from one or two Opposition Members when I mentioned terminal A at Manchester airport. It is most unfortunate

that that terminal was opened on 1 May. I do not know whether the significance of that date had anything to do with who runs Manchester council, but the opening of that terminal was a disgrace and compared most unfavourably with the experience of the first day of the north terminal at Gatwick airport. The electrics did not work, the doors did not work and the catering facilities did not work. I was at the opening of the north terminal at Gatwick and the first day of operation of the new terminal at Manchester. The comparison between the terminal at Gatwick, opened by the British Airports Authority, and the new terminal at Manchester, for which Manchester council was responsible, is a good example of the difference between the private sector and the public sector.

Mr. Snape: The hon. Gentleman drew blood, at least metaphorically, when he was stupid enough to suggest in an intervention that strikes only occur in the public sector. It would be equally stupid for me to say that because the privatised BAA plc is anxious to screw its retailers into the ground at Gatwick and Heathrow and those retailers are protesting to hon. Members on both sides of the House, the private sector deliberately exploits its customers who are also its victims. That is as stupid as the hon. Gentleman's earlier remark that strikes happen only in the public sector at Manchester airport.

Mr. Mans: The hon. Gentleman should look more closely at what I said. I said that Manchester airport is run by a Labour-controlled local authority that tried to open the new terminal without the correct preparations for that opening. That was at least partly the result of an electricians' strike, but there were other causes. I do not think that that has anything to do with what he said about retailers at Gatwick.

I should like briefly to mention runways and air traffic control movements. If we get the terminals right and increase the throughoutput of passengers in the south-east, we shall, as my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) said, be able to wait until the turn of the century before we need another runway in the south-east. But by the year 2000 we shall certainly need another runway at Stansted, Gatwick or Heathrow.

We can ensure that we have adequate runway capacity for the increased traffic after 1992. The hub and spoke argument about air traffic control movements is that if we provide the necessary feeder services in and out of the main hubs, we are liable to attract more traffic. One of the problems is that our three London airports contain a great deal of charter traffic which tends to clog up the works at certain hours of the day. We have to distinguish between scheduled operations, charter traffic, which is, for all intents and purposes, almost scheduled operations, and the package holiday market, which in many cases can be moved to other airports. As my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside said, some of that traffic could be moved to other airports and possibly to RAF airports such as Manston, Greenham common and Brize Norton. We should also consider business aviation. We have to make certain that we do not throw out business aircraft from the major airports until we have somewhere to put them. If we did that, we would make Heathrow and Gatwick less attractive to business men.

We can increase our airport capacity through regional airport development. I agree with the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) about the importance of improving services out of Manchester. However, the hold-ups involved in transatlantic routes are on the other side of the Atlantic with the Federal Aviation Authority which cannot decide what it wants from the reciprocal arrangements that we have with the United States. I have no doubt that we can develop further regional airports. We can develop Manchester as a hub for operations in northern Europe so that people who want to go to north Germany and Scandinavia would fly into Manchester first and then fly on to various destinations. By doing that, and by following my other suggestions, we shall be able to meet the demands of increased air traffic in the next 10 or 20 years.

We must examine air traffic control which is the key to the whole issue. We can have as many runways and terminals as we like, but unless we sort out our antiquated air traffic control system it will be wasted money. The introduction of universal flow control last year did nothing to increase the number of air movements; it did the precise opposite. It is high time that the national air traffic control centre was hived off from the Civil Aviation Authority. We also need to look beyond 1995 and the introduction of the central control function to the production and building of the new air traffic control facility which will replace the one at West Drayton. The sooner we do that the better. We cannot afford once again to fall behind in terms of the air traffic control facilities that our airlines need if we are to maintain our position as the primary hub in Europe.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): Why did my hon. Friend say that he would welcome the idea of privatising the air traffic control operation? Does he believe that there is spare capacity or that it is an inefficiently run organisation?

Mr. Mans: The term I used was "hived off". I was suggesting that the regulatory function of the CAA should not be mixed up with the operations of the air traffic control network. They are separate functions and they should be run separately. I should like to see the national air traffic control system in private hands, possibly as a result of an employees' buy-out, but other hon. Members may have other thoughts. It is most important that the two should be separate.

Further development of air transport provides huge opportunities for wealth generation, job expansion and export earnings. We have to plan for the next 20 years, not the next five or 10, in order to get the right answers. We have already made certain that the United Kingdom's major airports provide a gateway to Europe and a departure point from it. We need to ensure that our airports' capacity and air traffic control network provide the support for our highly efficient airline operators to take on the rest of the world.

6.11 pm

Mrs. Gillian Shephard (Norfolk, South-West): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) on his choice of subject for debate and on the skill with which he introduced it. I must commend him for drawing the attention of the House to the importance of transport, if on this day of all days we need it drawn to our attention, and for putting the importance of transport and communications in the context of our needs in 1992 and beyond.

[Mrs. Gillian Shephard]

I represent an East Anglian constituency, and East Anglia is particularly well placed with regard to the European Economic Community. It is so well placed that on a foggy day fortunate viewers in north Norfolk may find themselves viewing Dutch television without adjusting their set. Although that is a telecommunications point, it illustrates that East Anglia faces continental Europe.

Several flourishing ports, including the exceptionally successful Felixstowe, mean that exports can leave easily and cheaply for continental Europe—a point increasingly appreciated by trade and industry not just in East Anglia. I do not imply that development and optimism are limited to Felixstowe. The ports of King's Lynn and Great Yarmouth have ambitious expansion plans for 1992 and beyond.

If East Anglia is to flourish as the obvious gateway to Europe, continuing investment and improvement in both road and rail networks is essential. There have been considerable improvements in both the A11 and A47, which are two of the region's most important roads and certainly those most vital to Norfolk over the past years. Yet Norfolk has only 20 miles of dual carriageway out of a total of 5,000 miles. That means that of Norfolk's total road network 99·8 per cent. is not dual. I wonder whether that is a record. I have no doubt that my hon. Friend the Minister can tell me. Moreover, although the position in Suffolk and Cambridgeshire is slightly better, the overall percentage of dualled roads in the three counties is still only 2 per cent.

Those figures would be curious anyway and they are certainly unacceptable to people in East Anglia who see with envy the large sums of cash expended elsewhere. I must emphasise that this Government have invested an enormous amount of public money in an excellent infrastructure of good road networks. East Anglians are also aware that undualled roads and those which switch from dual to single carriageway systems cause twice as many accidents as those which are fully dualled. Therefore, they feel themselves under-privileged compared with other areas and with regard to accident rates.

The figures are curious because, although East Anglia has the smallest population of all the English regions, it has the fastest population growth, as my hon. Friend the Minister will know. It also has twice the national average traffic growth. That is again highly significant. The three East Anglian counties have a much higher car ownership than elsewhere. It is 10 per cent. higher in Cambridgeshire, 12 per cent. higher in Norfolk and 10 per cent. higher in Suffolk. Therefore, our roads are needed and are used.

A particularly interesting contrast can be drawn with Scotland, which shows what we in East Anglia believe are defective ways of making judgments on where expenditure and investment should be made on roads. Scotland has a population of 5 million, whereas East Anglia's population is 2 million. In 1986-87, East Anglia had 19 per cent. of the expenditure spent on Scottish roads. If the figure had been calculated on comparative geographical size or population size, East Anglia would have had 25 per cent. of what was spent on Scotland, or 40 per cent. of the total. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister can say how these sums are calculated.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) said, this weekend there have been rumours of a possible White Paper which would include future investment schemes. The A11 and A47 are included in those rumours and I hope that they will prove to be true. I commend the suggestion made by my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling about the role that the private sector may take in the investment, given the enthusiasm of industry and commerce in East Anglia for good access to the ports which I described at the beginning of my speech. In particular, planning gain may be interesting to those industries and firms which want a good speedy communication network to the East Anglian coast.

I am sure that the hearts of all hon. Members present, with the exception of one or two, bled for the plight of my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) and his constituents. In East Anglia we should all be delighted with the investment in the electrification of the Liverpool street—Norwich line, on which Chelmsford lies, and the promise of electrification between London and King's Lynn. A good dose of consumerism, possibly injected by private sector interests into the management of British Rail, could only be in the interests of its users. I am thinking particularly of cleanliness. Unfortunate commuters between Liverpool street and King's Lynn never see the view. Not only is the rolling stock excessively old, but it is consistently coated with a think layer of grime. It is their impression that they are travelling at night. Moreover, although breakdowns are frequent, and have been frequent while engineering works have been taking place between Liverpool street and Norwich, there is seldom a word of explanation or an apology to the commuters who, by their payments, are making the whole operation possible.

I conclude by mentioning a problem on the railway line between Thetford and Norwich. Recently, the number of trains stopping on that line has been cut from 14 to five. The number of trains travelling along the line has not been cut; what has been cut is the number of opportunities for passengers to get on them. It is extraordinary that a service which is supposed to exist in the interests of the people who use it could provide any rationale for running trains through stations while the interested parties stand on the platform unable to mount the train. I am sure that there will be an explanation and, I hope, a complete reversal of that policy. I am following up the matter with British Rail in conjunction with all the enraged commuters who used to travel on the line between Norwich and Thetford and are now unable to do so. They are reduced to waving to the train as it passes briskly by.

The private sector, in helping our communication network both on road and rail, can do two things. It can provide a useful injection of cash but, almost more importantly, it can introduce a positive attitude towards its consumers and customers which, all too sadly, British Rail anyway seems to lack.

6.20 pm

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): The timing of my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) is impeccable. Not only is there a rising interest in transport, but today, as the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) said, the old saying about it being better to travel than to arrive has never been truer. Some hon. Members have said that the Opposition Benches are a little empty, but I know where Opposition Members are. They are in my constituency trying to find their way through to

the centre of London, and there are no Opposition Whips present because they are all on Lavender hill and the south circular searching for Labour Members who are desperately trying to get through to the House.

It can never be gainsaid that I represent not so much a constituency as a traffic jam. When my constituents get up in the morning—this has been especially true today—they get their cars out, they drive a few yards and then they sit in a traffic jam. So they go back home and decide to catch a train. They wait at the platform, but the trains do not come. If they do arrive, they are not so much things that people get into as things that people burst out of when the doors open. Then my constituents must wait for the next one or the one after that.

My constituents then go down the road and try to get on a bus. The bus stop is probably about half a mile away, and then the bus probably stops at one of the bridges in my constituency because a barge has run into it and the bridge is closed. So they go down the road still further and decide to get on the Underground, but they suddenly realise that we have none. Mine is the bit of London that the planners forgot when it came to transport. It has no Underground stations.

It is not surprising that, as they sit in their gardens, having given up the idea of travelling anywhere, listening to the buzz of traffic and smelling the fumes from the stalled cars, my constituents think that it would be a good idea to have some integrated planning for transport. I agree with the many hon. Members who have referred to the need for integrated planning for London, instead of doing a bit here and a bit there. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to take the message on board. It is not within his gift to appoint a Minister for London transport, but I ask him to make the suggestion to people who may have that gift. It would be a blessing for mankind if we had someone to co-ordinate all aspects of transport within the M25 area.

Mr. Corbyn: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that many Opposition Members have always wanted a strategic planning authority for London and were disappointed when the GLC was abolished and was not replaced by a strategic planning authority? Does he agree that there is an overwhelming case for an integrated planning authority that deals with transport and planning for London? If not, the chaos that we have seen today will be as nothing compared with what will happen in the future.

Mr. Bowis: We certainly do not want the GLC back, because it did not invest in transport in London. But I agree about integrated planning in London, and that is why I am asking for a Minister or someone else to take charge of it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gedling will forgive me if my remarks are somewhat London-based, but I come from my constituents with a shopping list. The first item on the list relates to heliports. My constituency has the only heliport in London, which seems a little de trop. Sometimes we are pleased to provide this service for mankind as people bustle down our roads to reach Battersea heliport. But the heliport has become rather full, and people are trying to increase the number of flights by 50 per cent. When my hon. Friend the Minister talks to the people who make the decisions, he should say, "If you want to have flights into London, they must go up and down the river and must not cut corners and cross over houses; nor must they go during the night". It may be a good idea to have radar screens so that we can tell where the flights are going. The Minister should also talk to the planners of the City airport and suggest that it is about time that heliports were built in other parts of London to share the load. Many of the people who use Battersea heliport come from the City airport, and the last thing that they need or want is to come all the way down to south-west London.

My shopping list also includes roads. Ministers should listen when there is agreement across the Chamber. The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) mentioned opposition to roads. There is similar opposition from all parties in all the boroughs in my area to the proposals put forward to the Department of Transport by the consultants. That is not the proper solution. It would simply bring more traffic into our area. If the road exists, it will attract more traffic. Nor do we want WEIR—the western environmental improvement route—unless we can find an expensive way of diverting it underground and bringing it out on the A3 beyond the Robin Hood roundabout. If that could be done, I might begin to consider it, but to take traffic down from Shepherds Bush to the river, where it would have nowhere to go but on to my already overcrowded roads, would be nonsense.

Several minor things could be done to improve the roads of London, including odd bits of straightening and widening and better co-ordination of traffic lights. My hon. Friend should consider carefully a scheme that some of us have been promoting called red routing, which would stop parking on through routes. There should be no parking, waiting or delivery between 7 am and 7 pm on through routes into London. It is unnecessary, and every time that one thoughtless person parks or double parks, 10 people are delayed and may suffer the coronaries to which other hon. Members have referred. People should park on side roads, and deliveries should be made outside rush hours. I beg my hon. Friend the Minister to introduce heavy penalties on people who offend in that way.

Many hon. Members have mentioned rail, which would provide some solutions to the transport problems of Greater London. But we should examine the unused and underused lines of London. We should examine existing lines to see whether we can make trains and platforms longer to improve comfort, reliability, speed and safety. I draw my hon. Friend's attention to the west London line and to the possibility of reopening a station in Battersea. Battersea High street station was closed during the war and was never reopened. That station could be linked with Chelsea harbour, where I believe a station is proposed. When it is electrified, it could provide a new through route into Clapham junction and thence to Victoria.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr. Bowis: I am trying to fit in a number of points before ceding to the chuffers from the Front Benches who will produce some light at the end of the tunnel.

Many of my constituents, and people throughout the south-east, come into Waterloo station and then go down what is called "the drain"—the Waterloo and City line. The Waterloo and City line has trains, if one can call them that. They may be the third-hand and fourth-hand trains going back 50 years to which my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West (Mrs. Shephard) referred. It is

[Mr. Bowis]

high time that that rolling stock was replaced. I know that schemes are shortly to be introduced to do that and I hope that the Minister will give them a swift go-ahead.

The other main request on railways is that the Underground should be brought to Clapham junction. If we do that, we shall have the option of taking further south the Hackney to Chelsea line proposed in the central London rail study, which would relieve the southern end of the Northern line.

There has been talk of British Rail having requested a Bill for only one item in the central London rail study—the east-west line. I am told that that has been requested for November. I hope that that does not mean that the other options will be ruled out. It is important that the Hackney to Chelsea line should be kept to the fore as a real option.

There are many other options that we could discuss in this splendid debate—not least the use of the river by river buses and river taxis. Other hon. Members have referred to bus deregulation and Hoppas. I shall not, as the one thing that I ask of transport is that it should be punctual and I am told that the Front Bench spokesmen are waiting to speak at this very moment. As I pull into my station, I invite them to take off.

6.31 pm

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): I do not think that I have been referred to as a chuffer before.

Mr. Bowis: What about a puffer?

Mr. Snape: Or even a puffer; certainly not. Even so, I am prepared to forgive the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) because his speech was excellent. I hope that I shall not prejudice his prospects if I say that the Department of Transport needs men like him. The sooner that common sense the like of which we have just heard emanates from the Government Front Bench, the better.

The hon. Gentleman ought to take the hon. Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell), who initiated the debate, on one side. I had some misgivings when I saw today's Order Paper. It was full of statistics, one or two of which were misleading, and of sentiments which, when they were not cloying, were completely wrong. I am afraid that my forebodings were soon to pitch up against the rock of reality when the hon. Member for Gedling started his speech by praising the Secretary of State for Transport. I shall not attack the Secretary of State in his absence—he has had enough of that from other quarters—but I must say that I should not have considered the present incumbent of the post to be the most successful that we have had over the years.

The right hon. Gentleman is certainly not the worst; that accolade belongs to the Secretary of State for the Environment, who has long been remembered as the worst Secretary of State for Transport the country has had. He is rapidly on his way to proving to be the worst Secretary of State for the Environment that the country has ever had. It is a pretty unenviable double. It is not accurate to describe the term of office of the present Secretary of State for Transport as especially successful, or to say that he has enhanced his prospects.

Besides the inevitable dash of sycophancy that one has come to expect from the younger Conservative Members, I was struck by the fact that the remarks of the hon. Member for Gedling contradicted those of his hon. Friends. The hon. Member for Gedling talked about British Rail making substantial progress, whereas his hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) was livid —I think that that is a fair description—about the lack of progress that has been made in one part of British Rail, Network SouthEast. A contradiction runs through all our debates about British Rail. On the one hand, BR is making very good progress in meeting financial targets, while, on the other, we have the decline in services that makes the hon. Member for Chelmsford gnash his teeth. That is because financial targets and quality of service do not go together very well. The fact that British Rail meets its financial targets in obedience to the Treasury, or to the Department of Transport, which is subordinate to the Treasury, inevitably gives rise to the fall in standards that has made the hon. Member for Chelmsford, among others, wax so indignant.

The hon. Member for Gedling also made the plea that is habitual from hon. Members in his part of the world for the electrification of the midland main line. I do not wish to patronise the hon. Gentleman, but I must point out to him that if the midland main line electrification scheme does not meet the criteria laid down by the Government, the line will not be electrified. It is as simple as that. If the hon. Gentleman thinks that those financial criteria are wrong, he should say so.

I hope that the Minister will confirm or deny the point put to him by the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey). I hope that he will confirm that the investment criteria that have ruled out the electrification of the midland main line—for at least the next seven to 10 years, I would estimate—will not be worsened by the increase from 7 per cent. to 9 per cent.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: I hope that the hon. Gentleman noted that my comments did not run counter to British Rail's investment criteria. I sought to make it clear that, as there is a long-term case for electrification, we must be told about it locally so that those who make investment decisions about investing in Nottinghamshire are aware that British Rail intends to ensure that the midland line remains at the forefront of railway technology.

Mr. Snape: I was not for one moment suggesting what the hon. Gentleman has just implied. I have to tell him, as gently as possible, that he falls into the same trap as some of his hon. Friends. They are all in favour of capitalism, red in tooth and claw, except when it applies in their constituencies or to a railway line in which they have an interest. The fact that the midland main line will not meet the Government's criteria in the short term means that it will not be electrified in the short term. If the hon. Member for Gedling wishes that to change, he should get on to the Government to change it.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I do not dissent from the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) about the desirability of electrification, but does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is dangerous to talk about the electrification as the be-all and end-all of good, clean, fast rail travel? Provided that the trains are properly timetabled and kept clean, there can be no more comfortable service than the 125 service.

Mr. Snape: The problem about that is that once the high-speed rail link is built and the Channel tunnel is

opened, the high-speed trains will run no further than St. Pancras—or whatever the new King's Cross interchange is to be called. Electrification is essential, both for freight and for passenger traffic, if the east midlands is to realise the potential that will be created by the Channel tunnel and the high-speed link. I think that that is the reason behind the view of the hon. Member for Gedling that electrification is desirable.

Mr. Livsey: The same criteria applied to the south Wales line, which will not meet British Rail's investment criteria. If cost benefit analysis was applied in that case, the railway line would be electrified very much sooner.

Mr. Snape: No doubt everyone will rush in with pleas from various parts of the country and the Minister, who never likes to say no to anybody—at least not from the Dispatch Box—will have the unenviable task of turning people down. Before that happens, there is a case for re-examining the work of the Leitch committee, which recommended in 1977 that there should be a fairer way of considering proposals for railway electrification, and railway projects in general, in relation to the road network. It suggested that the criteria should be examined to ensure that the same criteria are applied to both modes of transport. Those recommendations have never been properly implemented. If we are to solve the vexed question of which main lines should be electrified, perhaps the Leitch report should be dug out of the vaults and studied by the Minister and others.

The debate has ranged far and wide. As my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) remarked, the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) made a comprehensive speech about air travel—the speech that he would have made on his motion had this debate not looked like occupying all the available time. He will forgive me if I cannot say much about his speech because of the lack of time. I think that the House will be united in joining the hon. Gentleman in pleading with the Government to be a little more sympathetic to the aims and objectives of regional airports. Air traffic control procedures and the modernisation of the necessary equipment may well form the subject of a debate in the future. If our aviation industry and our airports are to meet the challenges of the 1990s, and if a greater degree of liberalisation is achieved regarding air fares, it is vital that air traffic control is improved.

The hon. Member for Gedling, among others, praised the impact of deregulation on our bus services. I always believe that hon. Members, particularly Conservative Members, can afford to be sanguine about the impact of deregulation on the bus network. Politicians are not normally found thronging the bus stops in the rain. Those who praise deregulation because of its impact on the bus services in the rural areas have obviously not talked to many of their rural constituents, nor have they waited for too long for those rural buses—their numbers have been sadly decimated since deregulation. The report that I drew to the attention of the hon. Member for Gedling pointed out the reduction in bus-passenger mileage since deregulation. I recognise that there have been some valuable spin-offs from the legislation, but we must remember that bus managers displayed a conservatism with a small "c"—probably with a large "C" too—in previous years that led them to pooh-pooh the idea of minibuses, particularly on some of the busier routes.

During my short and particularly undistinguished term of office on what was then known as the south-east Lancashire and north-east Cheshire passenger transport authority—fortunately defunct, if only to get rid of that particular mouthful—any suggestion from councillors, those much maligned creatures so disliked by the hon. Member for Nottingham, South, that minibuses should be operated in the south Manchester suburbs was greeted with scorn by the so-called professionals in the industry. They assured us that minibuses were generally unreliable and would be unable to cope with the battering that they would receive in everyday service. They were wrong then and, since deregulation, they have been proved wrong again. Perhaps we should acknowledge that since deregulation more minibuses have been introduced in some parts of the country, which have benefited the passengers.

Roads have not been mentioned that much, although I heard one Conservative Member advocate the addition of yet another lane to the M1. My hon. Friends the Members for Burnley and for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) were right to say, "So far, so good, but what happens to the extra cars and lorries generated by the extra lane when they reach the end of the motorway?" Certainly in recent years the collective realisation has been that urban motorways are not the answer to our transport problems.

May I tentatively suggest to the Minister that one way in which to ease the congestion on our motorways would be a campaign, undertaken by the Department, to persuade a substantial number of British motorists that the left-hand lane on our motorways is not there purely for decorative purposes. The number of motorists who persist in hogging the centre lane of the M1 and our other motorways is legion. Rather than an extra lane being added to the M1, a somewhat cheaper solution would be to persuade motorists that the left lane is there not simply for milk floats or farm tractors but for all road users. After all, we drive on the left, at least until 1992—and who knows what might happen after that.

I am sure that the House is grateful to the hon. Member for Gedling for this opportunity to debate public transport. However, listening to the hon. Gentleman and most of his hon. Friends, with the honourable exception of the hon. Member for Battersea, one would never have thought that we were debating public transport at a time when there is very little of it in London. I am not, however, suggesting that that is the fault of the hon. Member for Gedling.

The "Business Focus" section of *The Sunday Times* yesterday was full of the City's plans for British Rail. The headline ran:

"City wants a ticket to ride."

A number of graphs illustrated what the Conservative party would consider were the eminently praiseworthy achievements of British Rail. They showed that the labour force had gone down, productivity had gone up, costs had gone down and passenger income had risen. Two graphs were missing, however: one to show quality of service standards, which have taken a swift nose dive—the hon. Member for Battersea suggested that—and one to show the wages of the employees within the railway industry compared with those employed in other industries.

I do not want my concluding remarks to be too partisan as I always like to maintain all-party amity as far as possible. If the Government do not tackle the problem of customer and staff satisfaction, the problems faced by

[Mr. Snape]

London today will be repeated in the rest of the country in the months to come. I get no personal pleasure from saying that, but unless those problems are dealt with, privatisation in the short term will be immaterial.

I hope that we will have the opportunity to debate these matters again in more detail, particularly aviation, which represents an important sector of our transport network. No one has mentioned shipping, which is another important aspect of our transport policy. In recent years the British merchant fleet has declined dramatically, and some of that decline is due to Budget changes, many inadvertent, which have militated against the British merchant fleet. I know that the Minister will not make a speech about shipping today, but it is a vital part of Britain's transport system and we should debate it.

I am aware of the time and I know that I must conclude. I am running according to Network SouthEast times, so I shall be a couple of minutes late. Nevertheless, this debate has been about important matters and I am grateful to the hon. Member for Gedling for giving us the opportunity to debate them.

6.47 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Michael Portillo): I begin where the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) ended, by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) on the quality of his speech. He is particularly well informed and I think that may be for good family reasons. During his speech he was heckled by the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East and that is the traditional tribute paid to a good speech.

The debate was also an opportunity for my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) to discuss bus deregulation. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend for the role that he played during the passage of the Bill, which became the Transport Act 1985. My hon. Friend was as perceptive in those matters as my right hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley). Not many hon. Members are prophets proved right in their own time and I am pleased that my hon. Friend has been. I have no current powers to oblige the privatisation of bus companies and to bring about employee ownership. However, it is certainly not something that I would rule out for the future and I am aware of my hon. Friend's great interest in that matter.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gedling comprehensively dealt with roads. He is aware of the enormous increase in road usage that we have experienced. From 1982 to 1987 the number of cars grew by 16 per cent. and the number of goods vehicles by 11 per cent. Although the Government's investment record has been impressive—an increase in capital investment in trunk roads of about 60 per cent. since 1979, and 880 miles of new and improved motorway and other trunk roads completed—we recognise that congestion is a serious and expensive problem for British motorists and British business. We are in no doubt about that. Reducing congestion has always been one element of our road policy and, given the recent increases in congestion, we have recently undertaken a thorough review of the trunk road programme. We have concentrated particularly on schemes that will reduce congestion on the roads between cities and that can be completed quickly. We shall announce the result of that review shortly. My hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West (Mrs. Shephard) will not, therefore, have to wait long to see what is proposed in the White Paper and whether it helps her constituency.

I understand the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) that one of the most important steps is to make better use of existing infrastructure. I am grateful to him and several of my other hon. Friends for their interesting proposal to have a red route scheme through London to speed traffic on its way.

My hon. Friends the Members for Gedling and for Nottingham, South were worried about the A453. We are considering making improvements to that road, which links the M1 to Nottingham, and I have noted their views carefully. My hon. Friend the Member for Gedling was also concerned about the Gedling bypass. He is aware that the scheme is the responsibility of Nottinghamshire county council as the highway authority. We encourage counties to improve their local road networks through transport supplementary grant, for which the Gedling bypass is a suitable candidate. Therefore, it is for the county to give it a higher priority so that it can be considered by the Government.

I say to my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling and other hon. Members who urged us to get on with private finance that I am determined to increase the private sector's role in the provision of road infrastructure. The private sector has much to offer in terms of innovation, enterprise and management efficiency, and can make a real contribution to the provision of roads in this country. I am convinced that privately financed roads will soon begin to complement our public sector road network.

Such a policy has already started with developers being able to invest in improved access to their developments by contributing to local trunk road schemes. Since 1986, 50 agreements have been concluded, and 50 more are at an advanced stage of preparation. We want to go further. We are encouraged by the example of the Dartford-Thurrock bridge, which is being built in the private sector. We are encouraged to think that the second Severn bridge may be suitable for private sector development.

There could be much more. There are many ideas in the private sector about how private finance could be applied. My colleagues and I have held valuable discussions with the private sector and some firms have already come forward with interesting ideas. We have tried to answer their questions about the way in which we shall proceed. Only a few days ago, we were able to remove one obstacle, which many believed stood in the way of private finance, by announcing the retirement of the Ryrie rules. That means that there will not be a scheme-by-scheme reduction in the public road programme in respect of privately financed projects. That is a useful step forward which means that we are progressively cutting away the obstacles that stand in the way of, or have been perceived to stand in the way of, the private sector.

Some issues still need to be clarified, and the consultative document that we shall shortly publish will, I hope, help to do that. It will cover subjects such as shadow tolls, which the Government regard as a financial device, which is no more than disguised borrowing, and is unacceptable. It will also cover the issues raised by my

hon. Friend the Member for Gedling, such as exclusive rights to ideas for road schemes—what he called intellectual property.

Roads are unlike other commodities. Anyone can suggest a route, which may have been worked out in great detail or may be merely a line drawn on a map, but they cannot have exclusive rights to it. Where the Government support a scheme—for example, through hybrid legislation or procedures that require compulsory purchase—we must ensure that we can justify our choice of project by having a proper competition. Competition is an essential feature of a true market, and a factor which the Government have taken great steps to introduce into many areas. It brings with it higher quality and efficiency.

The key issue that we want to address in the Green Paper is the suitability of existing procedures to authorise privately financed roads. We are clear that our current procedures are unsuited to privately financed roads, whether financed by development gain or tolling. We are considering how they can be improved. All highways legislation is designed for conventional, untolled roads that are financed by the public sector. Tolling has to be authorised by statute on a case-by-case basis. Shortly, we intend to bring forward proposals for better procedures.

In a Betjemanesque attack on the horrors of Bethnal Green, which he believes should share the same fate as Slough, my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) raised the subject of the difficulties of travelling on railways. He said that he was fed up with being told that we would receive jam tomorrow. However, I have some large lumps of "jam tomorrow" for him. In real terms, investment last year was the greatest since 1966. This year, investment is planned to be 25 per cent. higher again, the largest in real terms since 1962. Therefore, it is the largest in the history of the British Railways Board, and yet more is planned for the early 1990s. The pace of approvals of investment is also increasing. Since January, I have approved investment in a total of 423 new passenger coaches to add to the 2,372 that have been approved since 1983. My hon. Friend the Member for Battersea referred to 50-year-old trains, giving a new meaning to the phrase, "The Age of the Train". He can be assured that the Government will look carefully and sympathetically at any investment case that is brought forward by British Rail.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gedling takes a realistic attitude to the possible electrification of the midland main line. During the 1990s, British Rail will begin to assess the results of the east coast main line electrification, and consider whether there should be further major route electrification. Those results should be available for analysis before the rolling stock on the midland main line comes to the end of its useful life and decisions will have to be taken on major replacement. That will provide the ideal opportunity for British Rail to examine whether electrification would offer the best option for the future.

My hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) raised many interesting questions about aviation, and in doing so he was echoed by my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans). I fully agree with the main thrust of the argument of my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside that we must open up the market to provide better services at lower fares.

When he talked about airport policy, my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside drew attention to the document CAP 548. He will understand that, as that is a consultation document issued by the Civil Aviation Authority to help it to fulfil its commission from the Secretary of State to provide advice to him on United Kingdom airport capacity and traffic distribution, it would be wrong for me to become involved in arguments that might pre-empt the decisions that must be taken. However, I understand the urgency and importance of the questions that he and my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre raised about air traffic control. He will know of the important practical measures that have already been taken. Indeed, he referred to a number of them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside referred to the major development for the early 1990s—the phased introduction of the central control function at the London air traffic control centre, which will be completed by 1995. That new traffic management system will provide adequate capacity to handle Stansted at full, single runway capacity of 40 movements per hour, Luton at 16 movements per hour, and Heathrow and Gatwick at their runway capacities. Further system enhancements will also be introduced at the London ATC centre, the Manchester sub-centre and the Scottish and oceanic control centres.

My hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside was worried about why such matters needed to take so long. He knows that they are complex systems and the senior management of the CAA has called in consultants for the specific purpose of conducting an independent review of the central control function. The consultants advised that the time scale was aggressive, but realistic. That was an independent point of view. My hon. Friend the Member for Wyre suggested that the national air traffic services should be hived off from the CAA. That suggestion was put forward by the Select Committee and, along with all its other suggestions, we shall consider it.

The hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) was concerned about the development of Manchester airport, which I well understand. He will be aware of the need to make fair agreements between different countries and of the tremendous advances that Manchester airport has made, with the £300 million of capital investment that has been made in local authority airports since the Government came to office. We are keen to allow additional opportunities for new United States airlines to operate into Manchester, but it is important to secure balancing opportunities for United Kingdom airlines into the United States.

The debate has offered us a good opportunity to discuss transport policy. The motion that we have been discussing was superbly drafted, and it calls attention to a decade of achievement in transport by the Government. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling not only for that but for the opportunity he has given the House—especially to my hon. Friends—to offer a series of interesting ideas on transport topics.

The future will require a continuation of Government investment in road, rail and air traffic control, and our economic success makes that possible. But our future will also require further liberalisation and privatisation, and I am grateful to all my hon. Friends for the vigorous support that they have given those policies today.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House congratulates the Government on the increase in spending on roads by 57 per cent. in real terms since 1979 and on rail by over 75 per cent. over the last five

[Mr. Michael Portillo]

years; notes the substantial and continuing pressure by the public for further measures to be taken up to and after 1992 to relieve road congestion; further notes that additional significant increases in public spending of 25 per cent. on roads and nearly 50 per cent. on rail are planned up to 1992; applauds the encouragement being given to the private sector to develop a role in our roads programme; believes that the privatization of British Rail would improve the service for the customer in the years beyond 1992; notes the improvement in the quality and quantity of bus services following de-regulation, and the privatisation of the National Bus Company; believes that there is a need to take further in the years up to 1992 and beyond the steps already taken by the Secretary of State for Transport in liberalising air fares and routes in the interests of the travelling public; congratulates the Secretary of State for Transport on the steps he personally has taken to promote public discussion of radical as well as conventional solutions to these problems; and urges the Government to continue its efforts to identify ways of mitigating and resolving these challenges in the years up to 1992 and beyond, the cost of which can now be supported because of the success of this Government's economic policies.

City of London (Various Powers) Bill *(By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.

7 pm

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I must announce to the House that Mr. Speaker has not selected the blocking motion or the instructions.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: My right hon. Friend the Paymaster General is not able to move the Second Reading of this Bill, but I am delighted to do so on his behalf and on behalf of the Corporation of the City of London. I speak wearing three hats on this matter—as one who went to the City of London school, as a freeman, and as a member of the Guild of Freemen of the City of London. I greatly admire what the corporation does for the inhabitants of London. It spends vast sums on London and it deserves to be praised. I am delighted that it is now looking after Hampstead heath and I am sure that it will do so extremely efficiently.

Nothing in the Bill could be called controversial in a party-political sense, although it may well prove controversial across party lines. I shall try first to explain the three parts into which it falls and then, with permission, respond at the end to points on which clarification may be needed. If I have to be away from my place from time to time I hope that my hon. Friends will understand, should any points require further elucidation.

I am sure that hon. Members have read the Bill in great detail and seen that it falls into three sections. Clauses 4 to 8 deal with the need to build the Hackney to the M11 link road. As clause 7 makes clear, the Department of Transport will pay the costs of this part of the Bill, and it must explain the reasoning behind these clauses, which the City has had to include in the Bill. I can take no responsibility for the views of the Department of Transport. The corporation has been merely a vehicle for this part of the Bill.

The background is as follows. This link was first announced in 1979 and was the subject of two public inquiries, in 1983 and 1987, as a result of which the route was fixed. Some Epping forest land has been taken around the Green Man roundabout, and some land near by at George Green will also be affected. The City argued at the 1983 inquiry—by City, I mean the conservators of the forest—that the road at these spots should be in tunnel to protect the environment of the forest, and that happy solution was agreed.

I propose to use measurements with which we are familiar. Six and a quarter acres of forest land will be permanently acquired by the Department of Transport; approximately another half an acre will be subject to the right of access, with seven acres being used during the construction time. These latter 7·5 or 8 acres will be restored and returned to forest use after the completion of the road, and the tunnel tops will be grassed over. The cost of all that will fall on the Department of Transport.

The Department has agreed to add 20 acres of land to the forest adjacent to Wanstead park, representing a net gain of permanent forest land of more than 13 acres. This land will be properly prepared for forest use by the

Department. In passing, I may add that those who talk about the speed of road building should note that more than a decade has passed since this idea was first suggested, and not a piece of tarmacadam is yet in place.

During and after construction special access will be provided at the new roundabout for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. Horse riders play an important part in the background to this Bill. Access will be provided even during the construction period, and when it is over there will be proper, permanent access for these three groups.

The second part of the Bill, clauses 9 and 10, is about horse riding in the forest and has aroused much local interest. I know that my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) and my hon. Friends the Members for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) and for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) have been much interested and involved, as was my late friend and colleague Sir John Biggs-Davison. This part has given rise to much detailed discussion. Those who have visited the forest in recent years as I have know that it is used a great deal by horse riders and riding schools. The impact of horse riding was last reviewed about 20 years ago, and the City has been concerned about the implications for the ecology of the forest and for other users, as the area is used much more by riders now.

The City has had a duty since 1878 to maintain the forest for the enjoyment of the public, and to protect it. Most of the forest is due to be designated as a site of special scientific interest under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Because of that, and because of the increased riding use, a working party was set up and there was a review in 1988. The group that undertook the review visited all parts of the forest and consulted widely.

Three major problems were identified. First, a minority of inconsiderate riders were causing damage to others and to the forest and generally showed a lack of concern for the local ecology and environment. Secondly, the intensification of riding has caused adverse ground conditions. That has caused ecological damage and is affecting the pleasure derived by others who use the forest. The increase in riding is churning up parts of the forest and making it less pleasant for walkers. Thirdly, there is the increased cost of trying to keep the rides in acceptable condition.

During the past 15 or 20 years the City has spent about £1 million on the provision and maintenance of rides. The intensification of riding means that substantially more has to be spent on maintenance, additional provision and long-term control. Unless the Bill is enacted the riders will make no contribution to the upkeep, preservation and restoration of the forest. I shall return to those matters.

About two months ago I received a letter from an organisation called the "Friends of Epping Forest". That organisation makes clear that there is a large volume of support for the City in its desire to regulate horse riding in the forest and to make reasonable charges to riders. The honorary secretary, Mrs. Bitten, says in the letter that the organisation sent out petition forms on 8 February to be returned by 28 February. At the date of her letter there were already 3,500 signatures.

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): I have no doubt that my hon. Friend will be interested to know that there are now more than 5,000 signatures on that petition, which I have taken charge of this very evening.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that update. It shows that those who use the forest accept that the City has been doing its best to look after the interests of all the people who use it.

The review that I mentioned has resulted in two main proposals. The first is that powers must be made available to control the irresponsible and thoughtless activities of a minority. I stress "minority" because the overwhelming bulk of riders are not irresponsible and accept the logic of what the City is suggesting. Secondly, the riders will have to make some contribution, and the money will be specifically ploughed back into facilities, thus enabling the rides to be maintained, added to and improved. The City has made clear that the contributions will not be spent on the general upkeep of the forest, but will be specifically applied to the riding areas.

The concept of contribution and registration is not new. It is already operated elsewhere and was recommended as long ago as 1969 by the Eastern sports council to the then Minister responsible for sport, the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell). Power to restrict rides is in the 1971 Act. At that time the proposal to register and to charge was deferred until about 20 miles of surfaced rides were nearing completion. Now those 20 miles are virtually ready for use.

I stress that all the amenity and conservation groups that were consulted support the proposals. There were two objections and both were from riding associations. The objections were mainly that riders should make no contribution. That is a narrow way of looking at things because riders are specialised users of the forest and other specialised users, such as people who fish or people who play football or golf, make a contribution. Therefore, the objection by the riders is impossible to sustain on any logical basis.

The third part of the Bill is much more domestic. It deals with pedestrian safety, emergency access, litter and school staff appointments. I should like to deal with those matters and it might be useful for the House to know some of the background and the reasoning for this part of the Bill. Clause 17 will prohibit pedestrians from using the Blackfriars underpass and the part of Upper Thames street which is in the tunnel. I do not know how many Members have tried to walk through that underpass, but I hope that any who have had heavy life insurance because the underpass is narrow and dangerous and no pedestrian should try to go through it. Quite rightly, the City is saying that because there is no suitable footway provision in the tunnels and the presence of pedestrians is likely to give rise to hazards affecting them and other road users. However, there are perfectly easy and acceptable alternative ways for pedestrians.

Clause 12 allows the corporation temporarily to close walkways for repair or maintenance and to set opening times generally. At the moment the right to use walkways, which is conferred by existing legislation, is confined, strangely enough, to pedestrians. Understandably, the City thinks that it would be helpful if provision for access by emergency services vehicles could be permitted. Present legislation does not permit that but clause 12 of the Bill would make it possible.

Earlier I spoke about the Green Man roundabout and George Green. That shows how green we all are. In a green world we must prevent the dropping of litter and clause 13 tries to tidy up that aspect of legislation. I am sure that hon. Members will know that the practice of giving away

[Sir Geoffrey Finsberg]

magazines and other publicity material is widespread throughout London and certainly in the City. The material is frequently given out near Underground stations, especially during the morning rush hour. As most of us have observed from time to time, the unused material is left unattended in piles on the pavements or elsewhere for passers by to pick up. If it is windy or if someone kicks the pile of material the pieces of paper are scattered. If they are scattered so as to conceal a step tread the result could be highly dangerous. The City wants permission to remove this material when it is deposited in public places adjacent to the highway, such as at street entrances to railway stations and the Underground. Again, that would be accepted as practical and sensible.

Clause 15 makes amendments to the traffic legislation that governs roads in the new Billingsgate market, and clause 16 does the same to permit byelaw-making powers to deal with house boats.

As an old citizen, perhaps I should comment in great detail on clause 17, which makes provision for the staff appointments at the City of London school. In the time that I was there, most of us would have welcomed the chance of having a say in the appointment or removal of certain masters, but times have changed and the City wants to modernise the process. What is suggested in the Bill is practical and, I think, acceptable to any modern thinking organisation.

I hope that that explanation will satisfy those who wish to be satisfied, and will not fuel the fires of those who do not. Legislation affecting the City of London is always a great gamble. Some will use it as a vehicle for the most vehement attack on the City. Others will use it as an opportunity to say, "Bring back the GLC." Others, like the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen), will use it as a genuine reason for making a particular point that is worrying them in their constituency and to advance arguments to which I am sure the House will wish to listen. I believe that the Bill is a good thing, as Sellar and Yeatman would say.

7.21 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I thank the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) for his comments about me. However, the Bill steals Leyton's forest land, and gives it no proper replacement. That is the nub of the matter and that is why I object to the Bill and so have tabled a blocking motion. My constituency is the only one to be adversely affected by the Bill. Nobody would expect a Member of Parliament worth his or her salt to put up with that state of affairs, and I will not. I shall speak in detail about the iniquity of the Bill and of the Minister for Roads and Traffic, who is forcing the Bill through and robbing Leyton of its land.

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Peter Bottomley): Whose constituents will gain most by the new road? From where in his constituency does the hon. Gentleman suggest that the replacement land should come?

Mr. Cohen: I shall deal with that second aspect in great detail. I have already put that information to the agents, Sherwood and Company, who said when they looked at it, "Oh, crikey! What you want is peanuts, Mr. Cohen, but we'll just have to check with the Department of Transport." They phoned the Department of Transport, which said, "No deal." It ill behoves the Minister to talk about replacements and negotiated land for the forest land taken from my constituency when his Department blocked the suggestion for replacement land.

As to the first point about who benefits from the road, I shall also come to that. My constituents are beginning to wonder, because of the Government's immense meanness in refusing to put nearly all of the road into cut and cover. They are prepared to put tunnels all over the place for their Tory friends but not in an urban area like Leyton which needs them. I will read to the Minister what I said in the public inquiry, which welcomed the road but argued that it needed environmental benefits, which the Department of Transport has sabotaged. My constituents, and even the local council now, are wondering whether the road is worthwhile without those benefits, because it will carve across Leyton and Leytonstone and be a disbenefit overall, especially as it will be there for 100 years or more.

I have tabled a motion suggesting that the Bill should be read a Second time not today but in six months. My real wish is that it will never be given a Second Reading, or at least not until Leyton gets reasonable compensation and a reasonable deal. I asked for what the agents described as peanuts, but the Minister was too mean to provide it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) is ill, and I am sure that the House will wish him a speedy recovery. He sends his apologies for not being here to speak about his instruction, which reads:

> "That it be an Instruction to the Committee on the Bill that they satisfy themselves that none of the provisions contained in the Bill are in conflict with the draft Strategic Guidance for London issued by the Secretary of State for the Environment."

My hon. Friend also wants to draw attention to the important environmental aspects over which the Department of Transport is riding roughshod, particularly in my constituency. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West takes it as an important principle that urban areas should have a good environment. In his constituency and my neighbouring constituency he wants to see put into effect the proper environmental guidelines and improvements that the Government claim to be supporting. However, the Minister for Roads and Traffic is ignoring them by forcing through this proposal, which is a scandal.

My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) also sends his apologies. Although he knew that his blocking motion would not be selected, he would have been here, but he has had to go to an important meeting at the Foreign Office to talk about Kurdish refugees, many of whom are coming into his constituency. Therefore, he sends his apologies. His instruction reads:

> "That it be an Instruction to the Committee on the Bill so to amend Clause 11 as to provide for equivalent space elsewhere in Upper Thames Street to compensate for the additional area which will be closed to the movement of pedestrians in order to facilitate access to buildings on the route."

Again, he is looking for compensation for his constituency and other parts of London. Perhaps I should not say this as he is not here, but his constituency is not as badly affected as mine. Leyton is being robbed of forest land by the Minister. He is stealing forest land in a built-up urban area without replacing it. I note the point made by my hon.

Friend, and I hope that the Committee will pick up his point. However, I shall concentrate on what is happening in Leyton.

A cartoon appeared in the weekend press—in *The Guardian*—that amused me. Perhaps I should not say that because Steve Bell amuses me quite often with some of his sharp cartoons. In this instance he summed up the Government's environment policy in his usual caustic manner. He showed the Secretary of State for the Environment lazing in a deckchair. He was talking about fast golf—yes—and Socialism—no. Then he outlined his environment policy. In effect, he said, "We stop the working class from voting, breathing, eating and farting. Next, we nuke ourselves up to the eyeballs. Next, we invest in more global weaponry." That is about right for the Government's environment policy. After that, the Secretary of State, through Steve Bell, said, "Then we retire to Gloucestershire to build major extensions to the family seat."

That is the Government's environment policy in a nutshell when it comes to working people. That is why the Minister for Public Transport does not give a fart for forest land in Leyton. That is the truth of the matter. Steve Bell's cartoon summed up the Government's attitude extremely well. A good environment is all right for Ministers, but they do not care about the environment for urban areas such as Leyton.

In his opening remarks the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate described the City of London as the vehicle for the Department of Transport, and that is exactly what it is. This is an appalling abuse of the private Bill procedure. A private Bill is supposed to be exactly that —private. That means that the Bill is something that is wanted, for example, by the City of London, or by the people of Leyton. I can tell the Minister that the people of Leyton did not want him to steal their forest land without proper replacement. We are witnessing an abuse of the private Bill procedure. In reality, we are dealing with a Government measure.

The hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate said, "This is a vehicle for the Department of Transport." Those were his words. That being so, the Department should have come to the House with its own Bill. It should have introduced a Bill entitled, "The Stealing of Land from Leyton Without Proper Replacement Bill". The City of London should not have been used as a pawn.

I tried to negotiate with the City of London. The compensation that I wanted was described by the agents, Sherwood, as peanuts. That being so, I thought that the City of London would settle quickly. I received a telephone call and I was told that the Department had in turn been telephoned. What interest does the Department have in the matter when this measure, apparently, is a private Bill? I was told, "We have phoned the Department and it says, 'No deal.'" This is an abuse of the private Bill procedure.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: I wish to make it clear that I said that this part of the Bill was a vehicle because the City has legislative responsibility for the forest. Therefore, if there is to be any change, the matter has to come through Parliament in this way. I have been assured—I hope that the hon. Gentleman will take this from me—that at no stage did Sherwood use the word "peanuts". I am told that that is the word of the hon. Gentleman, and it is one that I understand. Sherwood's representatives are emphatic that they did not use the word.

Mr. Cohen: That is a lie. I am not calling the hon. Gentleman a liar, but what he has said is an untruth. I was present at the meeting on the Terrace. The agent is sitting outside the Chamber. Obviously, someone who is not a Member of this place cannot sit in the Chamber. When she considered the compensation for which I was asking, she said, "This is peanuts."

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate for intervening in my speech. It was interesting because I was not sure whether the City of London was neglecting the people of Leyton, whether it had been called upon by the Department of Transport to do the dirty work, or whether it was a bit of both. I was leaning to the view that it was doing the dirty work for the Department in stealing forest land from the people of Leyton without paying compensation. However, it may be that it is acting off its own bat. If that is so, the people of Leyton face an appalling sell-out.

As I have said, the Bill is a Government measure. At least, that can be said of the provisions within it to which I am referring. I accept that other parts of the Bill are the City of London's responsibilities. When it comes to forest land, the motivation lies with the Department of Transport. It is prepared to take forest land from Leyton without providing proper compensation.

We are being presented with a fait accompli. The conservators were put over a barrel by the Department of Transport. If the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate is saying that the City of London gladly colluded in the process of robbing Leyton of forest land without providing proper compensation, that will be remembered by the people of Leyton. If that is so, it is a scathing indictment of the City of London.

The hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate has told us that City of London Bills are always a gamble. Who is he kidding? They are never a gamble. There are always 100 or more Conservative Members who are prepared to crawl out of the woodwork for the City of London. Ministers crawl out of the woodwork when these Bills come before the House. A City of London Bill has never been defeated in this place since way back in the 1800s. That is because Conservative Members are in the pocket of the City. Perhaps they will get a few good dinners at the Guildhall. They do not mind robbing the people of Leyton of their forest land without providing proper compensation. They do not give a toss about that. There is no gamble. We know that 100 Conservative Members, or more, will roll up to vote at the end of the debate. That will not be the end of the matter, however, because the argument will continue.

The statement that was issued on behalf of the promoters in support of the Bill's Second Reading was shameful. If statements and advertisements had to be honest and truthful, the statement would fail those criteria. It is a statement of deception and lies. It seems that the lies will be compounded if the agent says now that she did not say that the compensation that I was seeking was peanuts.

I shall run through parts of the statement. Initially, it states:

"The Bill is promoted by the Corporation of London for the principal purpose of authorising the Corporation as Conservators of Epping Forest to grant to the Secretary of

[Mr. Cohen]

State for Transport the land, and the rights in land, that he requires for the construction of a part of the Hackney to M11 link road authorised under the Highways Act 1980."

That is how the statement starts. It is a sell-out by the City of London and the conservators in that respect. The Bill does not provide compensation for the people of Leyton for the forest land that the Minister is stealing. It is no excuse to quote the Secretary of State's powers to acquire land for the Hackney Wick to M11 link in not providing replacement land to the benefit of people living in Leyton and in Leytonstone. The conservators have sold out in respect of their role to conserve an urban area such as Leyton, which is scandalous.

The statement continues:

"The Bill would authorise the Conservators of Epping Forest to grant to the Secretary of State out of the open wasteland of the forest the freehold interest in some 27,500 square metres—approximately 6·8 acres—rights to construct and maintain foundations in some 2,500 square metres—approximately 0·62 acres—and rights of temporary occupation for the construction of the roadworks in some 28,500 square metres—approximately 7 acres. The authorisation is subject to the acquisitions of the Secretary of State using the usual statutory powers for compulsory purchase."

The Secretary of State will not use those same powers to acquire compensation land. He will not use them to rehouse the homeless in my constituency, who are suffering as a result of the proposal.

The figures of the amount of land that is being taken are interesting. It can be seen that a large area of land will be used, but the statement does not reveal anything like the full picture as to the amount of land that is being nicked —being stolen—for the roundabout. We do not mind the roundabout, provided that land is given in its place as a recompense for the land that is stolen.

Item 4 on page 2 of the statement says:

"By the Epping Forest Act 1878 the Corporation as conservators of Epping Forest were charged with the duty of preserving as far as possible the natural aspect of the forest."

The same should apply to Leyton. The statement continues:

"By Section 7 of that Act they are required to keep the forest unenclosed and unbuilt on as an open space for the recreation and enjoyment of the public and to resist all encroachments on the forest."

The same should apply to Leyton, but the conservators have failed to meet their responsibilities to the people of Leyton as to the forest's natural aspect. The conservators say, "They are only Leyton people. They do not matter that much." That is the conservators' attitude, which echoes that of the Minister for Roads and Traffic. The conservators' attitude is, "The Leyton people can lose their forest land and not receive any compensation."

The conservators have failed over a long period to upgrade the forest for the people of Leyton and Leytonstone, particularly in the Whipps Cross and Hellow Pond area. One of the conditions that I put to Sherwoods, which were described as being "peanuts" until the Department put the boot in, was about upgrading the forest land. It was the conservators' job to do that in any case. They should have upgraded the land over the past 100 years, but they neglected that responsibility, which makes me very angry. That is another reason why the statement is nonsense and represents an abrogation by the conservators of their responsibilities.

Item 6 concerns itself with the chosen route doing the least damage to the forest's natural aspect. The conservators have not done that part of their job particularly well either. Nevertheless, item 6 states:

"It was for this reason that the Conservators argued for the new road to be put in covered cuttings, as previously described, at the Green Man roundabout and George Green."

At the last inquiry into the roundabout, Wanstead was given more covered cuttings, but Leyton got none because of the Government's meanness and vindictiveness, saying, "The people of Leyton don't matter. They don't need forest land." The conservators have not tried very hard to secure covered land in Leyton. Their efforts were tokenism in the extreme and reveal another aspect of their neglect.

Item 7 states:

"The area of land to be given in exchange for the forest land required for construction purposes is to be equally advantageous to the public and to the commoners as the forest land for which it is substituted."

That is a straight lie. The forest will be substituted by scrubby old sewage land in Wanstead, two and a half miles away. That land cannot in any way be described as "equally advantageous", not in Leyton it ain't. It will not do. Item 7 has the cheek to continue:

"This addition will provide a substantial amenity for local people."

What a nerve. It will not do so, and that is yet another straight lie, unless one expects the people of Leyton to walk two and a half miles from the Green Man roundabout and risk getting run over on the way. That is one of the biggest stretches of road there is. That will not represent any kind of amenity for the people of Leyton.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman does not want to depart from the truth. The "scrubby old sewage land" to which he refers will be brought up to the standard of the forest by the Department of Transport. There is no question of there being "scrubby old sewage land."

Mr. Cohen: What a big deal for the people of Leyton. They will be provided with substitute land two and a half miles away along a busy motorway, which will not really be of any benefit to them. I still say that it will be scrubby old sewage land. Our experience of Redbridge council showed that it was only too keen to build on land that had toxic waste under it, causing medical problems for the people who subsequently lived there. Who is to say that such a thing will not occur again in respect of the replacement land?

The people of Leyton want open spaces, forest land and parks, yet the Minister is stealing Leyton's forest land. The Government, using the vehicle provided by the Bill, are manipulating the City of London and the conservators, and are stealing Leyton's forest land without replacing it properly. That is the reality of the situation. If the Department of Transport's meanness is anything to go by, that scrubby old sewage land will not be brought up to a proper standard. The Department will spend the barest minimum, unless the other policy comes into play so that, because it is a Tory area, it can have what resources it likes while Labour areas have their forest land stolen from them. If that is the case, we have a Minister whose green and environmental policies are perverse. That is something that the people of Leyton will understand very well.

The Government are supposed to be environmentally minded. The Prime Minister has made a statement saying in effect that, having broken all the pollution laws under

the sun for years on end, we are green now. I heard the Minister proclaim that as well on "Any Questions". He must think that people in this country are green. He clearly thinks that the people of Leyton are if he imagines that they will allow their forest land to be stolen without their Member of Parliament protesting.

The Government are not green at all. They have broken more Common Market standards and laws on pollution than any other Government in the EEC. They are the party of law and order—except when it comes to polluting and despoiling our environment. They allow the pollution of beaches up and down the country, and do not provide clean water. They are not green but motorway grey: they are stealing Leyton's forest land for motorway tarmac.

Leyton is a heavily built-up urban area, with houses set close together and not much green space. There is not nearly enough park and forest land. The people who must live in the area have received no help from the Government, and what little green space is available around the perimeters is coming under assault from all directions. The local authority, seeking to maintain its parks, has been savaged by cuts in rate support and capital grants. Kiddies are being hurt in the playground when they fall on to tarmac. The Government have not provided the money for the council to provide safe equipment in the first place, or safe landing facilities in the second.

The parks are becoming devastated and bare. There is more and more wasteland. I am not complaining about the council's employees, who do a wonderful job, but they are increasingly stretched. Jobs, too, have been savaged by the cuts in rate support grant. Those people are working hard just to preserve an amenity—the breath of fresh air that is vital in a heavily built-up area where juggernauts go past pumping out their diesel poison.

As the central London road assessment studies make clear, the Bill is part of a package that puts Walthamstow and Leyton marshes seriously at risk. On 7 April the *Yellow Advertiser*, a local paper, featured a photograph of Lea Valley park with its symbol. It is a bit like a nuclear symbol, but at least it means fresh air in this instance. Lea Valley park has not done a great deal for my authority, considering the taxpayers' and ratepayers' money that has gone into it; there is an ice rink, but that is about it. In the past it has backed schemes to dig up the marshes for the gravel and to try to make a profit out of it.

The paper headlines its article

"Natural beauty road planners' target . . . concrete future for marsh area?"

There is a beautiful picture of the marshes. You are welcome to come and walk over those marshes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think that you would enjoy it enormously; it is a wonderful piece of land.

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow) *rose*——

Mr. Cohen: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is about to confirm that it is a wonderful amenity, and that he does not want roads to be built over it.

Mr. Summerson: As the hon. Gentleman mentioned a part of my constituency, I feel that I must rise to agree entirely with what he has said. The Walthamstow marshes are indeed an ancient part of our heritage, going back 1,000 or 2,000 years.

I saw the article that the hon. Gentleman mentioned, and I am delighted to have the opportunity to put it on record that if any such scheme ever attempted to cover Leyton and Walthamstow marshes with concrete in the way that he has described I would fight it to the limit, and I am sure that my constituents would simply not permit it.

Mr. Cohen: It is all very well for the hon. Gentleman to say that they would not permit it. He is a relative newcomer to Waltham forest, but when I was on the local council the Conservatives on the council voted for a proposal to dig out the gravel from Walthamstow and Leyton marshes. It was only the Labour group that stopped it from going ahead, despite tremendous pressure from the Conservatives, the Government and the big business interests who wanted the gravel. I welcome the hon. Gentleman's change of heart, but I think that he will have to go back and discuss the matter with his colleagues, and try to persuade them to change their views.

Mr. Summerson: The hon. Gentleman must not impute to me views that I simply have not expressed. I do not know what any particular council of any particular political complexion did in the years before I was elected; I am speaking for myself. As a Conservative Member of Parliament, I would fight such a proposal.

Mr. Cohen: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's statement. I am merely giving him a bit of the history. I must point out to him that his hon. Friend the Minister is a very mean-minded man when it comes to the Leyton people's forest. He is stealing it from them and refusing to give it back, and he can exert a fantastic amount of pressure.

The hon. Gentleman has not been all that good at fulfilling his pledges in the past. I remember that about a year ago he signed a motion opposing charges for eye tests, and pledged that he would fight them. When it came to the vote, however, he went through the Lobby with the Government, and the eye charges were imposed. While I welcome his promise to oppose the concreting of this land, I wonder how much faith can be put in it. I know that the hon. Gentleman is speaking honestly now, but when the pressure is on and the Government Whips are out, will he do the same as before?

Let me quote from the article in the *Yellow Advertiser*, which deals with the assault on the green land of Leyton and Leytonstone and the surrounding areas, and the theft of the fresh air and forest land that belong to the local people. It says:

"Concrete future for marsh area. Outline proposals to ease London's traffic congestion include the idea of ploughing a major road straight through Walthamstow marsh."

It has also been referred to as Leyton marsh. Leyton marsh runs into Walthamstow marsh. Both marshes are affected by the plans. The article continues:

"In the past, the boggy nature of the land has been its best defence against any sort of development but now private consultants, hired by the Department of Transport, have pinpointed the Lea Valley as one of a number of options for new roads. Other neighbouring open spaces that would disappear under concrete if the Lea Valley option is ever taken up are the Warwick reservoir and the Essex filter beds."

Those are prime and important areas of land in the area. The article continues:

"Marie Fallon, conservation officer with Waltham Forest council, said: 'It is at very early stages and the consultants have not clarified what they mean by the proposals.'"

That is why this is a most dangerous time. We must stamp on the proposal, or attempt to do so. The Minister will not get away with this without finding that he has an enormous fight on his hands. The article then says:

[Mr. Cohen]

"However, the London ecology committee, which includes councillors from 23 boroughs, has been so alarmed that it has asked for a meeting with roads Minister Peter Bottomley." I bet they got scant joy from him. He is only too keen to take forest land from the people of Leyton and, presumably, from people elsewhere for his pet grey motorway projects. He is a very grey Minister. He would do that without providing any proper replacement for what he takes away. The article goes on to say:

"Waltham Forest committee member, Councillor Eric Sizer, said, 'When roads are being considered it is often thought easier to push them through open spaces where opposition is thought to be muted. We will stress to the Minister that we regret that so many of the options affect significant sites of value for nature conservation and other much loved open spaces.'"

I echo Councillor Sizer's comments.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman may be able to remind us whether that councillor was with us when the hon. Gentleman and I went down the high street on the trunk road to within about 150 yards of the Green Man roundabout. I seem to remember being with the hon. Gentleman for about an hour and a half—or was it two hours? We started near Leytonstone station; we walked up towards the Green Man. I introduced the hon. Gentleman to a number of his constituents, many of whom recognised him and paid tribute to his work. We spent a long time together, but I cannot remember the hon. Gentleman, or one of his constituents, or one of his councillors mentioning one word of this. However, I do remember the hon. Gentleman discussing with me whether the Hackney to M11 link would provide the kind of environment improvement, the casualty reduction and the improvement in life required in his constituency.

It seems to me that since that time, when the hon. Gentleman was walking politely around with me, he has discovered an awful lot of things that he might have tried to share with me before this evening. He is talking in general rather than in specific terms. I regret the fact that the hon. Gentleman did not take the opportunity when we were within 150 m of the roundabout—I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman was at school when metres were taught rather than yards—to speak to me about one of the main matters that worries him.

Mr. Cohen: What a distortion that was, Mr. Deputy Speaker. At that meeting the chief executive, as well as myself and others, including the local press, said, "Could we speak about the M11 link and the tunnelling options?" The Minister replied, "I'm not here to speak about that."

Mr. Bottomley *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Cohen: He put a block on it in the first two minutes. The press were all around him; so were the councillors, the chief executive and the officers. They said, "Could we have a word with you about the tunnel?" The Minister said, "I'm not here to speak about that. I'm here to plant a tree and to walk up and down the road." That is what he said. His statement was a distortion of what happened.

I intend to deal with two specific details. I am just setting the general picture of the Government taking our forest land—our green, open space land—and not giving proper compensation for it. The Minister intervened at that point because he did not want to discuss the effect of the London assessment studies on this beautiful area of land in Leyton and Walthamstow. He had the opportunity when he rose to his feet to say, "In no way will any road touch that beautiful piece of land, those marshes." I invite him to say that.

Mr. Bottomley *rose*——

Mr. Cohen: Is the Minister going to say that?

Mr. Bottomley: I do not want to try your patience, Mr. Deputy Speaker, or that of the House, but I suggest that the hon. Gentleman is trying to get rather more support from this side of the House in an effort to keep his speech going than he is getting from his own side. Apart from the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) on the Opposition Front Bench, the hon. Gentleman's speech is being heard not only in total silence by his own side but also in the total absence of his hon. Friends. He makes sweeping accusations that it would be better and more courteous for the House to ignore.

This is one of the hon. Gentleman's typical speeches. It might be better if he turned to specific details that the House might wish to consider at this stage. There are many points that other hon. Members may wish to raise. The hon. Gentleman has been speaking for about three quarters of an hour without making any specific points. It may be that he has not got many specific things to say, but that will be for the House and for you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to judge.

Mr. Cohen: I have plenty of specific things to say. The Bill affects my constituency. I said at the beginning of my speech that it is being savaged by the Minister who is stealing our forest land. The land is in no other Member's constituency, so how can I expect other hon. Members, who are very busy, to come here? I have not asked them to do so. The Minister thinks that he can pick on one constituency, mine, and get away with it, but he has got another think coming to him.

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): Of course my hon. Friend knows—but perhaps the Minister would like to know, too—that the London group of Labour Members of Parliament supports what he is doing this evening. We have absolute confidence in our hon. Friend. Other hon. Members in the London group of Labour Members of Parliament do not need to speak on the subject, because no one can speak more eloquently, provide us with more information and best serve the House than my hon. Friend.

Mr. Cohen: I thank my hon. Friend for her kind words.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cohen: I shall gladly give way to the Minister. I hope that he will address this point of the central London assessment study and give a pledge that not an inch of his proposed roads will touch the Walthamstow and Leyton marshes.

Mr. Bottomley: I would not dream of accepting that invitation. That would be out of order and beyond the scope of the Bill.

I rose to intervene because I have just remembered that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport met the London group of Labour Members of Parliament a short time ago. I think that the hon. Gentleman was at that meeting. I hope that he will confirm that he was there.

I do not think that he raised that issue with my right hon. Friend. Again it seems to me that the hon. Gentleman is not getting down to the specifics, that he has not taken advantage of previous opportunities to raise these issues and that for some reason he may be trying to ensure that the House forgets why he rose to speak in the first place. Other hon. Members remember what we are here for. We are not sure that the hon. Gentleman remembers what he is here for.

Mr. Cohen: The Minister's tactics are to try to divert hon. Members from considering the specifics, but he will not waylay me in that way. I had the date of the meeting with the London group of Labour Members of Parliament in my diary, but the Secretary of State for Transport cancelled the meeting at the very last minute. He rearranged it at the very last minute, too, by which time I had made other appointments. I shall give the Minister details of those other appointments, if he wants them.

Mr. Bottomley *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Cohen: Of course he does not want the details, but that is typical of the way that this Government behaves. It will be noted by everybody when they read the report of this debate in *Hansard* that the Minister refused to give any commitment or any sort of pledge that the central London assessment study will not lead to concrete motorway grey going all over the beautiful Walthamstow and Leytonstone marshes. Local people have been warned of his proposals. That is part of the Bill. It is one of the assaults on the green belt and open spaces that the Government are making on the people of Leyton and Leytonstone. They are stealing the forest land from the local people.

I wish to quote a letter from councillor John Plant—an appropriate name—the chairman of the London ecology committee. He said:

"You will be aware of the London traffic assessment studies which are currently under way and are due to report to the Minister for Roads and Traffic in May this year. The London Ecology Committee, which has all-party representation from 23 London boroughs, is very concerned at the effects that many of the options may have on London's open spaces and semi-natural environment."

The Minister is using Leyton as a guinea pig in taking away our forest land. It is his starting point; it will spread throughout London's open spaces and its natural and semi-natural environment. Mr. Plant continued:

"These are all places which are vital for the wellbeing of Londoners and give them some relief from the built-up areas where they live and work."

That is exactly the point that I made earlier. We are discussing the very air in which people in urban areas have to live. Mr. Plant said:

"In your constituency the enclosed map indicates the nature of the options, the most significant open spaces of nature conservation which could be affected, including the Essex filter beds site in the Lea Valley. That is part of a complex identification of metropolitan importance by my Committee as being under threat from the Government. An all-party delegation of the Committee, which included representatives of the Nature Conservancy Council and the Countryside Commission, has asked for a meeting with the Minister. Your support would be invaluable."

Needless to say, I gave my support. Here is a threat to Leyton's green and open space.

Water privatisation is another threat. It will have a terrible effect on green land, some of which is designated as sites of special scientific interest. The marshes in my area could be at risk. The Government think that ruins such as the ancient Rose theatre are not worth preserving. They also think that sites of special scientific interest, where rare flora and fauna exist, are irrelevant and not worth saving when put against big business and the people who speculate to make millions out of assets that rightly belong to the people.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): My hon. Friend told me about this Bill only the other day, and explained that there were double standards. He has fully demonstrated that in his remarks. Not long ago constituents from Kent massed outside the House, together with the Mujahideen of Kent —the ex-Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). The Government found £500 million to accommodate their wishes—not that that will satisfy all of them. When the Minister received representations from my hon. Friend's constituents, he turned a deaf ear to them. Is that what my hon. Friend is explaining to the House?

Mr. Cohen: There are not only double standards but hypocrisy in this matter. The £500 million for the Channel tunnel is in addition to the money that the Government are already pumping into Kent to ensure that most of the route is below ground so as not to disturb a few villages. The M11 link in Leyton runs past a densely populated area, but the Minister refused to provide so much as an extra penny so that it could be tunnelled. His insistence that the road should run above ground has carved Leyton and Leytonstone in half. Those are the sorts of double standards to which my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) rightly referred.

Water privatisation will be a charter for the speculators, who will sell sites of special scientific interest, including the Leyton marshes. It is an assault on our green and open spaces. They are being given to the land speculators instead of being kept for the people of Leyton. In fact, Leyton should have had a great deal more open space. There was once a project for the M11 to be tunnelled along the whole of its route, with a linear park along the top.

Mr. Skinner: What is a linear park?

Mr. Cohen: The M11 would have been underground, so there would have been space on top of the tunnel. It was a wonderfully inventive scheme thought up by two brilliant engineers—the scheme is called "Lister/Goldsmith" after them—which would have provided a park along the length of the M11. That would have meant an enormous improvement to the environment of Leyton. It would have been a wonderful benefit to such a densely built-up area. The project was both feasible and sensible, but the Department of Transport put the boot in it. The Department allowed it in other areas such as Hatfield and, of course, it allowed it in Tory areas. Leyton was savaged by the Tories at the Department of Transport, aided and abetted by their friends at the Department of the Environment. That is now being compounded by this Bill.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover was not present at the beginning of my speech, so I must explain to him that under the Bill the Government are stealing the forest land of Leyton. This attack on the green and open spaces of Leyton has made me very angry.

Mr. Skinner: We are supposed to be living in a green political age, with the Prime Minister masquerading as a green veteran in an anorak and sandals and eating brown rice. Yet the Government intend to rip out the forests—

[Mr. Skinner]

what few there are—in Leyton. They are trying to kid the British people that they have suddenly latched on to environmental questions, yet they do not care tuppence about the environment when it comes to lining the pockets of speculators in my hon. Friend's constituency.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. We have already covered that ground in general terms. We cannot recapitulate for the benefit of an hon. Member who was not present at the beginning of the debate.

Mr. Cohen: I should not wish to repeat——

Mr. Skinner: I was here before you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I ask the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) to resume his speech.

Mr. Cohen: Although I would not wish to repeat my earlier remarks, I must say that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover was right to say that the Prime Minister is masquerading. The reality is at issue, and the reality is that the right hon. Lady is stealing forest land from the people of Leyton and Leytonstone. The people have already been robbed of the proposed linear park, and my heart bleeds because we were denied it. It would have provided a wonderful environment for local people and their kids. We were robbed of it by a pernicious, vicious and anti-green Government who are now compounding their actions.

The so-called replacement land is a joke. I have here a letter from the director of the development office at Waltham Forest council, which explains what the replacement land is about. He wrote that the Department of Transport

"is to replace the forest land lost at the Green Man with land at Wanstead. The new land at Wanstead comprises two sites owned by the Thames Water Authority which were formerly part of the Wanstead Sewage Works."

The land is 2·5 miles away from Leyton on a busy road. It is inaccessible for pedestrians. They do not want to go to an old sewage works in Wanstead—they want their forest and open land near Leyton. The letter continues:

"As you will realise, they are located 2·2 km (1·5 miles) south-east of the main area of forest land to be lost at the Green Man"—

it is actually 2·5 miles.

"It could be said that at that distance they are little compensation for local people."

He is being deeply ironic. The land is no compensation.

"They will adjoin Wanstead park which the City also controls under the Epping Forest Act."

So Wanstead gets the green land. The hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) is here tonight. I do not begrudge him or any other hon. Member the green land. That should be the natural course, but it should not be at the expense of the people of Leyton. It should not be stolen from Leyton and given to Wanstead. That is another example of giving to the already haves. Areas such as Leyton are already deprived of green open space land because they are so heavily built up and because Government cuts do not give the council the opportunity to provide open space land. The letter deals with the replacement land succinctly and shows what a joke it is.

We should remember that sewage land contains many toxic substances. We know from the example of Redbridge that when such land is built upon or walked on it can have an adverse effect. We are offered a scrubby old sewage works. I do not think that we can trust the Department of Transport to put up the money to get it up to a decent standard.

Park land funding has been cut. The Department of Transport says that responsibility lies with the Department of the Environment, and the Department of the Environment says that responsibility lies with the Department of Transport. They both get out of it. That is the cheek of it. The land will not be brought up to a proper standard. That is something for the hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford to argue. It cannot be claimed, however, that the land is a replacement for Leyton people.

The Minister is stealing our forest land and not providing an adequate replacement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: As it is now just over an hour since the hon. Gentleman started his speech, can he tell us how much land is being lost to the public in his constituency? What is the net loss in Leyton?

Mr Cohen: I am just about to come to that. I am coming to the specifics now. The Minister was not very specific about the central London assessment study and the land that is being taken from Waltham forest marshes to make a grey motorway. He was not specific when there was a prospect of another robbery of green open space land.

Mr. Skinner: Can I get this right? They are getting rid of forest, which they probably would not have done if it were owned by Terry Wogan or one of the other personalities who invest in forests. Are they proposing to replace it with beacons, bollards and the like?

Mr. Cohen: My hon. Friend is right about Terry Wogan, but I shall not pursue that line of argument. An amount of forest land is being stolen to make a roundabout for the M11 link road, which could have been a linear park. They are taking several acres of forest land for this roundabout and they are not replacing it with open space land in Leyton. They think Leyton does not matter. They do not care about Leyton. They do not care about built-up areas. They do not give a toss about them.

The Minister will not comment on saving the marshes. All he will say is that I am going on for too long. I will go on demanding my green land, forest land and park land all night if I am given an opportunity—which I know I will not—to stop him cheating the people of Leyton out of it.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Does the hon. Gentleman know, and will he tell us, what the net loss of land in his constituency is? What is the net addition of land available to people in his constituency?

Mr. Cohen: I am coming to that. My figures, however, are not manipulated, distorted and cheated figures which the agents tried to bounce on me in the negotiations. The figures were the biggest distortion I have seen for a long time. I will give the real figures.

Mr. Skinner: When my hon. Friend does that, will he tell us whether the area is bigger than St. James's park, Buckingham palace grounds or some of the other posh areas which the Minister would not dare to lay his hands on?

Mr. Cohen: I confess that the area is not as big as either of those, but it is vital. Whereas Buckingham palace grounds have just a family or two walking over them, my

forest land in Leyton, Leytonstone and Whipps Cross has thousands of families walking over it every weekend. It is crucial that that land should not be taken away without a proper replacement.

I shall give the figures as the Minister is so keen to hear them. They are not his Department's figures. I should make it clear that one acre of land is equivalent to 0·4047 hectares, and a hectare is equivalent to about 2·5 acres. The Minister can get his calculator out now, and he will be able to work out what I am talking about whether I use acres or hectares. To start with, 0·55 hectares is being taken. That does not sound much, but is 1·4 acres of prime forest land by the Green Man that is going to tarmac.

The acreage of the roundabout itself is useless as forest or recreational land for the people of Leyton. But that is just the start. The new roundabout will take up 4·13 acres —or 1·67 hectares—more than the present roundabout. In addition, the total open space that will be lost between the roundabout at the Green Man and Leyton high road is 13·6 acres, or 5·5 hectares. That represents an enormous amount of green land in my area, and the gardens and allotments will not be replaced. In an area of housing density such as Leyton, many people do not have their own gardens as they live in flats, and more houses are being converted into flats. They need their allotments to grow vegetables, especially given the prices of food in the Common Market because of the huge surpluses that the Government have accrued. Instead of bringing food prices down, they make people want to grow their own vegetables and to use allotment land for recreation. But that land is being taken away.

In addition to taking away people's gardens and allotments, the Government are taking away a playing field at Leytonstone House hospital without compensation. The truth is that the Government are robbing us of our open spaces. That is only on one side of the roundabout. On the other side of the roundabout, at Temple Mills, on the other side of Leyton high road, we are losing another 3·5 acres, or 1·4 hectares—the Minister can get out his calculator. That includes a slice of Eastway sports centre which is also being nicked. It is part of Lea Valley regional park. A beautiful green area and a vital amenity for local people will be sliced into by the motorway-mad Minister without being replaced. All that green land will be covered in tarmac.

The Minister asked for the figures and I have given him the figures but he is nonchalant. He does not give a damn about all the green land being taken away from Leyton.

The *Waltham Forest Guardian*, another local paper, stated on 17 February 1989:

"There will be a 26 ft wide link across the interchange between Leyton and Wanstead Flats, said the conservators."

That land is not specifically mentioned in the Bill. I was not consulted and the people of Leyton were not consulted on that. It represents more land being lost without proper compensation. I reiterate that it is a densely urban area where green land, open space and forest land are at an absolute premium. The Minister of Transport is snuffing it out without a thought for the people of Leyton.

I have given the Minister the figures and he has not jumped up to deny them. He is jumped up, but he has not jumped up to deny the figures. It will be noted in *Hansard* that the Minister could not repudiate the figures.

There is a further adverse aspect of the road scheme and the Bill which is taking forest land from Leyton without compensation to the people who live there. Mr. John Goldsmith FRIBA is behind the Lister Goldsmith plan for that linear park which would have been such a wonderful innovation for the environment and people of Leyton. On 26 April he wrote to the Prime Minister because he felt so strongly about the deleterious effect of the road, saying:

"I have now witnessed a further 'development' of the A12 London to M11 link road as a result of the engineering particulars being revealed. Instead of the promised permanent landscaping along the fringe of the new routes we are now being told that this space is being required for pipes and ducts."

That was supposed to be permanent landscaping. We were promised a little green sward along the edge, but now it will be scrubby old land for the pipes and ducts. Mr. Goldsmith continued:

"Gardens to surviving housing are being further reduced to postage stamp size to house the extra cabling."

Mr. Skinner: What does he mean by postage-stamp size?

Mr. Cohen: He means that the people in those houses will have the smallest gardens imaginable. Yet the Bill will also take away their forest land and they will not even have their own gardens. Postage-stamp size means that their gardens will be minute because the Minister made a cock-up or perhaps deliberately promised landscaping when he knew all the time that the engineering work would require ducts, pipes and cables. He did not want to get into a row at any inquiry with people who have been denied their opportunity to get compensation. The underhand Minister has led them up the garden path, but they will not have much of a garden path left in future because of the Government's approach and their double standards.

If those people are to have such small gardens, there is all the more reason why they should have forest land, parks and open spaces in Leyton as some compensation, but the Minister could not care less.

Mr. Skinner: What kind of trees are in the forest?

Mr. Cohen: None of the Conservative Members have caught me out, but my hon. Friend has caught me out because I have not counted the trees. They are lovely green trees, oaks and elms, but my hon. Friend is leading me astray. They are beautiful trees. I have to confess to my hon. Friend that he has caught me out. I once tried to learn about trees and their leaves. I pinned a beautiful chart on my wall, but I am not better at identifying any particular trees.

Mr. Skinner: Are they deciduous or evergreen?

Mr. Cohen: They are evergreens.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should not intervene from a sedentary position.

Mr Skinner: Quite frankly, if we are talking about saving a small forest or part of it, we should know about it. I think that there should be a site visit before any decision is taken to see what will be destroyed. If we had a site visit we would find out what sort of trees are there. For example, in London there are a lot of plane trees. In my part of the world there are many horse chestnut and sweet chestnuts in Clumber park and Sherwood forest. It all depends on the soil. There are many rhododendrons in this part of the world. I would bet diamonds that there are rhododendrons in that part of the forest and they will be taken out.

Mr. Cohen: If I had known of my hon. Friend's interest I would have brushed up on the different trees on the land there. It is a lovely part of the forest to stroll through and I have rambled through it with the Epping forest ramblers. The fresh air is beautiful. Yet that is all to be taken away.

Mr. Skinner: There will not be gorse.

Mr. Cohen: There will be gorse. The forest will be made into a motorway.

Mr Frank Haynes (Ashfield): Is my hon. Friend aware that in Nottinghamshire we have many trees, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) said? We have one particular tree called the major oak which is supposed to be connected with Robin Hood. With the growth in industry, slowly but surely the forest is being destroyed. There is a programme connected with Europe to replant that forest. The destruction of forests is shocking and I welcome my hon. Friend's speech on that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This is not about Clumber park. Let us stick to the City of London (Various Powers) Bill.

Mr. Haynes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I merely mentioned the major oak. That is all. I am talking about my hon. Friend's forest. We are replanting the forest in Nottinghamshire, yet Epping Forest is being destroyed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Clearly, I misunderstood. I thought that the hon. Gentleman was inviting the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) to comment on Nottinghamshire, which would be out of order.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Would it not be more appropriate for the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) to take his two hon. Friends to the forest at the Green Man roundabout?

Mr. Cohen: I take heed of your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would welcome hon. Gentlemen having a look at this part of the forest and, indeed, the whole forest. It is a beautiful amenity for local people. I would welcome a site visit. We need forest preserved in Nottinghamshire just as we do in Leyton. The people of Leyton do not want their forest land taken away.

Mr. Haynes: May I suggest that we take a picnic to the area and invite you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because you are not liking my interventions today? That may make you feel a bit better.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I called the hon. Gentleman to order only once and today is the first time that I have ever apologised from the Chair to anyone.

Mr. Cohen: It is nice walking land and it is green, unlike everything else which is grey and full of lorries and pollution. That is what is so welcome about it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover is right about the problem of oaks in Nottingham not being replanted properly, and it is the same in Whipps Cross. I had a go at the Conservatives who run the City of London about the neglect of Epping forest, particularly in my area. One aspect of that neglect is that they have not replanted properly, so the forest is being run down. That is happening in many other areas, for example, where people like Terry Wogan plant trees for tax benefits. Areas of natural woodland are beng neglected.

I am sure that in Nottinghamshire areas are being run down because the Government are too mean to put up the money for the National Trust and Nature Conservancy Council to replant properly for the future. That is a tragedy. Today we see trees that were planted in the 1850s, not recently planted trees. That is because the Government were too mean to have a proper green policy in the past decade.

Mr. Skinner: Does my hon. Friend recall that a couple of years ago we had a hurricane and that many trees fell on that October night? As a result nearly every hon. Member said how sad it was and that a big replacement programme was needed throughout southern England. The Government had to be pushed and shoved to find sufficient money to assist. Hyde park, Kew gardens and many beautiful places in and around London were affected seriously. Less than a year later the same Government are trying to kid us on that their interest in trees and forests at that time was real. They do not care about little old Leyton and its little patch. It is one thing when something affects their people and another for us. Those of us who want to see the greenery and forest remain in Leyton have perfect justification to say to my hon. Friend, "Carry on with this point."

Mr. Cohen: I thank my hon. Friend for that comment, but I must tell him that at the time of the hurricane the Government did not care. They did not fund in full the replacement programme.

Mr. Skinner: They were forced to.

Mr. Cohen: They did not refund local authorities in full. All sorts of ancillary costs were left to local authorities, such as Waltham Forest, to meet. Funding certainly was not 100 per cent. Moreover, my local authority is subject to rating penalties. For every pound that it spent, the ratepayers spent £1·60 because of the Government's meanness. That was exacerbated by the Government not funding the cost in full.

Mr. Haynes: Where there are trees there are birds, and there is nothing better than getting up in the early morning, particularly in Leyton, and listening to the birds singing. If there are no trees there will be no birds, and that is another reason why my hon. Friend is worried about Leyton.

Mr. Cohen: My hon. Friend makes another genuine point, but I shall not go into it, except to say that I agree that birds, indeed all flora and fauna, are important and should be recognised as important. We should not have tarmac spread all over this green land.

The Minister asked for specifics and I have already given him the total acreage, but he failed to respond. I shall continue because I have much more detail. Mr. Goldsmith said:

> "An existing girls' school science block annexe will be perched on the edge of the cutting"—

it will right by the side of the road——

> "and a local authority is being made to find the cost of double glazing and the perpetual ventilation cost. This ventilation running cost is the same for the local residents too and they get no relief."

That shows how the Minister through the Bill is harming the people of Leyton. Mr. Goldsmith continues:

> "Judging by the treatment that the Beazer Enterprise Route has received"—

that was a way of getting at least some cover for the road—

"from the Department where a commuted sum of £4 million has been demanded by the Department"—

that is a scandal; the Department should be putting up the £4 million——

"for future maintenance of the private housing over the road tunnel, now sadly abandoned as a result"—

sabotaged by the Minister and his Department——

"I now believe this precedent should work in reverse and that tenants who are boxed up by sound insulation and can only breathe in their homes via a fan and, or cooler should receive a substantial capital sum to offset the running cost of such equipment together with its replacement cost at some future date. I will suggest through a copy of this letter to the press that such a sum should be half the value of the house at present market prices."

Mr. Goldsmith then asks the Prime Minister, "Do you agree?" He concludes the letter:

"Of course, if these urban roads were properly designed for the 20th Century with protective lids, such costs would not be necessary."

The Department demanded money up front from the enterprise group and the council for covering the road, but it will not provide the money for ventilation for local people.

I now come to another aspect of the matter. When I spoke to the negotiators and said what I wanted as compensation for this piece of forest being stolen from the people of Leyton by the Department of Transport, I was told by the agents, "What you are asking for is peanuts, Mr. Cohen." They contacted the Department of Transport, which said, "No deal." That was the very last day before the date was set for debating the Bill. They did not come up with any offer before that, presumably under the orders of the Department of Transport, which did not want to make any deals. What they came up with as a replacement—I have the maps here if any hon. Member wants to see them—was what I can only describe as "SLOAP"—surplus land left over after planning. It is what is left over after a building has been put up—perhaps a few metres of land, which may be landlocked and which cannot be used in the planning. It is rubbish. With the Department of Transport it is a slippery slope and when we got on to "SLOAP" the negotiations went downhill all the way.

Some hon. Members may think that the offer of replacement land was genuine because there are six items——

Mr. Skinner: When did the Minister slope off?

Mr. Cohen: It was not a genuine offer because it was land at the side of the road to replace the forest land stolen from the people of Leyton.

I shall summarise what is on the map. The first piece of land was by Eastway near Temple Mills marshalling yard. It was a thin slither of land along the road next to industrial land. I was after a proper replacement for forest land, a decent open space or park land, but all I got was this leftover land which must be the responsibility of the Department of Transport anyway because it is part of its plans. The land is inaccessible to local residents and particularly to pedestrians because it is blocked on one side by the marshalling yard and on the other by industrial land. The nearest residents would have to get over two —not one—2m high barriers on each side of the road to have access to the land. Even if they got past one barrier, managed to get across the road without being run over and climbed the other barrier they would need a pair of skis to get down on to the land. That slither of land is useless.

The second bit of land was at the back of Trelawn road near the railway station, which is also right next to the link road. That was another narrow sliver of land. Its only use could be as the back gardens of the houses in Trelawn road. The Minister and his Department know that the only common sense use for the land is as the back gardens of the people in that road. It will not be much good to them because it will be right up against the main road, but if it is not used for that, it will just be some leftover land which the Department will be responsible for keeping tidy. It is no compensation for the forest land stolen at the Green Man roundabout.

The third bit of "SLOAP" was another thin sliver of land between Grove Green road and the link road. My hon. Friends do not know the area, so I should tell them that Grove Green road and the link road will run parallel to each other, and even after this major motorway project gets under way, Grove Green road will still carry about 1,000 vehicles an hour. It will still be a busy local road, yet the Department wanted to offer as compensation the bit of land between the two. If children were kicking a ball about, it could run on to either of the two main roads and they could get run over. Yet that was supposed to be a replacement for the forest land stolen from the people of Leyton by the Department of Transport.

Mr. Haynes: That is a very interesting point because it raises the question of road safety. The Minister regularly preaches at the Dispatch Box about road safety, yet here the Department is creating a problem for youngsters and adults who could be run down by vehicles on that busy road.

Mr. Skinner: Two busy roads.

Mr. Cohen: Two busy roads, as my hon. Friend said. That is why it was ridiculous to put that land up as a replacement for the forest land stolen from the people of Leyton.

Mr. Skinner: How wide was the other bit?

Mr. Cohen: I cannot tell my hon. Friend the exact size, but it was not very large. One expects kids to play football in open spaces, but in this case the right and left wings would be main roads. Not many of those kids would end up playing for Leyton Orient because as soon as they put the ball wide, they would get run over.

The fourth bit of "SLOAP" is even more disgusting. That was near Connaught school, abutting directly on the link road. It was shameful that the Department refused to tunnel at least that small part of the road. They would not tunnel any of the rest of it, and they refused at the very minimum to make this little bit of tunnel by the girls' school. That was a disgraceful aspect of the Minister's policy. Parts of the annexe to the school will be only 2 m away from a busy motorway. How can those pupils study properly? The Minister even refused to put up the money to double-glaze the annexe. If the Department must offer this so-called "SLOAP" by the side of the road, it should at least—the local residents may have something to say about it—place compulsory purchase orders on the few houses between that bit of land and the school. The Department would have to pay proper compensation so that those affected could be properly rehoused. At least the residents would then have more land which could be used for dual purposes—as green land for the school and park land for the community. The area would not have been

[Mr. Cohen]

very big even then. I asked the Department to do at least that, but the Department and the Minister were too mean and would not get their act together. The land is useless to the school because there is no proper direct access to it.

In any case, there is a serious housing crisis in my area. If I had time, I would deal with that in greater detail. The council cannot place compulsory purchase orders on the properties and rehouse the occupants to the standard that would be required because it does not have the money or the houses; it has an enormous waiting list. That option, too, was therefore ruled out by the Department of Transport.

The motorway will create enormous problems for the school. The construction of the road is already posing problems. My hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) talked about road safety and the safety of the children. The teachers and the education authority have expressed their concern and anxiety about the children's safety and about the fact that the Department is doing nothing about it. The Department of Education and Science will come up against the problem. It will have to decide what to do about the site—perhaps on a replacement school. It is the same old story—the machinery of Government working for a mean Government: the Department of Transport says that it is the concern of the Department of Education and Science; the Department of Education and Science says that it is the concern of the Department of Transport and in the meantime those kids are at risk, that school has a rotten environment and the Department of Transport steals our forest land without giving us proper replacement land. That bit of "SLOAP" was also useless.

The fifth bit of "SLOAP" was a small triangle of land in Grove Green road, again abutting on the motorway —the M11 link road—at Nos. 481 to 493 Grove Green road. Yet again the Department would not place compulsory purchase orders on the houses and provide generous compensation for the residents, although that would have allowed us to get a small bit of land together. It would still have been very small and not a good environment. The so-called "SLOAP" is a useless set of blobs of land not linked together and adjacent to the road. That is how the Department tried to brush me off, having nicked the forest land in Leyton. As hon. Members can imagine, I was not prepared to put up with that nonsense.

The last bit of "SLOAP" was a small sliver between Fillebrook road and the link road. It is unusable. It has exactly the same drawbacks as the bit of Grove Green road that I described, where the green land is between the two roads. It was right up against the most dangerous and busiest point of the motorway—the Green Man roundabout interchange, with which the Bill deals.

None of that land could be regarded as a proper replacement for the forest land stolen by the Government from the people of Leyton—not by any stretch of the imagination. There should have been a linear park anyway. All these "SLOAPs"——

Mr. Skinner: Where does that word come from?

Mr. Cohen: It is a planning term, and I was chairman of planning in the London borough of Waltham Forest. I think that they thought that they could pull the wool over my eyes because I had no planning experience, but I am not so easily fooled when it comes to matters affecting my constituency.

In the end, the Department of Transport will have to hand over all these pieces of land. They are there because the Department refused the linear park option and carved a motorway through Leyton and Leytonstone, with adverse effects on local residents. These little bits of land have been left over. They will go to the local authority, which will have to manage them. If that does not happen, the Department of Transport will be under enormous pressure to keep the land in good shape. I shall be asking questions in the House and, frankly, the Minister's life and that of his successors will be hell. Of course, the Department will palm off the land. We were not going to be fooled by that nonsense.

Let me draw attention to another letter from the director of the development department, who said:

"My understanding is that you have a meeting with the Department shortly to discuss your objection to the Bill. I understand that the Department intends to draw to your attention the various small open spaces alongside the link road through Leyton—for instance, off Grove Green road, Fillebrook road and Ashbridge road. These total about one hectare—2·4 acres in all. By and large, these are narrow spaces, which are simply undevelopable areas left over from the Department's CPOs."

Mr. Skinner: Slithers.

Mr. Cohen: Yes, slithers.

The letter continues:

"They are of limited visual value only."

One would expect that, given that they are right on top of the motorway. It goes on:

"Few have any recreational potential. These open spaces also include land currently occupied by church land which LRT want for replacement car parking".

The officer showed that the offer from the Department of Transport was rubbish.

The Minister and the House will want to know what I specifically asked for to replace the forest land that had been stolen. I am a pragmatist.

Mr. Skinner: No, you are not.

Mr. Cohen: Well my hon. Friend may not think so, but I am pragmatic and I wanted a linear park and all the road in a tunnel.

Mr. Skinner: I do not believe that that is being pragmatic. My hon. Friend should reflect on what he has just said. He was negotiating a deal and I do not believe that that was being pragmatic. He was faced with the machinery of state and realised that he could get something for his constituents—a linear park—where kids could play and which would exist for a lifetime and beyond. My hon. Friend did the right thing. The truth is that it is clear that the Government were only interested in stealing the land and they did not want any conclusion to be reached. I do not believe that my hon. Friend was being pragmatic; he was being sensible. He was working on behalf of his constituents. I hope that my hon. Friend will not use that word, because it has been used by a lot of people just lately. There is a bloke who sits on the Bench near me who has been using it just now.

Mr. Cohen: I appreciate my hon. Friend's kind words. I was trying to do a deal. I had wanted a linear park and the road in a tunnel, but I knew that this was a small Bill, and that there was no way in which my request could be

granted at this stage in the proceedings and that, therefore, I had to come to a deal. Therefore, what I asked for was limited—just a replacement for that forest land stolen by the Department of Transport, which had given no proper replacement land.

All I wanted was a deal with some quid pro quo in relation to the land stolen—I did not want the whole lot replaced. When I went to the agent for Sherwood and Co. —the agent for the City of London—and described what I wanted, she described it as peanuts in relation to the road scheme. She said that she would take my request back to the Department of Transport to see whether I could get the peanuts that I wanted. I must say that I was rather worried as I thought that I had underbid and that I could have got more for Leyton. For a while I was panic-stricken, but then I thought that I had put in my bid and should stick by it. Then my secretary got a phone call to say that the Department of Transport said "No deal" It would not even offer the peanuts for the forest land stolen from the people of Leyton. That shows just how mean the Government are.

It is right that the House should know what I asked for —that is a genuine request—as a replacement for the forest land stolen——

Mr. Skinner: Instead of a linear park?

Mr. Cohen: Yes, it was instead of a linear park, but as a replacement for the forestry land stolen by the Department. Green land is at a premium in my area and I appreciate that it is not easy to get a replacement, but at least I thought that the Department could do something about open spaces and parks as compensation. I said that I had Cann Hall park coming on stream in my area. It is meant to be a play area for six to 12-year-olds, a dual use kickabout area. The officers at the council described it as

"a preliminary scheme for this site which is currently vacant involving a 6 to 12s play area, kick-about area and a sitting-out area, which would cost about £200,000."

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover would agree that that is peanuts. In any case that park should have been provided for by rate support grant and capital funds. The Government are denying the children in that heavily built up area the opportunity of having a little kickabout.

I also asked about Skeltons lane, which is a play area for the six to 12-year-olds, and about servicing work at City farm. The officer said:

"Improvements at this park, which might involve providing a city farm, a six to 12s play area, and new planting, would cost about £230,000."

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover talked about birds, but it is important that the kids in an urban area should also have a look at the animals, and learn about them. We had the chance to set up such a project. It should have been done straight out of the rate support grant and the capital funds which the Government have cut. However, they refused to put up the money. We are talking about absolute peanuts.

Harrow road is a play area for the under-fives. That small site—

Mr. Skinner: We could have got that money out of Common Market fraud.

Mr. Cohen: Yes. My hon. Friend is right. The money that we are talking about is peanuts compared with the money involved in Common Market fraud.

The officer said of Harrow road:

"This small site next to the Acacia nursery could be laid out as an under-fives play area with planting and new fencing. A scheme here would cost about £50,000."

However, we then received a phone call from the Minister saying, "No deal—we cannot afford it." The Government can afford Trident missiles, but they cannot afford £50,000. What a disgrace that is.

That was basically the list for which I asked. I had the forest in mind, because the Government are stealing forest land without giving compensation. Therefore, I wanted something done for the forest in my area. I shall read the list, which might seem long, but is not really. It is a sensible list, detailing what should have been done to the forest if the conservators were doing their jobs properly and if the City of London was really responsible for the forest. It merely has nominal responsibility for it.

I told the officers that there could be improvements to Epping forest land, and amenities in Leyton. First, I asked about improved rubbish clearance, which would be sensible, and would be popular locally. The area gets full of litter because it is heavily used.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend has a good list but there is no need for including rubbish clearance because it is covered already. The Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for the Environment go round clearing up these places. He carries the bag and its "bag it and bin it." Therefore, I do not see why he should worry about that problem.

Mr. Cohen: I appreciate what my hon. Friend says, but I am afraid that they do not reach as far as Leyton and Leytonstone. They would be welcome to come along and clear up the rubbish, as would the Minister who is present. I extend an open invitation to the Minister for Roads and Traffic, whose Department is stealing the forest land, to come along and tidy up the area that is being left. Again, we receive an impassive response from the Minister. He certainly will not put up the small amount of money to do that job properly.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Perhaps, while the hon. Gentleman, together with his hon. Friends the Members for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) and for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), are counting the trees at the Green Man roundabout, which is one of the commitments that have been offered and accepted by the hon. Members, I might come to see what the situation is and, if necessary, help.

May I make it plain that the Government support this part of the Bill, and that 40 per cent. of the cost of the Hackney to M11 link is for environmental projection and improvement. It is plain that it is difficult for the House to consider the details because, in a long speech, the hon. Gentleman has not put them forward. The scheme offers great advantages and much money has been spent on environmental protection. It is also plain that most people believe that the exchange land offered will provide net benefits, both for Leyton and for the forest.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Can I remind the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) that he has been speaking for nearly two hours and there are other hon. Members who wish to participate in this debate?

Mr. Cohen: I do not like saying harsh words, so I shall put this gently, Mr. Speaker. You were not here at the beginning of the debate, when I said that this Bill adversely

[Mr. Cohen]

affects my constituency and only my constituency. Others are generally content with it. I need to get that point over, and I appreciate that you did not hear my opening comments——

Mr. Skinner: I have been listening carefully to my hon. Friend for the past hour and a half and I think that his is an extraordinary performance by a Member of Parliament fighting on behalf of his constituency. I have seen other examples of this, I remember the Father of the House fighting for almost four hours against a proposition to blight a large part of his area. He got stuck in and somehow managed to succeed. I hope that my hon. Friend will do the same.

I want to know whether the Minister's intervention a moment ago was helpful. Was there anything in it?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The point is that, although the hon. Gentleman has every right to make his points on behalf of his constituents, if he does not give the Minister the chance to reply he will never know whether he is making a concession.

Mr. Cohen: If the Minister does not get the chance to speak in this limited debate, he can write to me offering to come and clear away rubbish in this part of the forest. Or he can offer to replace the land. I have already heard the Minister's response from the agent. When he told me that what I had asked for was peanuts, he went to the Department. He may have spoken to the Minister, for all I know—he certainly spoke to one of his minions. The Department said, "No deal."

I am still hoping to change the Minister's mind, but I have no confidence that he will change it, just as I have no confidence in his intervention. The only land replacement that he mentioned was the "SLOAP" that I have referred to—he based his case on it. That does not give me much confidence.

As I was saying, I asked for rubbish clearance. Then I asked for the restoration of the ancient woodlands at Whipps Cross. We have a little patch of ancient woodlands there which has fallen into disuse and been run down due to the Conservatives' and the City of London's neglect of Leyton. It is not a Tory area, so the Government do not want to save those ancient woodlands or give them the respect due to them——

Mr. Skinner: What does my hon. Friend mean by "ancient"?

Mr. Cohen: They might even date back to BC.—I do not know the age of the trees. However, I am told that it is a precious piece of land——

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: I cannot let the hon. Gentleman get away with those remarks, which are an insult to the integrity of the superintendent of the City Corporation. These ancient woodlands have been disappearing as a result of natural soil causes. So he must not talk about costs, because at no stage has any money for the replacement of the woodlands been considered—this is a natural disappearance. The rest of what the hon. Gentleman said may be right, but he must not attack servants of the corporation who are doing a first-class job.

Mr. Cohen: Nevertheless, they have allowed the woodlands to decline. What is more, they have not put enough effort into restoring them. Conservatives are much more interested in putting their money into other areas; they do not see Leyton as a priority, with the result that our ancient woodlands are being destroyed more quickly than other areas.

My action plan to save the woodlands was not unreasonable—it should have been implemented anyway. It is a scandal that the Department of Transport rejected it.

Next, I asked for action to plant avenue trees in Ferndale road at Wanstead flats—not an unreasonable request—and to provide proper disposal facilities for the chemical toilets at the fair at Sydney road. That, too, is something that should have been done anyway.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Does my hon. Friend agree that in other parts of the country, for example in the industrial north, slag heaps have been reclaimed and the areas planted with trees and regrassed? The fact that soil has been affected by chemicals is no disincentive to replanting trees, to reseed and redevelop natural woodland areas.

Mr. Cohen: My hon. Friend makes an excellent point. The disincentive to the Government is money and they will not put up a penny for areas such as mine. They say that proper replacement is a bit of old sewage land 2·5 miles away in Wanstead. They should be replanting trees.

Mr. Haynes: Nottinghamshire council is Labour controlled and it is replacing trees right, left and centre in the county. I said on Thursday night that I hope when the Speaker retires he will move into that beautiful county because he likes to go there. He will see that trees are planted. My hon. Friend is right. The Minister will not find the money to replace trees because all that the Government want to do is to destroy them.

Mr. Cohen: The Speaker has much respect for trees, green land and open spaces where he likes to ride his horse. He certainly has more respect for open space and forest land than the Minister for Roads and Traffic. The Minister is stealing forest land in Leyton.

I asked about improving the Hellow ponds at Whipps Cross for boating. They have not changed since 1909. The Conservators have not prepared a boating plan for that area. It is a lovely recreational area for local people but it could be improved. However, the Government are too mean to improve it. I asked about providing disability access, decent paths in the forest for wheelchairs. That is a sensible suggestion and Conservatives in the City of London and the Minister should have taken it up. I asked for peanuts and the agents have admitted that. Unfortunately, I underbid because all the things that I asked for were obvious and should have been done before.

I did not ask for a great deal. I asked for improved lighting on the footpaths, especially in Bushwood which is around the forest area. We all know that terrible problems are caused by poor lighting, but I shall not go into that because I know that time is short. I asked for nature trails and educational services for the kiddies to enjoy the forest and for a forest craft centre. That would bring in the Nature Conservancy Council to prepare a plan and upgrade and improve the forest. Those are sensible suggestions and two other possibilities were thrown in.

When the council officers put up the next two suggestions I was not very impressed. They were about

land at Riverbourne E11 which is just outside my constituency. It is an area about 1·2 km north of the Green Man off Snaresbrook road. It is open woodland and owned, oddly enough, by the London borough of Redbridge which has done us no favours. It immediately adjoins the forest and is separated from it by a concrete panel fence. Redbridge currently treats it as an amenity open space for its adjoining housing estate. That could have been opened up as a bit of green along with the land to the rear of 6 to 30 Sydney road. That is in my constituency, but right on the border and out of the way. It would be nice to use that and it could be provided at low cost. This is a small vacant site of about 0·2 hectares—0·5 acres—which we understand is privately owned and not fenced off from the adjoining forest land. It is about 1·8 km from the Green Man. That is forest land that could and should be used anyway, although as it is on a small scale, it will not compensate for the forest land that has been stolen from my constituents. That was what I asked for. Does the Minister agree that what I asked for was peanuts?

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman does not need to ask me. I can confirm that both the size of the forest and the amounts of other green land in the vicinity of the route will increase as a result of construction of the road. During this debate, it has been established that the environment will improve in the hon. Gentleman's constituency and outside. We have established that, on my visit to the hon. Gentleman's constituency with him, he did not raise these matters. We have confirmed that he did not raise them with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State when they were at a meeting with the London group of Labour Members of Parliament. When I went to the Green Man roundabout on Friday—a few days ago—I did not see that many trees or people in the middle of the roundabout, which is what the hon. Gentleman has been discussing for the past over two hours.

Mr. Cohen: They are stealing the forest land and the green land in my constituency. I have given the figures for which the Minister asked, showing the acreage that is being stolen. At the beginning, the Minister was dead keen for me to give him the figures, but when I did so he shut up. He could not respond to that. All he is offering is slum land, left over after planning. He claims that that is a replacement. That is a mean deception.

When the Minister came to Leytonstone, in the very first few minutes the press asked him whether he would answer questions about the Green Man roundabout and the tunnelling of the road. The local councillors, the chief executive and the planning officer asked the same thing. The Minister said that he was not there to discuss that and he refused to discuss it. He put a block on it. I will get all those who asked him about that, if he wants to see them again. He cannot fool the press. They asked questions and they were mad keen to get the answers, to get something out of the Department of Transport, but he put a block on it. Now he has the cheek to come here and say that the question was not raised.

Mr. Bottomley: We have established during this debate, and certainly during the hon. Gentleman's speech, most of the points that might have been made otherwise on behalf of the Department of Transport in support of the Bill and its Second Reading. If the hon. Gentleman brings together these witnesses, whether they confirm what I said or what he claims that I said, they will know that I walked up and down the high street with the hon. Gentleman. I said, "This is Harry Cohen" and one or two said, "Yes, we know." Others said, "Come on, let's go round and see the improvements that the Department of Transport has made on the existing road and, by the way, can we look forward to the Hackney-M11 link, which will provide the major environmental improvement in the constituency, casualty reduction and the opportunity of more jobs?" All three would be well served by the proposed road, which this Bill would help.

Mr. Cohen: The Minister came along and did his normal PR exercise, posed for the photos, planted a tree and treated it as fun and games. He made a big show of it. He wanted to stay well in. When it came to the substance, he flopped it. He refused to answer. In the first two minutes, the press asked him questions about the new M11 link, about getting some more tunnels and the Beazer scheme, which would have at least meant more tunnel in various parts of the road, but he said that he was not there to answer such questions and put a block on them, which was a disgrace.

Mr. Keaton wrote to me on 2 May. He explained:

> "Perhaps I could add that as can be seen from the Bill the conservators are required to keep forest land unenclosed and unbuilt on as open space for the recreation and enjoyment of the public. In addition, they are required under the 1978 Act to maintain the forest's natural aspects."

I agree with that. I understand that it is difficult to find replacement land in a busy, urban, built-up area. There are planning problems, and they are not solved by the "sloap". However, at the very least, my demand could have been met. I asked for more open space, for parks to be upgraded and for improvements to be made to the running of the forest in my constituency.

The more I think about these matters and the longer that the debate continues, the more I think that I underbid, especially when the representative of the agents said that I was asking for peanuts. Replacement land should have been provided to take account of the forest land that would be lost. Anyone who reads the report of the debate will understand that what I asked for was reasonable.

One of the results of the scheme is that the Department of Transport is making thousands of pounds every day against the would-be construction costs. The result of high interest rates is that prices are coming down. At the very least, price increases are slowing down. Prices are not as high as were anticipated by the Department. As I have said, the Department is making thousands of pounds every day and every week, if not hundreds of thousands of pounds. It is happy to drag out the matter for that reason. At the same time, it is not prepared to pay peanuts for the improvement of the environment in my constituency.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): How much do you want, Harry?

Mr. Cohen: I have provided the figures. I have made it clear that they amount to about £500,000. The agent's representative talked about that as peanuts. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman could put that sum together. I am sure that many of his hon. Friends could do so as well. Let it be understood, however, that it is a lot of money for my area. Forest land is being stolen from my constituency. The money involved is nothing for many Conservative Members. I suppose that it amounts to no more than a few gins and tonic for them.

Mr. Skinner: We know that £500 million was offered to the Kent Tory-held constituencies so that the Members concerned could try to hang on to their seats. That was a Government-sponsored move through British Rail. The sum that my hon. Friend is talking about is peanuts when it is set against that. It is about 1,000 per cent. less than the amount which was offered to bail out Tory constituencies. However, my hon. Friend is talking about a working-class area.

Mr. Cohen: Absolutely. My hon. Friend has raised a good point. I am asking for less than £500,000 for the replacement of the land. Also involved is a small amount —about £250,000—for the forest land. Even if the total sum reached £1 million overall, it would still be peanuts when set against other items of expenditure. The Government will not give in because of their meanness to working-class people in working-class areas. They are prepared to steal forest land, but they are not prepared to provide a proper replacement.

After the so-called negotiations, during which what I asked for was described as peanuts, I received a letter from the council. It was written by the remembrancer of the Guildhall in the City of London. It is clear that the City of London does not remember Leyton to any great extent. It was the remembrancer but there is not much memory when it comes to decent services for Leyton. The letter to which I refer was headed "City of London (Various Powers) Bill". The body of the letter reads:

"I am sorry that it was not possible to reach an agreement on the road provisions in this Bill following our meeting of Wednesday."

The remembrancer must have been crying into his tea as he wrote that. The letter continues:

"As you will know from our agents, we put all the points that you raised to the Department of Transport."

Those are the points that I raised with the Minister and his Department. The remembrancer explained:

"They are to look at the land that you referred to but they were not attracted by the other suggestions that you raised."

Not attracted!

"I will be in touch again soon when I have more news."

After that I received a phone call, during which I was told that there was no deal. They were not attracted because they are not the ones who will suffer. Their land is not being stolen. They are not the people who will suffer by having their forest land stolen and not replaced. The people of Leyton are very attracted to receiving proper compensation and open land. For them, that represents the air that they breathe and the green land that they walk on. That reply exposes the disgraceful attitude shown by the Minister and his Department.

I shall not make a big speech about horse riding, but it is another aspect of the Bill. I shall speak about it only in so far as it affects the stealing of Leyton's forest land. With the Bill, there is a map of the whole forest, which stretches for an enormous distance, and which shows running through it pathways coloured orange indicating the routes that horse riders can take. If they leave those routes they are in trouble.

Those routes are shown to run through the whole of the forest, except in the Whipps Cross area in my constituency. That shows how little regard the Government have for the people of Leyton. Does that not strike the House and the Minister as being a little funny and as being a dirty, rotten deal for the people of Leyton?

I received a letter from Dr. F. B. O'Connor, director of the Nature Conservancy Council, which asks me to support the Bill. It deals mainly with clause 9, concerning the control of horse riding. I shall not be nasty about that particular clause, but Dr. O'Connor writes:

"Heavy usage by riders is causing severe damage to the flora and fauna in the forest."

What about Leyton? As I said, I shall not be nasty about horse riding, and if people want to ride then they should be allowed to do so. Nevertheless, many people walk on the land in Leyton of which I speak. Leyton is a heavily built-up urban area and people come out every weekend to take a stroll there. They could get knocked over by the horses. What about the flora and fauna in that part of the forest? The City of London should put up money to ensure the replanting that I mentioned earlier.

In addition to all the mistreatment I have cited, the Minister is, through the Bill, using the City of London to steal our forest land and not replace it properly. To Dr. O'Connor and the Nature Conservancy Council I say that they should involve themselves in Whipps Cross. I am genuinely green and am happy to support them on environmental matters, but if Dr. O'Connor and the NCC want my support, they should also be concerned about my area and help protect it. They should put pressure on the City of London, the Department and the Minister to devise a plan to upgrade the Whipps Cross area of the forest and to improve the facilities there, so that the people of Leyton and Leytonstone can enjoy them.

I am angry with the City of London for doing the Department's dirty work for it. I acknowledge that the Department is the main culprit, but in selling out in the way that it has the City of London has not performed its role properly. That made me so angry that I went up to the Table Office. I am now preparing a Bill—which I may present as a ten-minute Bill—entitled the City of London (Abolition of Control of Epping Forest) Bill. I have got it in print.

The City of London could easily not have sold out Leyton and Leytonstone. It could have obtained compensation from this mean, motorway-grey Minister; it would have been peanuts to him. We have been let down badly. I am very tempted to present my Bill. I have not got the wording quite right yet——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That might be a good idea. It would enable others to take part in the debate, particularly the Minister, who could then answer some of the hon. Gentleman's comments.

Mr. Cohen: The Minister will have plenty of opportunities. Perhaps another hon. Member may wish to raise the issue on the money resolution because of the strength of feeling that it has aroused, and the Minister will then have a chance to respond. We have a debate tomorrow on the soaring cost of the Government's publicity machine. How about a press release saying that the Government will replace the forest land that they are stealing from Leyton people? The Minister does not need to use the House; millions of pounds are being spent on the publicity machine.

I gather that you do not want me to talk about my Bill, Mr. Speaker, but I shall certainly raise it at a later stage. It has been provoked by the treatment of Leyton and Leytonstone residents. I shall propose that control be

taken from the City and redistributed among the local authorities. They will not relinquish their land without a fight and without obtaining proper compensation.

The resources for the running of the forest should be distributed according to how much land is used. In that way Leyton, Leytonstone and Whipps Cross will receive much more, because that land is used heavily by local people. Even if my Bill is not passed because of the Tory majority, at some stage in the future there will not be a Tory majority, and then the reckoning will come. I throw that out as a warning.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): A threat.

Mr. Cohen: Yes, as a threat. I get very angry when my forest land is stolen and not replaced. I have a long memory.

Let me come to the substance of my speech. I want to give the House the history that has led to this legislation, and how the M11 link came about. The housing problems are immensely serious. Hundreds of people are about to be thrown on to the streets, but the Department of Transport has not given Waltham Forest the money to rehouse them. The Government claim to have provided the money when there was a Conservative-Liberal local authority in Waltham Forest a few years ago, but on investigation it turned out that the housing investment programme had been cut by only slightly less than the massive cut that had apparently been imposed. The money that the Government provided to rehouse people was really a huge cut in resources. Nobody noticed that this Government had apparently or allegedly given money to decant and rehouse those people.

Instead of putting that money, or that cut, aside to rehouse people, the Conservative-Liberal council used it to keep down the rates. That was its short-term ploy. It has resulted in an immense housing crisis for the people who live along the route. The council has been trying to rehouse those people, but this mean, motorway-mad Minister will not put up a penny to rehouse them. It will create an immense crisis, and I must spend some time on it.

After I have dealt with that crisis, I shall turn to education. I have already said a few words about Connaught school. It faces a real crisis because of the Bill and the provisions concerning the M11 link road. The school deserves a fair deal and proper facilities. The Minister was too mean to provide for tunnelling on one side or the other of that school, as he should have done. We were pressing for tunnelling right along the route, but at the very minimum he should have provided for a tunnel near to Connaught school.

Mr. Skinner: How long would the tunnel have been?

Mr. Cohen: It would have been literally a few metres and the cost would have been negligible over the life of the road, which will be there for at least 100 years. By not having a tunnel near the school, the Minister has condemned the pupils and teachers to absolute misery. It could lead to the demise of the school, although it has performed wonderfully well for the local community. It is now under a death threat because of the mean Department of Transport.

The Department has shifted the goal posts. The House knows that I am a simple sort of fellow. Two years ago the Department said that if we wanted a tunnel, private capital would be needed, that the public purse could not fund tunnelling and that there would have to be a partnership with private interests. The local council did just that. It got the Beazer corporation to come up with a scheme.

Mr. Skinner: Who are they when they are at home?

Mr. Cohen: It is a big corporation. I have no specific details about it. It was after the work, and it was keen to get a lot of contracts. That was fair enough. It fitted in with the needs of the community. However, when we met the Minister we faced delaying tactics. Eventually, the Department of Transport put obstacles in the corporation's way. It said that the corporation had to put 4 million quid up front. The corporation refused to do that, so the Department of Transport blocked the bid; it killed it. So much for the Government's stated policy of using private capital. When the Minister's bluff was called, he destroyed the scheme.

Mr. Skinner: Who was it?

Mr. Cohen: It was the Minister.

The Government do not want working-class areas to benefit. Working-class areas such as Leyton can be cut up. They do not matter to this Minister, so long as he can ponce about the high street saying what a wonderful fellow he is by planting a few trees.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *rose*——

Mr. Cohen: And he can ponce about at the Dispatch Box as well.

Mr. Bottomley: I now understand that the hon. Gentleman has misunderstood everything. He has misunderstood the fact that the proposal will make things better in Leyton. Furthermore, I was talking about the hon. Member to his constituents, not about myself. If praising the hon. Gentleman to his own constituents leads him to describe me in that way, we have reached a sorry state of affairs and I am sorry that we have had to listen to him for two and a half hours. If the hon. Gentleman wanted to receive answers to his questions, he ought to have allowed time for them to be answered, or at least debated. The fact that he has monopolised most of the debate means that he thinks that they are worthless points that can easily be rubbished.

Mr. Cohen: That is certainly not true. We had phone calls from the Department of Transport saying, "No deal", yet the agents said that the amount involved was peanuts. It shows the Minister's contempt for Leyton. He now tries to say something rather different. He should pull the other leg; it has bells on. We know that in reality he is still saying, "No deal", however he dresses it up in a public relations exercise. He is rather good at that, as he is rather good at going up and down the high street. He is doing the dirty on Leyton by stealing our forest land and not giving us proper compensation.

I want to deal with the long history—almost 40 years —of the M11, which has blighted the area. It is the longest blight caused by any road scheme. At a public inquiry in 1983, I, local residents, Mr. Goldsmith and others called for a tunnelled route. We did not object to the road in principle, provided that it was environmentally sound through the use of tunnelling. We said quite clearly that the Department of Transport's plans would divide the community and would cut Leyton and Leytonstone in half.

[Mr. Cohen]

The linear route proposed by Mr. Goldsmith would have cost only a few million pounds—not a great deal more than the Department's scheme. It would have been in place for 100 or more years and provided enormous advantages for the local area. Instead, an obscenity of a road will carve up Leyton and Leytonstone. The Minister is mean. The scheme has made conservationists and the residents of Leyton and Leytonstone very angry.

It will be impossible to cross the road and the access to it is appalling. Some 280 homes will have been demolished, Connaught school has been annexed and made unusable, and Westdown road will have a high embankment with the motorway running along it—what a lovely visual aspect. The proposals for the Green Man are dangerous and unsightly.

When we put our case to the inspector at the inquiry, he concluded that tunnelling would be a good idea. He said:

"It should be a model for future motorways."

Yet the project was savaged and destroyed by the Department of Transport. The only concession in the Bill is tunnelling at the Green Man. The Department and the Minister show more concern for the cattle in Epping forest than for the people of Leyton and Leytonstone.

Local people, the council and environmentalist groups have tried to promote tunnelling. They have picked up the Minister's words and the Government's policies, yet they have been rebuffed. Since the M11 inquiry many other schemes have been tunnelled, even though they provide less environmental benefit than would be provided by tunnelling the M11. The A1M tunnel in Tory-controlled Hatfield received a Department of Transport grant of £8·87 million—£2,900 per linear metre. That would more than cover the cost of tunnelling the link road and providing a linear park. That solution is good enough for Hatfield, but too good for Leyton. Moreover, the Department is stealing our forest land and not replacing it.

The document produced by the action group on the link road says:

"Good enough for others. We are the Cinderella of the road building pantomime. While covered roads protect the forest in Epping, residents in Enfield and industry in Hatfield, thousands of men and women living close to the link road are content to suffer an open road, sometimes yards from their houses. What is good enough for others is good enough for us."

It is not, apparently. There is a lovely picture of the Bell common in Epping. It is a lovely bit of green land. The document says:

"There is a cricket club here where players and spectators can enjoy their game to the accompaniment of birdsong from the nearby forest trees. Late at night we might see some of the forest creatures crossing the common on their ancient paths. A splendidly English beauty spot. Who would guess that the M24 roars beneath the cricket pitch? Six lanes of traffic speeds through a well-lighted tunnel while up above on the surface life goes on as normal. The cricketers and animals are protected."

It is good enough for Epping, it should be good enough for Leyton. The Department is to steal a bit of land——

Mr. Skinner: Epping is Tory.

Mr. Cohen: Indeed it is. They are stealing a meagre but important bit of forest land. Hatfield got a huge grant from the Department. The document adds:

"A covered road is being built at Hatfield in Hertfordshire."

which, of course, is Tory.

"The A1M at this section is not in a highly residential neighbourhood nor one of natural beauty. It is an industrial district and there was local opposition when the Department of Transport proposed an unnecessary tunnel outside British Aerospace. Now all is revealed. A £15 million commercial complex is to be built on the tunnel lid. At the link road public inquiry, the Department of Transport denied that it would be possible to build on top of a covered road. Why, when they knew that such a scheme was being planned for Hatfield?"

That is another example of the double standards and hypocrisy that have been employed in the Government's dealings with Leyton, which they have given the worst in a shabby deal. Now the Department of Transport is stealing a small bit of forest land and not giving compensation.

The document mentions Enfield, and shows a picture of a lovely bit of greensward. It is not a sliver. Enfield is Tory, although we hope to make it Labour at the next general election. The document says:

"You are looking at the M25 motorway. Orbiting London and carrying thousands of vehicles each hour, each car, each van, each lorry emits stinking fumes and makes a great deal of noise. Perhaps you think we got the wrong photograph. We didn't. The M25 at Freezy Water Wall to Enfield runs through the Holmesdale tunnel. A linear park and a school playing field have been constructed on the lid of the tunnel. Residents in the houses on either side need never know the M25 is there. Connaught school in Leytonstone could have a playing field if the M11 link road were covered, and the homes of residents there and in Wanstead would be protected."

Precedents exist, but the Department will not give us a linear park. What an exhibition of meanness and callous, grey, motorway mindedness this is from the Minister. He has other plans to rip up the marshes, which are sites of special scientific interest. Twice I gave him the chance to get up to the Dispatch Box to——

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 125, Noes 24.

Division No. 198] **[10 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan	Currie, Mrs Edwina
Amess, David	Day, Stephen
Amos, Alan	Devlin, Tim
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Dorrell, Stephen
Atkins, Robert	Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Atkinson, David	Durant, Tony
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Dykes, Hugh
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony	Emery, Sir Peter
Beith, A. J.	Fallon, Michael
Bellingham, Henry	Fenner, Dame Peggy
Bendall, Vivian	Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*	Fishburn, John Dudley
Boswell, Tim	Forman, Nigel
Bottomley, Peter	Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*	Forth, Eric
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard	Freeman, Roger
Brazier, Julian	Gale, Roger
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter	Garel-Jones, Tristan
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*	Gill, Christopher
Burns, Simon	Glyn, Dr Alan
Butler, Chris	Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*	Gregory, Conal
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*	Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*	Hague, William
Carrington, Matthew	Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Chapman, Sydney	Hannam, John
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*	Harris, David
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*	Heathcoat-Amory, David
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*	Heddle, John
Cope, Rt Hon John	Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Couchman, James	Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*

Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Irving, Charles
Jessel, Toby
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Neale, Gerrard
Nicholls, Patrick
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Paice, James
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Sims, Roger
Speller, Tony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Tredinnick, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waller, Gary
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Steve Norris and
Mr. James Arbuthnot.

NOES

Allen, Graham
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Duffy, A. E. P.
Fisher, Mark
Foster, Derek
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Haynes, Frank
McAvoy, Thomas
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Ruddock, Joan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Harry Barnes and
Mr. Gerald Bermingham.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put accordingly, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 122, Noes 22.

Division No. 190] **[10.12 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Amess, David
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Burns, Simon
Butler, Chris
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Jessel, Toby
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Neale, Gerrard
Nicholls, Patrick
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Paice, James
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Sims, Roger
Speller, Tony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Tredinnick, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Steve Norris and
Mr. James Arbuthnot.

NOES

Allen, Graham
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Duffy, A. E. P.
Foster, Derek
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Haynes, Frank
McAvoy, Thomas
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Ruddock, Joan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Vaz, Keith

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Harry Barnes and
Mr. Gerald Bermingham.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time, and committed.

City of London (Various Powers) Bill [Money]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

10.23 pm

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Peter Bottomley): I beg to move,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the City of London (Various Powers) Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any expenditure incurred by the Secretary of State—

(a) in reinstating certain land in Epping Forest temporarily occupied by him by virtue of that Act for road purposes;

(b) in reimbursing the Conservators of Epping Forest for such proportion of the costs, charges and expenses reasonably incurred and properly paid by them in connection with the preparation, obtaining and passing of that Act as is attributable to its provisions relating to the grant to him for road purposes of rights over and interests in land; and

(c) an indemnifying the Conservators against actions, costs, claims and demands brought or made against or incurred by them which are caused by or arise out of the grant of those rights and interests and which are not attributable to the wrongful act, neglect or default of the Conservators, their contractors, agents, workmen or servants.

We want to ensure that, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Bill that has just received its Second Reading, the payment of money provided by Parliament is authorised for expenditure by the Secretary of State for one of three purposes—to indemnify the conservators, to reimburse the conservators, and to reinstate the land in the forest temporarily occupied on behalf of the Secretary of State for road purposes.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) moved the Second Reading in his characteristic expert way and with good humour. Sadly, he was followed by the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) who, without humour and with an uncharacteristically long speech, managed to turn the fate of a roundabout into the fate of Epping forest. I invite the hon. Member for Leyton to take with him Thames Television or BBC London television cameras, and his hon. Friends the Members for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes), and to show them the part of the forest which justified his comment that forest land was being stolen.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Minister has been on his feet for many moments, but he has not yet mentioned money. If I had been in the Chair, I should have pulled him up by now.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I feel certain that the Minister is going to talk about the money resolution.

Mr. Bottomley: I think that the hon. Member for Ashfield must be moving from one part of the Chamber to another. In my introductory remarks, I mentioned each of the three parts of the money resolution.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton) *rose*——

Mr. Bottomley: Having finished my point of order, I shall give way to the hon. Member for Leyton who kindly gave way to me earlier.

Mr. Cohen: I am worried about the Government's press manipulation. Tomorrow, we are to have a debate on the millions of pounds that they spend on press manipulation. If the Minister takes a camera team and points it from the forest towards the existing roundabout, it will see motorway, but if it points its cameras in the other direction it will see forest land. That is the land that the Minister is stealing from the people of Leyton.

Mr. Bottomley: I fear that the hon. Gentleman may be over exciting his hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) in the same way that he overexcited his hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover. When the hon. Member for Bolsover discovered the time that the first Division was called on the previous business, what the debate had been about and what the hon. Member for Leyton had managed to cover in just over two and a half hours, the face of the hon. Member for Bolsover was quite entertaining.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate made the point that the deal with the corporation of London to look after Hampstead heath was in the great tradition of the City of London and the corporation. They have greatly cared for Epping forest and other parts of London and around, with proper trusteeship over the years. My hon. Friend also paid tribute to the staff, conservators and others who will do for Hampstead heath what they have done for other areas, for which they will receive praise from both sides of the House. I am sorry that working people have received implied insults from Opposition Members, but I hope that they will not receive any more.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I am familiar with Highgate wood, which is well administered by the City of London and is a pleasant place. Will the Minister reflect that, under the plans, known as the east London road assessment study, put forward to his Department by consultants, part of Highgate wood would be damaged by the construction of a grade separated road? Has he received representations from the City of London on the matter and the loss of virgin forest, which was originally linked to Epping forest before the rest of north London became built up?

Mr. Bottomley: What the hon. Gentleman wants to discuss may be more properly debated in Committee tomorrow. Perhaps we shall then have the benefit of hearing from the hon. Members for Islington, North and for Leyton, as well as from the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock), who has been sitting patiently listening to the speech of her hon. Friend the Member for Leyton on the merits of the different types of trees on the Green Man roundabout.

The Government are normally neutral about private Bills in which no major matter of principle is involved. This Bill and money resolution are exceptions. In principle, the Government strongly support the provisions of part II of the Bill which relates to the grant and exchange of lands. We are pleased to have reached agreement with the corporation of the City of London, as conservators of Epping forest, over the transfer of certain areas of forest land to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the construction of the A12 Hackney Wick to M11 link road. In exchange, the conservators have agreed to accept, for incorporation into the forest, an area of land near Wanstead park. Once that has been acquired from its owners, we shall put it into a fit state for forest use before handing it over to the conservators. The area of this land

exceeds not only that which will permanently be lost to the forest, but that which will be unavailable only during the construction period. There is a clear gain in that.

Mr. Cohen: Not to Leyton.

Mr. Bottomley: I am not sure why the hon. Gentleman feels it necessary to talk during my speech. He spoke at great length himself, and if he will allow me to proceed, I shall be happy to give way to him shortly.

When the road is completed, the lid of the tunnel at George Green will be reinstated and the appearance of that green will be much as it is today. At the Green Man interchange—it is the place that most concerned the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Bolsover; I await a report from both hon. Members on how they count the different types of trees—there will be a net loss of green land of about 1·25 acres, due principally to the new road running parallel to Cambridge park and to the diversion of Whipps Cross road. The surface roundabout will be smaller. Again, the tunnel lid, while remaining in the ownership of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, will be landscaped, be available for public use and dedicated to the forest. People will be able to reach it quite easily by means of the subways on the pedestrian, cyclist and equestrian route which will provide a safe link from Leyton flats to Wanstead flats.

The hon. Member for Leyton may remember our tour around the high street, where we saw the work that the Department has paid for on the A12 to make life better for his constituents, which shows our concern for them. Any suggestions to the contrary that might be inferred from his two and a half hours speech were, I am sure, unintended and due to his having been unable to find the right words. In any case, the hon. Gentleman, with his concern for vulnerable road users, will have noted that access to this central space is not regarded as particularly attractive for cyclists, equestrians or pedestrians. If the hon. Gentleman wants to tell me that he often sees cyclists or horse riding around the Green Man roundabout I shall stand corrected. I do not often see them there; I do not even see pedestrians there often——

Mr. Cohen: The roundabout will still be potentially dangerous because of the Department's plans.

Mr. Bottomley: Most people accept that it will be the reverse: it will be substantially safer.

The dimensions of the subways and the surface of this part of the route have been chosen to allow horse riders passage without dismounting and without the dangers of grade crossings on busy roads. The money in this resolution covers that. My hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate dealt with the provisions that are relevant to equestrians.

In addition, the landscaping proposals associated with the road will provide an extra 11·5 acres of green space between the Green Man interchange and Temple Mills. Just over half of it will be open to the public; all of it will be readily visible to them. Both the size of the forest and the amount of other green land in the vicinity of the route will increase as a result of construction of the road. That is in addition to the other environmental measures incorporated in the design of the road to mitigate its effects on its surroundings.

I repeat what was said in our earlier debate—that 40 per cent. of the cost of the A12 Hackney to M11 link is devoted to environmental improvement or protection. That makes it one of the roads with the highest proportion of spending on environmental protection——

Mr. Cohen: Will the Minister compare that with the schemes that I suggested earlier in Epping and in Hatfield, not to mention others? Where are the measures to improve the environment to be implemented? They will go to Wanstead, not to Leyton or Leytonstone.

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman has not got it right. We must go over the matter at another public occasion, not necessarily with an enormous audience, step by step; or perhaps I can arrange a briefing for the hon. Gentleman. The hon. Gentleman is a man of generous impulse, and I am sure that he will be willing to examine carefully the details of how it is proposed to build the road in his constituency. I am sorry that he has not so far had an opportunity to do that, but it is right for me to make the opportunity available to him again. If a road is ever again proposed in his constituency, perhaps we can explain it once, or even twice, to the hon. Gentleman so that he does not need two and a half hours to tell the House about what is proposed.

The hon. Gentleman's most significant point was about the A1 motorway at Hatfield. As I explained to him when he brought his local council and the representatives of Beazers to the Department, I think one and a half years ago, the A1M proposal came from the local authority. It asked if it could, at no extra expense to the Department, cap the road and develop on top. I said to the hon. Gentleman and his associates that if that could be put forward with the link on a time scale that was compatible with the road and if the extra cost did not have to be borne by the Department, we would not only cheerfully consider it, but might think it possible.

As the debate went on, some of the earlier estimates of cost turned out to be incorrect. Although there might not have been total agreement between Beazers and the Department, there was more general agreement towards the end of the discussion than there was at the beginning about the acceptable slopes, the gradients, for the road. Of course, that affected the potential cost. I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Leyton because I think that he was the first London Member to raise the question of private finance for roads in London. I hope that it will be possible to build on some of the ideas that he put forward on how to get private sector contributions for better roads for the environment, for industrial access, for jobs and to reduce road casualties. Conservatives may claim the credit for those ideas, but the hon. Gentleman thought of them first.

Mr. Cohen: I shall certainly not do that again because I and Beazers got a nasty snub for taking the Government at their word. Did not the Minister's Department say to Beazers that it wanted £4 million in advance for future maintenance costs? The Department refused to accept anything less and put the kibosh on it and demanded the payment of all the costs of Atkins, the consultants. The Department even demanded its own office costs so determined was it to kill that private scheme. I shall certainly not try that again because the Government are not being honest.

Mr Bottomley: If not tonight, then perhaps tomorrow, I think that the hon. Gentleman will acknowledge that his language has been a sort of scatter gun of insults—not all

[Mr Bottomley]

of them cheerful—to all and sundry. Some of them were directed to hon. Members but we can bear that. However, he also said some rough things about people outside and I hope that they have the kindness to recognise how deeply the hon. Gentleman feels about the matter and how mercurially he sometimes reacts to what is going on. In the original conversation with Beazers, I said to the hon. Gentleman—I think to his satisfaction—that if a proposal came forward which did not involve public expense, the Department would be keen and happy to consider it. That was the original proposal and anyone who complains that the terms have changed is looking at the matter in the wrong way.

If the hon. Member for Leyton had an unanswerable case, he could have made it in about 10 minutes. However, he was aware that his case was answerable and perhaps he kept speaking so that many hon. Members who wanted to take part in the debate were not able to do so. We have established that the size of the forest and the amount of other green land in the vicinity of the route will increase as a result of the construction of the road. That is in addition to the other environmental measures incorporated in the design of the road to mitigate its effect on its surroundings.

Anyone who has an opportunity to drive out of London on the A12 will see the impact of the existing A12 trunk road on the hon. Gentleman's constituency. He is right to be in favour of building this new road, and the fact that he wants to continue to add environmental considerations is a worthy aim. We should remember that all such issues are not covered by the Bill. The Bill and the resolution cover the exchange land, the indemnification and the compensation—the payment to the conservators of the forest. The hon. Gentleman should support the Bill, and I hope that on reflection he will realise that perhaps he was using a parliamentary tactic in voting against it. If he does not realise that, his constituents will not understand why he does not support the Bill.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): I hope that we can clear up one point in this debate on the money resolution, which touches on exchange land. Will my hon. Friend the Minister make it perfectly clear that his Department will meet the reasonable costs of putting that exchange land into a condition acceptable to the City of London, so that what the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) said in the previous debate about the Department being mean was as nonsensical as most of his other remarks, because it will have to meet the bills presented by the City?

Mr. Bottomley: My hon. Friend makes an important point. The Department will have to do that, but it is plain that the City of London (Various Powers) Bill is different from most private Bills. It is necessary to have this Bill to be able to make the exchange of land between the City of London and the conservators of Epping Forest. It is also necessary to have the new road to provide relief from the through traffic in the constituency of the hon. Member for Leyton. The Department will meet all the proper costs, charges and expenses reasonably incurred by the City, and people will want to ensure that neither the forest nor the City is harmed by this necessary road.

Mr. James Arbuthnot (Wanstead and Woodford): Earlier, the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) referred to this land as scrubby old sewage land, and we would all agree that that is right. However, is it not also right to say that the scrubbier the land, the greater will be the improvement when the Department gets hold of it?

Mr. Bottomley: My hon. Friend has, characteristically, made a point briefly that the hon. Member for Leyton failed to make at some length. The land, which is virtually unusable, will be treated so that it becomes part of the forest, and in future centuries it will be looked on with pride, just as the forest and most of Hampstead, as the hon. Member for Leyton said, are now. Therefore, it is important that we extend the forest, and the net provisions of the Bill of which we are discussing the money resolution are designed to enhance the environment, to grow the forest and to make sure that life improves.

Mr. Cohen: The Minister and the House will have heard me say that I do not begrudge the development of such land for the people of Wanstead. However, can the Minister, in his heart of hearts, say that this land will benefit the people of Leyton? It is supposed to be compensation for land that is going, and it is the fault of the Department that the land is going.

Mr. Bottomley: I hope to be able to explain to the hon. Gentleman—not at great length because I do not want to fall into his manner of speaking and mode of delivery, so perhaps on paper—that there will be more land in his constituency that will be both available and on view to his constituents than there is at the moment. If we go on making these exchanges across the Floor of the House we run the risk of boring our colleagues. The interest among those on Government Benches is rather more resilient and robust. I do not want to suggest that this is only because my right hon. Friend the Patronage Secretary is here.

Mr. Corbyn: The Minister can rest assured that there is a great deal of interest in the Bill among Opposition Members and the only problem is that they are not all here. The Minister seems to be playing one bit of land off against the other. All of us would welcome the restoration of some scrubby old sewage land into parkland or forest, but that could be done anyway, irrespective of the problem that my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) is experiencing. As I understand it from visiting the area with him, the nub of his point is that he wants, and understandably so, extra parkland to compensate for the loss within the area of Waltham forest that is not some distance away. It is possible to do both things, so perhaps the Minister can address his mind to that.

Mr. Bottomley: My hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate concluded his speech with a reference to "1066 and All That". What we have in all this is the opportunity to improve Leyton and the forest. The hon. Gentleman asked whether we have the exchange right, and we have. The detailed consideration can take place in Committee. When debating the money resolution it is time to restate the areas of land to which some of the sums are related. Having done that, perhaps the House would believe it right for me to conclude my remarks.

The net loss of open space at the Green Man interchange will be about 1·25 acres. The amount of land to be brought back in Leyton high road to the Green Man at Temple Mills will be 11·5 acres. On my reckoning, that is a factor of about 10:1. That strikes me as improvement

rather than deterioration. We have already established that for equestrians, pedestrians and cyclists, the Green Man interchange will improve.

We have had it accepted that the land in the forest will be greatly improved and added to. I believe that the House will probably want to follow Second Reading by passing the money resolution, and I commend it to the House. I hope that it will be possible to continue developing the environment and the number of jobs in east London and reducing the casualties. The development is much needed. Anyone who travels through the area will know that the road that we are discussing will provide uplift. The road has been needed for the past 10 years and I hope that tonight we shall move it on its way forward.

10.46 pm

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): I am keen to support the money resolution and in so doing to refer to a part of the Bill, to which the resolution refers, that did not receive the exposure on Second Reading that I and many of my constituents, and those of my hon. Friends the Members for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) and for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson), would have liked. As I know that they wish to add their remarks to the resolution, I shall endeavour to be brief.

However, before referring specifically to the Bill I wish to pay my tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) for the, as ever, competent and professional way in which he introduced the Bill on Second Reading. I pay a short tribute to my predecessor, Sir John Biggs-Davison, who took a considerable interest in the matters that we are discussing and who was a great friend of Epping forest over many years.

I have received a great deal of help in evaluating the issues that concern the great natural inheritance of Epping forest from John Bessant, the superintendent of the forest, and the members of his committee, who kindly entertained me on an extremely instructive tour of the forest. The professional advice of the City remembrancer and his staff has been of great assistance to all hon. Members who have an interest in the forest. A distinguished former Member of this place, John Harvey, offered his advice to me from an early stage of my by-election campaign, for which I am extremely grateful.

The problem that is referred to in clauses 9 and 10 impacts immediately on the money resolution. Those clauses relate to the problem of horse riding in Epping forest and how the means of repairing the damage that is caused by it should be financed. Although Epping forest is the size of Ashdown forest—Ashdown forest is probably its nearest equivalent in the south of England—it is very much nearer to London than Ashdown. It receives a degree of use that is disproportionate to its size. I understand that there are about 600 registered riders who use Ashdown forest, and the superintendent's estimate of the likely number of riders who would be licensed to use Epping forest, if such a scheme were to be introduced, would be about 2,000. That is understandable and proper because many residents in the constituencies of the hon. Members for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) and Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), for example, the two Opposition Members who have had the good fortune to participate in an extraordinarily interesting debate this evening that will feature prominently in all our lives, enjoy going to the forest. It is a marvellous lung of greenery and opportunity for recreation away from the busy city. However, there are many more of us today even than the City fathers envisaged when they rescued the forest from the depredations of enclosure.

The problem arises from overuse by a few irresponsible riders. My hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate identified problems in three areas. First, a few irresponsible riders are damaging the forest floor. Secondly, the forest floor is itself a vital part of the forest and its conservation is extremely important to the management of that amenity. Thirdly, a great deal of cost is attached to that exercise.

Given that clause 9 of the City of London (Various Powers) (No. 2) Bill 197] gave the conservators the power to regulate the places that horse riders may use, we face the question of how avoiding the damage so caused should be financed, and whether riders should be made responsible for meeting at least part of that cost.

I have received, as have many of my right hon. and hon. Friends, a great deal of correspondence about the matter, which is clearly divided into two camps. The horse riders' organisations take the view that any further incursion on the right to ride in the forest would be unreasonable. There have also been substantial representations—not least a petition, fetchingly bound in green velvet by Peggy Bitten, which contains 5,000 signatures—clearly expressing the view that responsibility for horse riding in the forest should be matched by a system of registration and charging to ensure that at least part of the cost of that exercise is met by the riders themselves.

The scheme suggested by the conservators incorporates a modest charge for enjoying the forest's facilities. I am pleased that the City of London authorities indicate a likely charge of about £50 per animal. Because the charge will essentially be levied on the beast, any person who wants simply an occasional ride from the stable will not find himself having to meet the entire cost of a licence but only the equivalent of a few pence per day. I note also that a charge of £40 to £50 would not represent a significant part of the cost of maintaining a horse. The various estimates I have seen—and I thank goodness that I have no female children—suggest that the cost of keeping a horse varies between £2,000 and £4,000 per year. I could not be more pleased that none of my children has expressed the vaguest interest in horse riding, and I propose ensuring that that remains the case.

Despite the fact that there is a good case to argue for registration to catch the few irresponsible riders, and for making a charge so that part of the cost of maintaining the rides is borne by the riders themselves, it is in a sense even more important to ensure that horse riders are not unreasonably discriminated against by any of the Bill's provisions. After all, riders are as entitled to use the forest as are walkers, bird watchers, or harriers. It was for that reason that, shortly after I returned to the House, I originally blocked the Bill to ensure that proper discussion took place between the City of London authorities and the various bodies that made representations to me.

I am delighted that the City authorities have expressed a willingness to delete the proposed subsections (3A), (3B) and (3C) in clause 9, and to make provision in clause 10 for a more general scheme of registration. Those are both useful changes, which go properly hand in hand with a system of registration and charging.

[Mr. Steve Norris]

I think it entirely proper for the money resolution to be approved. It adheres to a spirit clearly enunciated in the Bill that those responsible for the consequences of their leisure activities in the forest should make at least some contribution to the cost of repairing the damage. A more general principle, which I consider vital, is that while the forest is there for the enjoyment of all who wish to go about their business lawfully, engaging in their chosen recreation, the conservators' overriding responsibility is not to favour riders, walkers, bird watchers, harriers or any other group, but to ensure that the forest that we inherited is passed on to future generations in at least as good a state as that in which we found it.

10.56 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I am sorry that I was not able to be present for much of the Second Reading debate—as my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) pointed out, I was detained elsewhere —but I think that it would have been difficult for me to catch your eye in any case, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because of the interest in it.

I share the fascination of the hon. Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) and many others with the history of open space in London and the south-east. It is a history of the struggle of ordinary people who wanted space for themselves. They prevented the enclosures in Epping forest, just as in my constituency radical members of the Metropolitan Board of Works obtained Highbury fields for us.

I am concerned by some aspects of the Bill, and by the expenditure prescribed in it. I well understand the problems relating to the use of Epping forest. I have visited the forest many times and enjoyed it very much, although I once had to swim in a pond there in mid-winter because my dog had been caught in a branch and was in danger of drowning. The forest is a beautiful place and, indeed, very overused.

The Bill states that the conservators will try to regulate usage by horse riders—I understand that, because of the damage that they do to the tracks in the forest—and proposes the introduction of charges, provided—I quote from clause 10(1)—

"that taking one year with another the aggregate amount raised by such charges shall not exceed the reasonable costs incurred by the Conservators in undertaking the activities to which charges made under this subsection relate."

I am concerned about that, and about subsection (2), which states:

"Charges made under subsection (1) above may make different provision for different cases or circumstances or different areas of Epping Forest."

An important principle is at stake here. First, as the hon. Member for Epping Forest pointed out, the forest was rescued from the enclosures for all time for the public good—for the free usage and enjoyment of ordinary people. If a charging system is introduced, we shall have departed from that important principle. What worries me even more, however, is that the wording is something of an open book. It says that the charges should amount to no more than the "reasonable costs" that the conservators may incur in the necessary works, but there appears to be very little definition of what "reasonable costs" might be. If those costs become very high and the entire cost of the works is passed on to the users—in this case, horse riders —it may deter poorer children from schools rather than riding schools, and handicapped children, from riding and enjoying the forest in other similar ways. The Bill appears to be departing from a very important principle.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The hon. Gentleman is concerned about the introduction of charges in Epping forest. Does he not accept that riding horses is the only activity that is carried on commercially on Epping forest land that is not charged for and that very many other activities on Epping forest land attract charges?

Mr. Corbyn: Yes, I accept the hon. Gentleman's point. In a sense, it emphasises rather than takes away from my point. When children in areas such as mine, which is not a particularly wealthy area, want to take up horse riding —there is no reason why they should not, because horse riding should be available for all—they find that to have to pay for riding on open lands on top of the cost of the tack and the training makes it prohibitive.

Mr. Norris: I follow the hon. Gentleman's point, which is perfectly fair. However, he will accept, I am sure, that the system that the conservators have said that they wish to adopt in respect of charging suggests that a child in the hon. Gentleman's constituency would simply hire a horse for the afternoon, in which case the child ought to be charged only for that part of the day cost of the annual allowance, which would be 10p or 12p.

Mr. Corbyn: That is fair enough, and the way that the hon. Gentleman puts it is understandable, but the wording in clause 10 is fairly open ended and does not provide the kind of guarantees that hon. Members whose constituencies border Epping forest want. When the Bill is considered in Committee I hope that the clause will be amended and tightened and that these costs will be reconsidered. We want to protect the forest and regulate its use as far as that is necessary, but we must not discriminate against the very people who use the forest. Hon. Members who represent and live in the area are fortunate to have the forest on their doorstep, but it is also on the doorstep of many other people in north London. We enjoy going there. Epping forest once extended as far as Queen's wood in Hornsey and Highgate wood and to parts of Hampstead heath. Queen's wood and Highgate wood are still virgin forest, as is Epping forest. That, in an urban area, is remarkable.

I tabled an instruction on clause 11, but it was not selected. Clause 11 provides for a change in the length of the fencing of the Blackfriars underpass footpath from 1,200 ft to 1,282 ft. That extension of the fencing will prevent the footpath from being used. The City of London (Various Powers) Act 1977 authorised the construction of the Blackfriars underpass. The change would make the area very pedestrian unfriendly. Many people who travel by train to Blackfriars go to the Mermaid theatre in the evenings. The area between the City of London and the City of Westminster is becoming a motorway. We should not encourage high-speed traffic if there is little pedestrian access to neighbouring buildings. An urban motorway in that area should not be allowed to develop.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: I appreciate why the hon. Gentleman could not be here earlier, when I went to some trouble to explain the clause. I made the point that there is no access to buildings from this so-called pedestrian way, which is highly dangerous, and that there are plenty of other ways of reaching the buildings to which the hon.

Gentleman refers without going along a very narrow pedestrian path that would cause danger to both pedestrians and road users.

Mr. Corbyn: I understand that. I repeat my apology for not being able to be here earlier. I have tried to walk along that piece of pavement and I concede that it is very dangerous. My general point is that I do not like the idea of separating roads and pedestrians in that type of urban area because it creates traffic problems in the future.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Most of us would like traffic to be buried wherever possible. That is where the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) and I agree. It is probably best to give the whole road space to pedestrians. It may be possible to reverse the hierarchy in that way in areas that do not have to carry through traffic. One of the best courses is to do what the City has done, which is take traffic away from people and give people back the space.

Mr. Corbyn: That would be nice, but I can think of many parts of the City that are choked all day with unpleasant exhaust fumes. Some of the beauties of the City, such as the areas around the Guildhall, St. Paul's and the Monument, are unpleasant to visit. I often take visitors there, but they frequently want to leave quickly because it is not pleasant to visit such an environment. I hope that we can get more traffic out of the City rather than attract more into it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) has also tabled an instruction, but he is unwell. He telephoned me this morning. His instruction, which was tabled on Friday, concerns the draft strategic guidance for London, which has been issued by the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am finding it difficult to relate what the hon. Gentleman is now saying to the money resolution. He must address his comments to that resolution.

Mr. Corbyn: I understand the need to speak to the costs of the Bill. My hon. Friend wants to include in the Bill a provision which would lead to expenditure on the protection of ancient monuments in the City. My hon. Friend is anxious about the palace of the Roman governor of London, Julius Agricola. I hope that there will be an opportunity to raise such issues in Committee. What has happened today at the Rose theatre in Southwark shows that there is enormous feeling among ordinary people that our history should be preserved and not have speculative office blocks built on it.

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): Does the hon. Gentleman also accept that there is strong feeling among the people of Walthamstow that the Bill should be passed so that the forest floor in that part of Epping forest which is in my constituency is no longer cut up by riders?

Mr. Corbyn: I am not sure that there is unanimity in the borough of Waltham Forest on that matter.

It being three-quarters of an hour after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted Business):—*

The House divided: Ayes 101, Noes 19.

Division No. 200] **[11.8 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beith, A. J.
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowis, John
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Coombe, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Staml'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Dorrell, Stephen
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Harris, David
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Jessel, Toby
Knapman, Roger
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Neale, Gerrard
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Paice, James
Rathbone, Tim
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Speller, Tony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory.

NOES

Allen, Graham
Cohen, Harry
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Foster, Derek
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Haynes, Frank
McAvoy, Thomas
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McLeish, Henry
Marek, Dr John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Ruddock, Joan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jeremy Corbyn and
Mr. Harry Barnes.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the City of London (Various Powers) Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any expenditure incurred by the Secretary of State—

(a) in reinstating certain land in Epping Forest temporarily occupied by him by virtue of that Act for road purposes;

(b) in reimbursing the Conservators of Epping Forest for such proportion of the costs, charges and expenses reasonably incurred and properly paid by them in connection with the preparation, obtaining and passing of that Act as is attributable to its provisions relating to the grant to him for road purposes of rights over and interests in land; and

(c) in indemnifying the Conservators against actions, costs, claims and demands brought or made against or incurred by them which are caused by or arise out of the grant of those rights and interests and which are not attributable to the wrongful act, neglect or default of the Conservators, their contractors, agents, workmen or servants.

Taxation of Savings

11.19 pm

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Lilley): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 4763/89 relating to taxation of savings; and supports the Government's view that the proposals are unnecessary, ineffective and damaging.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wonder whether you can help me. The document that we are debating, No. 4763/89, is printed partly in the French language and some of the information contained in it is not in the English part of the document. It provides additional information that is not available in the English part. Is it in order for us to debate a document that is printed partly in a language other than English?

My second point of order relates to Standing Order No. 109, which states:

"No document received by the clerk of a select committee shall be . . . altered without the knowledge and approval of the committee."

My understanding is that the document considered by the Select Committee on European Legislation was wholly in the English language, whereas the one that we have obtained from the Table Office is partly in French. I wonder whether you could give us some guidance, because my understanding is that when the matter was raised previously, in the early 1900s when another language was used in the House, it was declared to be out of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): The matter is in order. The Standing Order which the hon. Gentleman has quoted does not apply to the House, but the points that he is making are perfectly legitimate ones to make in the debate.

Mr. Tony Marlow; (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Of course, I shall take the point of order, but I remind the House that the debate has started and that we are cutting into debating time.

Mr. Marlow: I am grateful, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will you clarify the ruling that you have just given? It is not likely to happen, but were it to happen that the document upon which the debate was based was totally in a foreign language, are you saying that the debate would go ahead?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am saying that there is nothing in the Standing Orders to cover this matter in relation to debates in the House. But these are perfectly legitimate matters to raise during the debate.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): As a historian, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you will be aware that in the past hon. Members have been ruled out of order for making parts of their speeches in a foreign language—especially Mr. David Lloyd George, then a rising Welsh Back-Bench Member——

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): It was not a foreign language.

Mr. Aitken: He was ruled out of order for using a tongue other than the English language. Since your

predecessors have ruled out of order the speaking of Welsh, why is it in order for someone to refer to these documents in French?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We are not dealing with speeches in the House. I was asked about the language of documents, and I made clear what the Standing Orders cover. But I repeat that these are legitimate points to make in the debate.

Mr. Marlow: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have dealt with the hon. Gentleman's point, and I cannot see that any points of order arise.

Mr. Lilley: It may be for the convenience of the House if I address it in English——

Mr. Marlow: If it is not proper to use a foreign language in debate, is it possible, is it proper and is it in order to read extracts from this document, which happens to be in a foreign language, during the debate?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is hypothetical.

I should say that Mr. Speaker has not selected the amendment.

Mr. Lilley: I shall speak in English, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Government believe that the Commission's proposals for a compulsory withholding tax Community-wide are unnecessary, ineffective and damaging. The origin of the proposals lies in the capital liberalisation directive which required the Commission to support proposals on reducing tax evasion and required the Council to take a position by the end of June. But it did not require the Council to accept those proposals. It specified clearly that acceptance would require unanimity, and the implementation of the remainder of the capital liberalisation directive, with the eventual abolition of exchange controls throughout the Community, in no way depends upon agreement on those proposals.

There are plenty of arguments of principle—no doubt we shall hear them this evening—and plenty of reasons why the House may not wish to give up its sovereign right to impose taxes or not to impose them. In any case, the practical arguments against the proposal are overwhelming. In the first place, it is clearly unnecessary. We can easily understand the fears of countries that are about to abolish exchange controls that abolition may give rise to an outflow of funds to evade taxation. Those fears were expressed in the House when exchange controls were abolished in 1979, but our experience provides no evidence to suggest that the abolition of exchange controls is likely to be followed by a significant outflow of tax avoidance funds.

Germany, which has had no exchange controls for a long time, had no measurable problem of outflow of tax avoidance funds until it imposed a withholding tax. That shows that it is not capital liberalisation but the very imposition of a withholding tax that leads to an outflow of tax avoidance funds.

Moreover, those who are prepared to evade their countries' tax laws are likely to have been prepared also to avoid their exchange controls before they were abolished. In addition, a network of double taxation agreements between countries, including the United Kingdom, largely meets the requirements of minimising tax evasion.

We believe that the proposal will also be ineffective. It contains several loopholes that will enable people to avoid paying tax. It rightly specifies that there will be no withholding tax on Eurobonds and contains a rather imprecise proposal that there should be no tax on interest to commercial companies. There is also the possibility of not having a withholding tax on small savings.

More important than that, it is quite clear that those who wish to avoid paying the withholding tax can simply put their money outside the Community altogether. New York, for example, has no withholding tax and in Switzerland fiduciary deposits attract no withholding tax. No doubt if the Community went ahead and imposed such a tax, tax havens would spring up around it like mushrooms over night. They would be the welcoming recipients of funds from the Community.

The ambition is expressed in the directive not only that the Community should establish a withholding tax but that agreement should be reached that all other countries should do likewise. That is wholly unrealistic and represents a tacit admission that, without such agreement globally, the proposal would merely lead to funds being diverted outside the Community.

It is a damaging proposal, not just because it would lead to an outflow of tax avoidance funds but because it would lead to an outflow of perfectly legitimate funds and, indeed, to the non-retention of funds from abroad because, although they are not subject to withholding tax in principle, many foreign holders of funds will not wish to go through the process of identifying themselves, reclaiming tax and going through the bureaucratic procedures necessary once a withholding tax exists.

Mr. Marlow: Does my hon. Friend accept that the secret reason, the secret agenda, the real reason for this proposal for a withholding tax is not because the European Commission thinks that a withholding tax is a good, natural, decent or reasonable tax? It is a stalking horse. What they want is other European sources of finance. They are trying this one out now, and if they do not get this one, they will try another one.

Mr. Lilley: That may be one of the motives. Ours is not to speculate about the motives but merely to determine whether it is a desirable proposal. I believe it to be a damaging proposal.

The other problem—apart from the outflow of perfectly legitimate funds and the outflow of funds from abroad—is that such a tax would drive financial markets abroad. That is a more serious problem from Britain's point of view. A withholding tax is incompatible with the operation of many commercial wholesale financial markets. Deposits change hands frequently and it is virtually impossible to keep track of the identity of those who own them, to whom the interest is payable and whether they are residents and therefore liable to withholding tax or non-residents and therefore not liable.

Where a discount is payable that diminishes over time, which many financial instruments enjoy, it is difficult to tell who the declining discount is attributable to and who not and therefore how a withholding tax could be levied on it. There are numerous other difficulties in the operation of the wholesale markets that are incompatible with the

[Mr. Lilley]

workings of such a tax and that is extremely important to the United Kingdom as it has the largest and most successful wholesale markets.

The German experience demonstrates emphatically that the views expressed are not alarmist but practical and empirically verified. Preceding the imposition of the withholding tax in Germany in January and during the subsequent four months there has been a massive outflow of capital. As a result, an interest rate differential has been established whereby it is more expensive to borrow deutschmarks in Germany than it is outside that country. Germany has therefore done itself the disservice of raising the cost of borrowing to its Government, industry and people relative to those abroad who borrow deutschmarks. The German banks put the cost of imposing the withholding tax at about $420 million. Small wonder that the Germans have decided to abandon the experiment of withholding tax and, on Friday, came out against the idea of a European-wide withholding tax.

Opposition to the proposal is widespread not just in this country from the British Bankers Association and Building Societies Association, but from individual institutions in the financial market. The European equivalent to the Confederation of British Industry has said that it thinks that the withholding tax

"could turn out to be more harmful than the illness it was meant to cure"

and that it would inevitably lead to a flight of capital from Europe.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Can my hon. Friend explain how the withholding tax would work in relation to British building societies that have special interest rate arrangements?

Mr. Lilley: At present we have a composite rate tax on deposits in building societies and banks up to £50,000. Over and above that, although the holder of such deposits is liable to tax, we do not withhold it at source as such large sums are often mobile, involved in rapid financial transactions and therefore difficult to follow. The liability remains, but no CRT above that £50,000.

Mr. Taylor: How would the withholding tax work on British building society accounts?

Mr. Lilley: If the proposal were implemented, we would be required to impose a withholding tax, not just the present one of 21 per cent. up to £50,000, but at least 15 per cent. on all deposits, including those above £50,000.

The United Kingdom has argued consistently, on the basis of its experience, against the proposal and our arguments have been making increasing headway. We have been joined by Luxembourg and the Netherlands in opposing the directive and now most emphatically by the Germans. Criticisms have also been expressed by Greece and Portugal, which are particularly worried about its impact on remittances from emigrants, and the Irish Republic is also critical.

The German decision to suspend its own withholding tax from July of this year effectively delivers the coup de grace—if I am allowed to use that phrase in this debate—to the proposal. Those who persist in pursuing the idea are rather like the German philosopher Hegal who, on being told that his scientific theories had been refuted by the facts, declared:

"So much the worse for the facts".

The German experience with its withholding tax has proved emphatic and final.

Fortunately, the Commissioner responsible for taxation, Madame Scrivener, has declared herself to be pragmatic and flexible and I believe that she will not long detain the Commission or deflect the Community with the proposal from the more important objective of completing the single market. I hope that the House will send a clear message to the Community that it does not believe that the Community's interests will be best served by a withholding tax of this kind.

11.35 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): We are, effectively, discussing two documents. The first deals with the proposals for withholding tax and the second with the proposals for co-operation to combat tax evasion on investment income.

The Opposition approach the document on withholding tax with considerable scepticism and caution. We share many of the Government's concerns about the proposal. We take a more sympathetic view of the second document than do the Government.

The Commission's aims for withholding tax initially sound laudable. First, it aims to ensure that the differences between the tax regimes of member countries do not distort and impede the process of capital movement liberalisation. Secondly, it aims to promote genuine, cross-frontier competition in financial services. With the approach of 1992 and the prospect that Britain's financial services industry could take a substantial share of European activity in the financial services sector, genuine cross-frontier competition is important.

Thirdly, the Commission says that it wishes to acknowledge that complete harmonisation is

"neither necessary nor desirable at the moment."

Finally, it says that it wishes to maintain the internal balance of the systems for the taxation of income in the different member states. I shall return to that point, because it is crucial to the argument about our response to the document. The Opposition fear that the proposed directive does not secure the aims that the Commission says that it will.

Our concerns are fivefold. First, we believe that the internal balance of systems of taxation is extremely important. The directive might provide the possibility of upsetting the internal balance which this Parliament might seek through the British taxation systems. We have criticisms of the present internal balance struck by the Government. We were discussing that precise point only last Wednesday in relation to the extremely generous provision which the Government are currently making for the tax provisions on equity saving, as opposed to other forms of saving. However, it is important for us to preserve the possibility of striking a balance which might be different from that sought by the commission.

We do not have any quarrel with the principle of a witholding tax, but we might, as a country, wish to consider the establishment of thresholds that might fall foul of such a directive. We might wish to seek differences between different forms of saving and their tax treatment. In addition, we might wish to use the tax system to promote industrial investment by means of individual contribution. All those possibilities might, in some circumstances, be ruled out by the provisions of the

proposed directive. We believe that it is important, within the internal balance of our taxation system, to preserve considerable flexibility.

Secondly, we fear that the loopholes that the Commission suggests—the Economic Secretary spelt this out—provide the opportunity for a coach and horses to be driven through its own proposals. Such loopholes include the exemptions for particularly designated savings income, for the vague attribution of industrial or commercial income, for residents of third countries and for international loans, such as Eurobonds. Those loopholes provide a fundamental insecurity to the system which they seek to establish.

Thirdly, we must recognise that the option would remain open to Governments—even if such a directive were brought in—to use interest rates as a financial market booster if flexibility in fiscal measures were removed. The temptation to switch from the use of fiscal policy to monetary policy would become greater under such a system.

Fourthly, we are worried that it appears from the documents that, in one respect, the Commission wishes to treat capital gains in some respects as pure investment income. There is a strong argument for treating income from whatever source in similar fiscal ways. There is a bias in the United Kingdom fiscal system against earned income; it should be rectified, but we are not sure whether article 2(2) of the directive is the right way in which to go about that.

Finally, we are concerned that there are practical difficulties for the wholesale markets, as the Economic Secretary outlined, and that the directive might well impede the efficient operation of those markets.

We have a number of serious doubts about the contents of the proposed directive on withholding tax. Accordingly, we shall not seek to divide the House, because we share the Government's doubts on the issue. However, the Government are being too alarmist in believing that such a proposal will have an adverse impact on the City and financial institutions. One is tempted to ask whether they can stand up to a world of competition on equal terms. If they can, they should not be worried by provisions such as these. Nevertheless, our doubts require careful discussion with other member states.

We take a rather more robust view of the second document, on co-operation to combat tax evasion, than the Government. We do not believe there is an absolute necessity to link to the proposals. The second document could be implemented, with modifications, before the first. It seems entirely sensible that member states should remove administrative barriers to the exchange of information in order to assist the process of identifying and clamping down on tax evasion. The document goes out of its way to stress that there should be no attempt to breach doctrines of bank confidentiality, but within administrative practices it identifies scope for greater co-operation. The Government should consider in their response not only the administrative burdens that that might place on the Inland Revenue but the possibility of advantage to our Inland Revenue from information gathered by other member countries' revenue departments.

The problem with the Government's response becomes clearest in their explanatory memorandum:

"The Government is concerned that . . . the use of tax investigation resources may be dictated by overseas priorities to the detriment of domestic priorities."

What domestic priorities? It is quite clear that our Government have devoted far too little attention to cutting out tax evasion. They have not given sufficient resources to the Inland Revenue to enable it to tackle tax fraud. Only last Wednesday, during the debate on the Finance Bill, my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) pointed to the considerable manpower losses in the Inland Revenue that the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service has identified.

A total of 260 tax inspectors left the Inland Revenue in 1987-88 and 170 left in the previous year. Let us be quite clear. The average yield of a grade 7 tax inspector undertaking accounts work in one of the specialised tax offices dealing with, in this instance, large commercial firms was almost £1 million per head in 1987-88. Loss of manpower within the Inland Revenue is serious and we know that even before the relative decline in Inland Revenue staffing, the Revenue was understaffed.

The Government have been dragging their feet on the need to crack down harder on tax evasion. That is in sharp contrast to the approach by the Department of Social Security. It is a classic case of one law rigorously pursued for the poor and another languorously applied to the rich. The directive would help in a small way to improve our performance and the performance of other member states in tackling tax evasion. We urge the Government to support it rather more enthusiastically than they appear to be doing.

11.46 pm

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): We should welcome straightaway this very tough motion submitted by the Government because it appears to indicate a change of attitude. I welcome that, and I think that all those who take a genuine interest in the European Community will also welcome it. In the motion the Government condemn as unnecessary, ineffective and damaging a proposal which, I understand, all the Ministers in the Council agreed to ask for only 12 months ago.

We have got a major change. Twelve months ago we wanted a proposal to be considered and now we quite rightly say that it is ineffective, damaging and nonsense. It would be a mistake not to welcome what is obviously a clear change of heart by the Government on the presentation of this mass of crazy Eurodocuments which push forward bureaucracy, harmonisation and Socialism and, unfortunately, force them on the people of Britain.

Secondly, it is utterly and completely ludicrous that an important proposal by the Common Market for new taxes on savings should be discussed at a quarter to 12 at night. In a rather controversial speech, my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) said he thought that there was an attempt to mislead the public on the nature of the European Community. I can understand how he and others might feel, because the people of Britain are not being told what is going on in the European Community. I wish to goodness that they were and that my right hon. Friends the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup and the Prime Minister and everyone else would tell people what was happening in the European Community and how it affected them.

At a quarter to 12 at night we are debating this important new measure. Tomorrow after 10 o'clock there

[Mr. Teddy Taylor]

will be another important new measure and there will be another on Wednesday after 10 o'clock. The people of Britain will hear little, if anything, about what is being proposed and what, in some cases, is being forced on them, whether they like it or not, by the majority vote of the European Community.

Mr. Marlow: And in French.

Mr. Taylor: As my hon. Friend says, we now have these things partly in French.

The Minister has rightly said that he thinks he can stop this. Mr. Jacques Delors has correctly said that, as a result of the Single European Act, about 80 per cent. of a significant part of the laws that we normally approve will effectively be taken over by the Common Market and that the majority of member states will decide on laws to be applied in Britain, whether or not the Parliament or the Government like them.

The Minister has said that this is one of the 20 per cent. on which we have unanimity, but we had this before. The Speaker's Counsel told us that there was unanimity on the summer time order, and the Common Market could not force it on us. There was no doubt about it. However, then the Commissioner of the Common Market presented a proposal, under article 100A, which we thought was unlawful and that our legal advice agreed was unlawful, but it still happened. The only way to stop that is to get the 12 member states to agree that the EEC Commission is wrong.

I am delighted with the stand that the Minister has taken on this most dreadful proposal for nonsensical bureaucracy, coming from the EEC. However, is he confident that there is no way that the EEC could ask for a majority vote? We have to think of the proposals of the court. As my hon. Friend is aware, to our cost, we have had the court forcing taxes on Britain. I am delighted to see that the Prime Minister is against the Common Market imposing new taxes on us, but it has been doing it through the court. For example, the new tax of VAT on spectacles and hearing aids was forced on Britain not because our Government or Parliament wanted it but because the court told us that we had to do it. In the same way, the proposals to impose taxes on industry and commerce, on electricity, gas, water and sewage and all new industrial buildings were carried through not because our Government or Parliament wanted to do it, but because the court told us to do it. I should like the Minister to make it abundantly clear—we know that he takes a deep interest in these matters—that there is no way in which this ludicrous arrangement can be forced on Britain if we do not want it.

Will my hon. Friend say something about what is planned, in case it is forced on us? I can remember sitting here listening to the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), then a Treasury Minister, telling us that the Common Market would never abolish our zero rates of VAT, but he was wrong, not because he cheated or lied but because the Common Market moves all the time and takes more and more power.

The Minister will be aware of what "interest" is, as defined by this proposal. It is:

"premium, prizes or the difference between issue and redemption prices on discount instruments."

Does that mean that prizes from premium bonds will be affected by this income tax? Does it mean that when people buy Government bonds at a discount, someone will work out the difference between what they buy them at and what the repayment prices are, and they will have to pay their Eurotax on this? What does it mean by "prizes"? It says here that prizes will be subject to the withholding tax. Are we talking about raffles? What are we talking about? I hope that the Minister will give us a clear idea about what we can look forward to.

The same is true of building societies. In view of what the Minister said, I am sure that many of the honest people in Britain who have saved for their retirement and have money in a building society will be worried about what the Common Market is planning to do. My hon. Friend should also give us some idea about what will happen with the overseas territories of the EEC.

People should know about these things but they do not. These orders are taken at midnight and no one knows about them. The hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) is nodding his head. He knows about it. We are having debates about how we will not allow people to come here from Hong Kong, but only yesterday we heard that people from the Portuguese colony next door to Hong Kong will be able to come here without any restriction.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Yes.

Mr. Taylor: That is the result of Common Market legislation, which the Liberals always supported enthusiastically. I am not blaming them for it because lots of people are responsible for this. Many such things are happening, and people do not know about them.

I am delighted that the Government are getting tough with the Common Market. We have had crazy proposals. It has let us down on every pledge. I remember all the talk about controlling spending, an issue on which the Prime Minister fought so hard. The Court of Auditors report spoke of the promised 3 per cent. increase in spending, which became a 20 per cent. increase because of fiddles.

I remember all the talk about the reforms of the CAP, but they never happened, and they never will happen, because we cannot reform the CAP. The Government seem to be waking up to the nonsense, the bureaucracy, the waste and the Socialism of Europe, and we should all say hooray. I am sure that I carry hon. Members on both sides of the House with me when I say that people have got to be told. We know that the Prime Minister will be tough on the Common Market, but the people must be told what the issues are.

The people will want to know whether the balance of trade with the Common Market is dreadful, good or horrifying. Most people do not know. People will want to know how much money we are paying into the Common Market. They would like to know now, but they do not. That is because no one is telling them.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister, an excellent Treasury Minister, will say, "Yes, we shall try to do all in our power to reject this Common Market rubbish. Yes, we shall tell the people of Britain what is happening." If that happens, we shall hear no more complaints from my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup or from anyone else. If the people are told what is happening, they will back the Government 100 per cent. in trying to stop this flood of bureaucratic, costly and Socialist Eurononsense.

11.55 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): The hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) warned us of bogeymen hidden in corners and even claimed a convert to his view in the Prime Minister's latest stance on Europe. I do not think that she is a total convert. As I understand it, she still believes that we should be a member of the Community. However, she seems to be having difficulty accepting some of the implications of that. It is, of course, no part of accepting the implications to assume that every proposal that emanates from the Commission is correct.

The proposal that is before us is directed to a problem that we would be foolish to deny exists. There could be substantial capital flows arising out of differential tax regimes in different countries and substantial tax evasion. However, having referred to that problem, the Commission advances a procedure that is unlikely to solve it. Indeed, in some respects it may make it significantly worse. These seem to be good reasons for sending the Commission back to the drawing board and saying, "You will not solve the problem this way so you had better look for another way of tackling it."

I am saying that the problem will not be solved for several reasons. First, the Commission's proposal is likely to generate capital movements all of its own. As the Minister said, the Germans found out about that. Such movements will probably be outside the Community. There are substantial loopholes within the proposal by its very nature. The Eurobond is the most significant example of that. Another example is the proposal in paragraph 18(iii) that

"Member States would be free not to apply the withholding tax to tax-exempt savings income (savings books and other common forms of saving)".

These savings will differ in about every country in the Community. It would be open to someone in Britain to take out every sort of tax-free saving in every different European country. In many instances different proposals would be used to encourage saving in different member countries. Someone who took that course would not have to pay any withholding tax on these savings. By this process he could accumulate a pretty substantial slice of income that would not attract the withholding tax. There is a series of loopholes of that sort.

There would be the enormous complexity of the clearing house mechanism, which would collect the tax at the withholding tax level at, say, 15 per cent. The member Governments would still have to maintain the differential between the withholding tax and the level at which they choose to tax savings. There is an obvious differential in Britain between the withholding tax level and the current composite rate that applies to bank and building society accounts.

It could be argued that the Commission's proposal represents a further limitation on that sometimes forgotten group, the non-taxpayers, whose members are receiving rather a raw deal at present. It is difficult now for an elderly non-taxpayer with age relief to find anywhere to put his savings where income tax is not deducted at source. National Savings represent an exception, but they would probably be exempt under the Commission's proposal. The offshore account is a reasonable proposition for someone who would not be liable for tax and who does not want to go through the process of having to reclaim tax, still less to have to pay tax that he cannot reclaim.

What would be the position, under the proposals that we are considering, of offshore accounts in the Isle of Man or the Channel isles? Both the Isle of Man and the Channel isles have association with the Community. What would be the position of offshore accounts in those territories under the withholding tax proposal?

The Commission's proposal is not a sensible way of tackling the problem. Therefore, we must consider the options. The alternative to avoiding substantial tax evasion is more information sharing between member states. To that extent, the mutual assistance directive seems to me more welcome than the Government suggest. Their tortuous argument that tax inspectors will suddenly be preoccupied with worrying about tax avoiders from Germany rather than with those in Britain is extraordinary. Mutual assistance is a reciprocal arrangement in which part of the burden of dealing with each other's tax evasion problems is shared. There is an element of that in all the bilateral tax arrangements we make with numerous other countries.

I am intrigued to know why the Government have, as I understand it, taken a hostile view of the joint OECD and Council of Europe proposal, which embraces a much greater number of countries, on the sharing of information. If information sharing is to be as effective as possible, it might best be backed by compulsory disclosure and total reporting of a kind that a number of member countries strongly resist because of their traditions of bank secrecy. Sometimes I think that right hon. and hon. Members such as the hon. Member for Southend, East should remember that other member states also hold strong views on practices that they do not think the Community as a whole should adopt. Looked at from the British perspective, it seems odd to us that the pattern should be preserved in some member states in which substantial tax evasion can occur with the knowledge of the banks, and without there being any communication between them and those countries' tax authorities.

The proposed information sharing mechanisms offer a reasonable way of tackling tax evasion without introducing other, even more serious, distortions of capital flows than the measure now before the House is designed to solve. I am more hostile to the withholding tax proposal than even the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), when he spoke on behalf of the Labour party in the new, responsible Euro-Labour party mould with a very wise and statesmanlike speech.

I do not merely have reservations about the EC's proposal but I think that it is plain wrong. The Government should resist it, but take a more co-operative approach to information sharing and to other measures for dealing with tax evasion, to avoid trapping Britain in a cumbersome mechanism that will create more problems than it solves.

12.1 am

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Over the years the Government and I have had our differences on European issues, but may I say how much I congratulate the Government on the motion that they have put before the House. It is succinct, it is to the point, it is the model of a motion.

I will endeavour to put this particular measure in the context of the debate which, if it has not started in the United Kingdom, jolly well should be started with the

[Mr. Tony Marlow]

European elections coming up. Yesterday, there was an elderly gentleman on our television screens—an elderly gentleman suffering from delusions of grandeur. It was of course my right hon. Friend "L'Europe c'est moi." He told us—whether we want it or not, whether we know it or not, whether we like it or not—that we in this country are now members of, part of, subsumed within, the united states of Europe.

Even allowing for the source of that advice, that comment showed a breathtaking arrogance. It was justified on the basis that my right hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker), along with a gentleman named Goebbels and 10 other individuals, signed this, in many ways offensive, piece of paper—the Single European Act. It is that document that has spawned the measure we are talking about this evening.

The one saving grace of this document is that it requires that this measure should be adopted not by majority vote, as so many of our laws are adopted, but by unanimity. Yesterday we were told that the treaty is important. But this House is important and the British people are important. This House and the British people have never agreed to be part of, to be subsumed in, a united states of Europe. Elderly gentlemen sometimes make mistakes. They get out of touch. In this case, this particular right hon. elderly gentleman is totally in touch. That is a rugby expression, Mr. Deputy Speaker, meaning that he is off the field of play.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) was somewhat more tactful. He said, "You cannot actually choose the bits of Europe that you like: you cannot have your Europe a la carte." Why not? If it is in our interests and we have the power to secure those bits that will benefit our country and the British people, why not have them? Certain issues in Europe are decided by unanimity. If a proposal is put forward that requires unanimity—such as the one that we are discussing—and we do want it, why not kick it out? If a proposal comes up for majority voting and we are in favour of it—if by manipulation, manoeuvre and argument we can get it through, and if it is in Britain's interests—why not have it?

There are good parts to Europe, and there are bad parts. The good parts include the single European market, of which I am sure that most hon. Members are in favour: free trade in goods and general benefits all round. Another good part is political co-operation. Any part in which we have interests in common and can work together sensibly is good. But this measure, this withholding tax, is one of the bad parts of Europe. There are other bad parts which should be seen alongside it. There is the European social charter, which would place massive burdens on our industry and on European industry. It would return to the industry of this country many of the disastrous apparatus that the Government have taken such a long time to get rid of.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Henley says that we cannot have Europe a la carte. I think that he ought to answer the question whether he wants this measure—the withholding tax—and whether he wants the European social charter. If that is what he wants, let him explain the benefits to us.

Another bad European measure has been put before the House, similar in badness to the measure that we are debating tonight. We debated the subject of smoking in public places. The European Commission, God bless us, felt that it was time that Europe took competence over such an issue. I suppose that the theory is that if one sits in a public lavatory chain-smoking in Dover, it will pollute the pastures of the French peasants in the Pas de Calais. Such little things please such little minds in the European Commission, and this is one such issue.

Why the withholding tax? We have no need for a withholding tax. What is the motive for the proposal? Why harmonise?

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): I entirely endorse what my hon. Friend is saying about withholding tax, with which most hon. Members appear to disagree. Will he recognise, however, that the motivation for the proposal was the much greater benefit to the Community provided by the agreement of the French and the Italians—against their better judgment—to remove their own obstacles to capital movements? In other words, they were going to abolish exchange controls, an event which I am sure that my hon. Friend will also welcome.

Mr. Marlow: I think that we all welcome that event, but as I read and understand the treaty, it was going to happen anyway. Everyone was committed to the removal of constraints on capital flows. There was no general commitment in favour of the withholding tax, however. If we can get the good, why put up with the bad as well?

Why, then, did the Commission want to introduce the withholding tax? Why did it want to harmonise taxes? A harmonised tax is a European tax. Any tax that is harmonised is potentially a source of European finance. What we must decide is whether we believe that taxes should be raised by Europe or within the nation states of Europe. I believe, and I think that the House believes, that we should raise our own taxes and spend our own money.

Why? First, we have had very bad experiences of money that is raised for Europe and spent by Europe. The main area of European expenditure is, of course, the common agricultural policy, and day after day we read stories of how it is riddled with fraud and the money is wasted. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) has told the House on many occasions that half the money spent on the common agricultural policy is spent on the storage and destruction of food. European policies are extravagant and wasteful and they spawn a great deal of criminal activity. That is another reason why we should not have a withholding tax.

The vast majority of the British people and the vast majority of right hon. and hon. Members believe that as we are in Europe we should stay in Europe, work with Europe and make Europe work. But that is a Europe of nation states, not a united states of Europe. A small minority is in favour of a united states of Europe, but if we start having more European levels of taxation we shall have more European levels of expenditure and we shall also move across the threshold from a Europe of nation states to a centralised, bureaucratic, Socialist united states of Europe. Let me explain why.

If Europe gets involved in personal levels of taxation —the level of tax that is charged to entrepreneurs—and if Europe gets involved in corporate taxation and controls the taxes that are paid by industry and commerce, there will be a tendency for them to be centralised at a high level in order to provide resources and scope for more

European policies. If the national Governments and national Parliaments of the nation states of Europe maintain the right, the power and the ability to raise their own taxes, they will tend to compete one with another. Instead of having high levels of European tax there will be low levels of national tax. If there are low levels of national tax, there is only one way that we can succeed. That is through growth—through giving scope to business, enterprise, commerce and industry.

If we want to have a prosperous Europe in the 21st century, national Governments and national Parliaments must decide what taxes are to be levied and how they are to be levied. If we move in the direction of centralised European taxation—of this withholding tax—or of any other areas of European taxation, we shall move towards the nightmare that has so often and so accurately been described by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East of a centralised, bureaucratic, Socialist united states of Europe.

12.12 am

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): I have listened very carefully to what has been said, including what was said by the Minister and the hon. Members for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) and for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow). It is the same old story. As the hon. Member for Southend, East said, here we go again, late at night, and it will happen again and again. It is high time we put a stop to it. The House should grab this one by the hair and do something about it. Ministers do not appear to be prepared to do anything about it. The Economic Secretary says that he disagrees with everything that his hon. Friends say. If there were to be a Division on the amendment, he would vote against it. I agree with the amendment, but it has not been selected. Had it been selected, the Minister would have voted against it.

The Minister is not always here when we discuss EEC matters. He is tucked up in bed, nice and warm. But some of us are here until the early hours of the morning discussing EEC matters. *[Interruption.]* The Government Whip is here, too. It is not often that I agree with him, but I agree with him tonight. He is here, too, until the early hours of the morning, along with some of my right and hon. Friends.

We are sick to death about what is going on. It is high time that it stopped. The Minister tells us what to do about taxation, but we can deal with that problem ourselves without the EEC telling us what to do. What help does the EEC intend to give us to carry out that job? The ordinary working class folk of this nation pay their tax automatically; it is deducted at source. That applies to Members of Parliament, too. His pay is taxed before he gets it. *[Interruption.]* I did not intervene when the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) was on his feet. He is a pro-European. He agrees with everything that they say, coming across that flipping water. We have had enough of it.

Mr. Beith: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Haynes: No, but I will in a minute. Dr. Death, who usually sits a bit further down this Bench, is always pushing about the European monetary system. A lot of us do not agree with it. He can keep pressing if he likes—he is one of a minute group. There are only three of them here.

A lot of hon. Members disagree with some of what is being proposed. I often disagree with what the Minister says.

Mr. Beith: I am having difficulty following the current Labour party stance. The hon. Gentleman is a Labour Whip. I listened to his Front Bench spokesman say that the directive on sharing information is welcome and that the Labour party understands the motivation behind the other, although it has some reservations about it. That does not seem to add up to the view that the hon. Gentleman is presenting—that Europe should not be considering these issues and that we can manage by ourselves. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Haynes: Now we have Pembroke yawping. He disagrees with everything that Opposition Members say. The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed will not get me to fall out with my hon. Friend on the Front Bench. That one was tried when we debated smoking, as the hon. Member for Northampton, North said. A Conservative Member tried to get me to criticise one of my lovely hon. Friends on the Front Bench. Once again, the Minister was tucked up all nice and warm between the sheets while we were here working.

I am expressing my own point of view here. I am entitled to do that if I want to. I represent an electorate of 66,000 and a population of more than 100,000. I am speaking on their behalf. I know what they say to me about taxation and the unfairness of it. We do not need Europe to tell us how to deal with our taxation. We can do it ourselves. The Minister is nodding. Does he agree that the House should be allowed to determine the destiny of its people and not be told what to do from across the water? Will the Minister get up and say so? He will not, because he agrees with many of the instructions that come from across the water. That is his problem. He will not get up and be honest like me and say, "I do not accept those things which they tell us we should be doing. We determine it. We decide." *[Laughter.]* The hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) may laugh, but his grandfather would not have laughed. I am talking about a serious matter. He knows who I am talking about. The fellow I am talking about was a real Socialist.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Not like Kinnock!

Mr. Haynes: We are all Socialists over here—except this lot behind me. I am expressing my view. It may be a bit different from that of my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), who is on the Front Bench. He is speaking on behalf of the party. I thought that we could express our views in this place. I usually do. I did this afternoon with the Secretary of State for Energy. I told him where to get off. That was necessary. Once again, I was representing my constituents.

I shall be here only another three years if the Prime Minister is prepared to go all the way. I shall enjoy those three years. I shall express my opinion forcefully. I think that hon. Members agree that I do just that. I shall continue to do so provided, of course, I catch the eye of the occupant of the Chair. I never speak without being called. I behave myself in the Chamber, as do many others. *[Interruption.]* I do not do things like that. The hon. Member for Northampton, North, with his coat of many colours, should have worn a rose today, like my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen); it

[Mr. Haynes]

would have looked very nice. But I am straying from my argument about taxation, and I want to save you from having to pull me into line, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I have made my point, but I shall continue to make my point about Europe telling us what to do. I shall decide for myself what I do and I shall express my views on behalf of my constituents because I believe that they do not need telling what to do.

As I told the hon. Member for Southend, East last week, we stand side by side and arm in arm in the argument about Europe. If Europe would leave us alone, we could get on with the job and do the right thing on behalf of the people we represent here.

12.20 am

Mr. Lilley: The debate has been remarkable because the proposal from the Commission has been rejected not only by the Government and the Opposition, but even by the representative of the Liberal party. If that is not a message which the Commission should take to heart, nothing is.

In response to the points made by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) and one or two others, I should make it clear that the Government are wholeheartedly opposed to any form of tax evasion. It is right and proper for national Governments and Governments in co-operation to act against tax evasion. Nor are we against withholding tax at source, where it is appropriate. We have the composite rate tax which could be described as a form of withholding tax. We use it where we believe that it is effective and where it does not have damaging practical consequences, as it would if it were extended to commercial markets and large deposits.

We believe that Governments should co-operate and we have one of the largest networks of double taxation agreements with other countries which enable us to co-operate in collecting taxation and preventing evasion. It is right that that should continue.

We are quite happy to consider the proposals, although we have reservations about some aspects in the second directive. We certainly have no difficulties with their approach; there are merely practical problems in a directive which has not yet been given very thorough consideration by the Commission or by member states.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) asked me for an assurance that the proposal required unanimity and could not be imposed on us by the workings of the European Court. I give him that assurance. In the case of taxation, the operations of the European Court apply only when a directive has been brought into effect by unanimous assent by the member states. Then the court has the duty to interpret it and, in the event of any dispute, rule on the precise meaning of the directive. As a result of such rulings, it was determined that a directive agreed to in 1977 under the Labour Government had a wider sense than was originally thought, in the case of the ruling on opticians and spectacles, and the ruling that we are currently putting through the House applying VAT to property and construction.

My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) made a number of valuable points, in particular that competition between national Governments in their setting of tax rates is not necessarily a bad thing as it can provide downward pressure on tax when normally all the pressures are upwards. That is particularly important given that Europe is a trading community which has to be competitive with the rest of the world. If Europe were ever to believe that it was immune to competition from the rest of the world and set tax rates which would render it uncompetitive with the rest of the world it would put itself at a grave disadvantage. So long as tax rates are primarily set by national Governments taking account of their competitive position in Europe and against the rest of the world, that danger will not arise.

I am grateful to the House for largely supporting the Government's position on withholding tax. The message that the House has given will contribute to a sensible decision on the issue in Brussels.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 4763/89 relating to taxation of savings; and supports the Government's view that the proposals are unnecessary, ineffective and damaging.

EMPLOYMENT

Ordered,

That Mr. Andrew Rowe be discharged from the Employment Committee and Mr. William Cash be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Ray Powell, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

TREASURY AND CIVIL SERVICE

Ordered,

That Mr. David Winnick be discharged from the Treasury and Civil Service Committee and Ms. Diane Abbott be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Ray Powell, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Child Abuse (Government Research)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

12.25 pm

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): It is a rare opportunity for a Member to draw an Adjournment debate and I hope that I do justice to that opportunity by raising an important topic.

The sexual abuse of children is a difficult, sensitive policy area on which I can claim no expertise. Like many Members of Parliament, it was not until a particularly horrendous constituency case came to light that my education began. In that case the perpetrators received long gaol sentences, and rightly so. It falls to Parliament to look more deeply at this issue—not merely to pick up the pieces, but to initiate an active programme of preventive measures after thorough research. That will reduce the risks facing children to the lowest humanly possible. We can help future potential victims. There is no place for crocodile tears, sympathy without funding or condemnation without action.

It is customary to say that this is a party political issue, but such genteel courtesies have no place in such a desperately serious matter. I unreservedly condemn the Conservative Government's wholly inadequate response to this phenomenon, but make it clear that the next Labour Government will be subject to equally vehement exposure if they fail to respond with the urgency and commitment that the issue deserves.

My calculations of the amounts spent indicate a pathetic level of Government support for research into the sexual abuse of children. The level of spending is a national scandal and disgrace, and amounts to less than £1 million from the Department of Health over 10 years. The Government may regard that as some sort of saving, but even at the crude economic level the logic is flawed, for where the Government do not help, other agencies have to step in, often in an unco-ordinated and wasteful way—county councils' social services departments, charities, private institutions and academic workers, all re-inventing the wheel and duplicating their efforts, despite desperately scarce resources.

The Government have a role. Why should the third international conference on incest and related problems, which is taking place in Britain this August, depend wholly on voluntary contributions and fees? Why are the Government not taking the initiative and supporting such conferences? Why is the leading centre for rehabilitating sexual offenders, the Gracewell clinic, privately run? In the United States of America, Australia and Europe Governments of all colours live up to their responsibilities. In Ontario the state institute for child sex abuse is funded to the tune of £1 million a year. Nothing less than that is acceptable for the United Kingdom.

We and future generations of children need a national institute for the study of sexual abuse of children. It needs to be properly funded and its long-term future guaranteed. The alternative is the Haile Selassie approach, where the Prime Minister ventures out of her enclave with a cheque for £800,000 for the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children—culled, incidentally, from existing, not new, moneys.

Such an auction for resources engenders competitive, not co-operative, efforts, even among those most committed in this area. At best, it skews what little money there is towards London, while at the same time question marks are placed over the Inner London education authority child guidance centres. There is also little cheer in the National Health Service review, where child psychiatry does not even rate a mention.

I have spent little time on the scale of the problem, nor with any of the heartbreaking individual cases, but to illustrate the extent of the problem I shall quote from the Incest Crisis Line document. It states:

> "At least one in ten children in this country are sexually abused by the time they reach their early teens, the vast majority of those are abused by people known to them and trusted by them . . . The victims of such behaviour are both male and female, and follow no particular age, race, colour, religion, social or class structure, in fact, abuse of this kind is relentlessly democratic . . . Remember, 75 per cent. of this world's prostitutes, almost all male prostitutes, 45 per cent. of drug and alcohol abusers, 40 per cent. of children in care, 40 per cent. of prison inmates and 30 per cent. of rape victims were abused sexually as children. Just think what social ills could be eradicated if we were all to deal with this problem in the right way."

As politicians, the right way for us must be to place the responsibility on Parliament, directly on the Government and specifically on the Department of Health.

Examining the matter from a different perspective, may I say that the magnificent social services department in Nottinghamshire—rightly praised by the Prime Minister—has informed me that the number of children registered as suffering, or likely to suffer sexual abuse, has doubled in the past two years.

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Allen: I am delighted to see my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) in the Chamber. I know that this matter is of special importance to him.

Mr. Meale: I congratulate my hon. Friend on achieving this debate on an important topic. Is he aware that not only in the centre of Nottinghamshire but throughout the county there is a clear increase in child abuse? Is he further aware of the pressure that has been placed on social workers in social services departments all over the county? The crisis has reached such proportions that in some offices social workers are terrified to lift the telephone because they know that they will have to take on the case from stage one right through to the end, which can be a harrowing experience. Social workers are leaving the profession because of that stress.

Mr. Allen: My hon. Friend makes a characteristically stout defence of Nottinghamshire social services department and, as usual, has put his finger on several points. First, the incidence of sexual abuse in our county has increased from just over 100 two years ago to 200 now. There is great stress, not just on social workers but on all those involved—the police, foster parents and others. Cases in Nottinghamshire vary in age from 17-year-olds to babies in nappies, only a few weeks old, suffering sexual abuse. More than half the cases in Nottinghamshire involve children under the age of nine. Any human being with any sensitivity—even a highly trained professional—suffers immense stress when dealing with such cases. I know that the caring people involved in the case in my constituency to which I referred suffered immense personal hardship and, in some cases, domestic damage as a result of their efforts.

[Mr. Allen]

The authorities are improving in a number of respects —for example, in their ability to investigate these acts; sadly, they do not lack the practice. Nevertheless, there are ways in which Government research can help in the process of discovery and in spreading knowledge. I shall point to one or two areas where more work is necessary and more Government support is essential if the work required is to be done. For example, we need to be able to assess the risks of keeping a child in a family where parental bonds are strong. What rehabilitation, if any, is possible or advisable if the child is not to suffer the additional problem of being separated from his or her family? That is a delicate question. A great deal of in-depth research is needed before social workers and others put their heads on the line, as a judgment based on wrong information may be catastrophic for the child placed back with the family.

Another matter that needs to be looked into is the compulsive nature of the offence. What happens after prison if perpetrators have not changed or even recognised that their behaviour is deviant? How effective is prison when compared with group work or individual therapy? What can be done to reduce or eliminate any reoffending by examining and identifying predicting factors? For example, a relationship might be found between violent offences and sexual abuse, and perhaps there are other characteristics that may help us to predict potential incidents of child abuse.

Another vital question, on which a great deal of research is needed, is where and when the sexual abuse of children begins. What is the mix of psychological, environmental and even biological factors that needs to be identified and tackled if we are to pre-empt abuse? What is the link between being a victim of abuse and becoming a perpetrator of abuse? What is the knock-on effect across the generations?

What is the effect of the availability of child pornography on people who are susceptible to becoming perpetrators of child abuse? Even more arcane, what is the effect of a culture that lays down Victorian, medieval or even pre-biblical roles for men and women?

A further subject of research is the effective placement and care of victims. That, too, needs thorough investigation. An abused child put into care with delinquents or even adolescent perpetrators of abuse is bound to do less well than those in special residential care perhaps—for example, in a girls' establishment with a staff composed entirely of women. Examining the training of fosterers is also important. We owe so much to those who foster abused children. We need to ensure that the long-term damage to victims can be identified by the fosterers and that they are adequately trained to treat the children in the most effective and sensitive way.

Mr. Meale: Might we not also appeal to the Minister to consider the protection of the child by the removal of the perpetrator from the home? It would take a considerable amount of central Government finance to allow social services departments to open holding homes in which to put suspected perpetrators until they are found guilty or not guilty but the child could then try, with the help of social services, to get over his or her trauma at home.

Mr. Allen: This area has been subject to so many taboos that one would have thought that the sexual abuse of children was a modern phenomenon, but it is not. We must discuss and investigate the subject and that is why the Government's research programme is the key.

We must investigate the possible effect on the child of its removal, or the removal of one of its parents, from a stable environment. That may be an inappropriate phrase to use in the circumstances, but it is an accurate one. In certain circumstances such removal compounds the injuries suffered by the child. Equally there may be other effects caused by the removal of the parent. Those are areas where we cannot have a reflex response. If we are to tackle the questions in the most appropriate way, we need a serious and long-term study funded by the Government. The most appropriate way is not always the one that we first think of, but a research programme would eliminate that possibility.

Many of the youngsters are, of course, coerced into sexual activity. Obviously that affects their views of adults, even those seeking to help them. How do we best train foster parents, for example, to cope with that situation and to overcome that problem? Once again the need for a national research resource for such analysis cries out for recognition.

On training and expertise there is no bank of co-ordinated assistance available for social service departments and other agencies. In my constituency there was little external expertise and advice available when a major case came to light. Even after the successful conclusion of that case, to my knowledge no contact was made by the Government. There was no systematic attempt to spread the lessons and the best practices after that case. Such a free market approach is immoral and unforgivable.

The limited research that is taking place is, of course, welcome and valuable, but so many vital areas are neglected. Another area that should be explored is the vulnerability of the woman at home where the male is the perpetrator. Many of the women are ignorant of the abuse, they may be colluding, feel powerless or are frightened to stop it and report it. Once again we must know the facts so that we are better prepared to assist women in that situation.

We must also ensure that children are more able to disclose offences—90 per cent. disclose to teachers, a parent, the police, neighbours, school friends or fosterers. Many of those groups could be trained in the techniques that make disclosure even easier. To do that we need to know more about the form in which abuse begins as victims are often more willing to disclose the less serious abuse than they are the more serious. We need to have more information to train people to detect the behavioural signs that will give an early warning of any sexual abuse, for example, over-sexual behaviour in children, bed wetting, mistrust and a withdrawn nature.

The expertise developed from the hundreds of cases and the 20 or so child abuse inquiries held since 1979 should not be dissipated. There are 1,000 questions and a 1,000 areas of initial research that could form the base for the answers to those questions.

I call upon the Government and I call upon the Minister tonight to commit himself and his Department to re-examine the level of funding for their research programme into the sexual abuse of children, to consider developing a national centre for the study of child sexual

abuse and now to make a serious effort to tackle the problem. This generation of children and the generations of children to come deserve nothing less.

12.44 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Roger Freeman): I begin by congratulating the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) on securing this important debate. He and I are at least agreed that this is a serious subject and one to which the House should frequently return.

I shall deal first with a point made by the hon. Gentleman at the outset of his speech. I understood him to say that research resources were being skewed towards London. He specifically cited the Prime Minister's recent announcement that £800,000 was being made available to the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. I should make it plain that the money is for the NSPCC's national training centre in Leicester, not London. We have committed £125,000 this year from central health service funding to the development of a centre of excellence in child protection in Newcastle. We certainly reject any attempt to argue that research resources are skewed towards the capital because that is not so.

I reject the assertion that we have been, and are, neglecting research into child sexual abuse. In the minutes remaining to me, I shall seek to argue that we have a well-founded and properly co-ordinated research programme.

The House will know that research on child sexual abuse has only in recent years begun to develop. The initial interest was in the United States, and that country is still pre-eminent in the field with a substantial and growing corpus of research, much of which is of relevance to our work in this country. However, the contribution made by British researchers in this country is growing rapidly, and I think it is now generally recognised that the United Kingdom is second only to the United States in terms of both the quantity and quality of research into child sexual abuse. This was underlined only last month at the second European conference on child abuse and neglect in Brussels, where more research and practice papers were presented from the United Kingdom than from any other country; and at which the first European scholarship on child abuse was presented to a British researcher, Jacqui Roberts of Dundee university. I am sure that the House would wish to join me in congratulating her on her extremely valuable contribution to the subject.

I should emphasise that in order to ensure that projects are chosen which will add to the knowledge base that already exists, such projects need to be considered properly and thoroughly before they are commissioned. In order to achieve this, the Department of Health has available a number of eminent professional and scientific advisers from whom advice is sought. In addition, the Department holds regular meetings with a research liaison group on child care which contains service advisers from the Association of County Councils and the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, and scientific advisers from the Institute of Child Health and the universities of Bristol, York and Leicester. Senior officials also attend from other Government Departments. All projects are thoroughly scrutinised through this mechanism to ensure that they are likely to provide sound and reliable results, and do not duplicate work already done or in progress.

I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that, in research, it is extremely important to ensure that it is not only carefully prepared with the best possible academic advice so that old ground is not recovered, but properly co-ordinated. We must not merely throw money at research, but ensure that it is thoroughly prepared.

As part of the Department's aim to attract more relevant projects from organisations undertaking research, child protection was made a priority theme for research for 1989. This has stimulated interest from academic institutions and other research organisations and the Department has received several new proposals, which we are in the process of considering.

The Department of Health, which has the lead in child care matters, has put together a full and effective programme of child protection research in recent years. The hon. Member will recall that these studies were detailed by my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State in response to a question from him on 27 January, and included a number of studies which related to both physical and sexual abuse. The total cost of studies completed in this field since 1980 is £180,000.

My hon. and learned Friend's reply also listed the projects which were currently in progress and under consideration. A number of these covered both physical and sexual abuse of children, but included was a study by Professor Philip Graham and Dr. Arnon Bentovim of the Institute of Child Health on intervention in child sexual abuse, which looked at the characteristics and outcomes of a treatment programme for child sexual abuse victims and their families; and a study by Dr. Marjory Smith of the Institute of Child Health of normal sexual knowledge in children, which aims to collect systematic and reliable information on sexual knowledge in children and behaviour in families to see whether it is possible to identify children who have been sexually abused on the basis of their sexual knowledge and behaviour.

The hon. Gentleman specifically mentioned the importance of research, and I agree with him. These two studies alone are expected to cost about £225,000. Total expenditure committed to current research projects by my Department is more than £500,000——

Mr. Meale: Peanuts.

Mr. Freeman: I do not agree. Research in this field has developed only in recent years. It is extremely important that it be founded on the best possible academic advice and properly co-ordinated with the private sector and other Government Departments. The Government do not believe that one can just throw money at the problem.

Among the projects listed as under consideration by my hon. and learned Friend, I am pleased to be able to say that two, on parental perceptions in child abuse and parental participation in case conferences, have now been commissioned. Of the projects which are still under consideration, in relation to the feasibility study on prevalence of child sexual abuse a research brief is being prepared for discussion with interested researchers, and we hope to commission a study in the course of this year.

In order to ensure that the Government have a co-ordinated, effective and comprehensive approach to all child care policy matters an inter-departmental group on

[Mr. Freeman]

child abuse was set up in March 1987, comprising senior officials in Departments with responsibilities for children. The group has provided a valuable forum in which policies and practices in the respective areas of responsibility of individual Departments has been developed consistently and with due regard for each other. The group meets at about quarterly intervals and discusses a number of child care issues, including research. It was largely through the group that Departments produced co-ordinated and complimentary guidance on the handling of cases of child abuse and child sexual abuse from this Department and the Welsh Office to relevant agencies, in response to Lord Justice Butler-Sloss's excellent report on Cleveland.

As part of this co-ordinated approach to research into child sexual abuse, I know that the Home Office has in progress a research study on the effectiveness of video links in child sexual abuse cases which will cost £45,000.

The hon. Gentleman has asked the Department of Health a number of parliamentary questions, at least two of which related to the importance of video links. I am pleased that my colleagues in the Home Office have decided to pursue this important aspect of research. The Home Office is also considering the commission of further research studies, including one on the prevention of child sexual abuse, which will cost about £90,000.

The Scottish Office has supported a number of continuing projects, including the professional identification of, and response to, child sexual abuse in Scotland, and a longitudinal study of a group of sexually abused children in Scotland. The hon. Gentleman will understand the term "longitudinal"; it refers to a study over a period of the development of a particular group of children and the potential effect of abuse on their behaviour——

Mr. Allen *rose*——

Mr. Freeman: If the hon. Gentleman will allow me, I shall try to bring my remarks to a close.

The Scottish Office has also identified themes on the management and treatment of child sexual abuse and research into decision making in the children's hearing system which it is hoped will attract a number of research proposals.

The Department of Health and Social Services, Northern Ireland, has funded a project on child sexual abuse incidence in Northern Ireland, and that is expected to be published shortly. It may be helpful to the hon. Gentleman and to the House if I place in the Library by the end of this week a comprehensive list of research completed, under way and contemplated by all Government Departments.

I have provided a rather brief survey of the programme of research which is in hand or being considered. Work in this field will, of course, continue to develop. My Department is aware of the necessity of looking forward in these matters and is already considering, for example, the need for new research that will be needed when the Children Bill is enacted.

It is important not only that good, effective research should be undertaken, but that the results of that research should be properly reflected in practice and in the planning and delivery of services. To this end my Department produced in 1985 "Social Work Decisions in Child Care", which provided a digest of recent research findings and their implications and was widely welcomed. I am glad to tell the House that a new paper will shortly be published. I hope that that is helpful to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at five minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 16 May 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

EMPLOYMENT

Skill Training

1. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to stimulate skills training in the tourism and catering industries; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. John Lee): Skills training is crucial to secure the quality and professionalism which the tourism and catering industries need to keep their competitive edge. The Government are helping across the full range of training programmes, including the youth training scheme, employment training and the newly launched business growth training, and are working with the industry through the tourism training initiative. The emerging network of training and enterprise councils will provide a further boost for skills training.

Mr. Jack: I thank my hon. Friend for that encouraging answer. He will be aware of the excellent contribution being made to training in catering and tourism by Blackpool and Fylde college. Does my Friend feel that with more than 1,000 people coming into this industry every week enough is being done elsewhere to meet the industry's training needs?

Mr. Lee: My hon. Friend is right about the Blackpool and Fylde college. The close liaison between the college and the hoteliers of Blackpool in tailoring training to fit employers' needs is widely regarded as exemplary. The industry is seeking to recruit nearly 1,000 new employees per week. There are far more people than ever before in training for our tourism and hospitality industries and there are an increasing number of courses right across the country, be we need even more.

Ms. Short: Is the Minister aware that the problem of low pay is great and growing in catering and tourism? Does he not understand that the problem with the whole of the Government's strategy is that if they keep encouraging low pay, we cannot achieve higher standards of skill and the proper management of enterprise because the two aims are contradictory? When will the Government give up their obsession with low pay so that we can achieve decent standard in industry and employment?

Mr. Lee: The hon. Lady asks the same question almost every Employment Question Time. The answer is that the industry increasingly is improving its remuneration package and far more people than ever before are realising the industry's potential for career opportunities.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Is my hon. Friend aware of the excellent courses available in catering and similar subjects at the Lancaster and Morecambe college of further education, which is one reason why unemployment in our area has fallen yet again?

Mr. Lee: Yes, my hon. Friend is absolutely right. The courses at the Lancaster and Morecambe college are excellent and I have visited the college. I must point out that the college head was trained in my own constituency, at Nelson and Colne college, and I have a high regard for him.

Statutory Wage Provisions

2. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give details of which European Community countries have statutory wage provisions.

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. John Cope): Five EC countries—France, Netherlands, Spain, Portugal and Luxembourg—have a statutory national minimum wage on various bases. Ireland and the United Kingdom have statutory minimum rates of pay in certain industries.

Mr. McAvoy: Does the Minister agree that the United Kingdom and Ireland are at the bottom of the league in terms of low pay for workers and protection for those workers? Should not the Government be trying to improve their record instead of undermining and trying to destroy the wages council structure?

Mr. Cope: I rather agree with the report that Mrs. Barbara Castle produced when she was doing our job.

Ms. Short: That is a bit old hat. It was 1968.

Mr. Cope: She said:

"The introduction of a national minimum will add to labour costs. This could in turn increase the level of unemployment."

We are doing much better in employment than all the other countries of the European Community put together, and that is what counts most.

Mr. Redwood: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the Government will make strong representations against any increase in social regulation from Brussels which might damage employment-generating prospects and that they will be especially vigilant to preserve the flexibility of the English labour market?

Mr. Cope: Yes, indeed, for the reasons that I gave in answer to the previous questioner.

Mr. Nellist: I wonder whether the Minister remembers the Chancellor of the Exchequer saying on television on 28 April:

"half average earnings in this country, which is poor; that's poor—half average earnings."

Given that the wages council structure pays on average £30 less than the Treasury definition of poverty, why is the Minister still proposing to abolish the wages councils?

Mr. Cope: We are consulting about the abolition of the wages councils and we shall consider the results of those consultations when we see them.

Mr. Hill: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the great myths of the Community is that one can bring out statistics to prove that we should all abide by the same rules on salary and conditions of work and that almost anything that happens in the workplace can be regularised throughout the Community? Despite that myth, however, does he agree that each country has different living standards, different costs of living and different indices and that in the short term it is impossible to have a standard answer for every occasion when such foolish questions are asked of the Department of Employment?

Mr. Cope: I agree that not only the statistics but the traditions of wage bargaining and similar arrangements are different in the different countries. They are not comparable one with another. However, all sorts of studies have shown that minimum wages tend to increase unemployment.

Mr. Meacher: When the Secretary of State leapt to the defence of the Prime Minister's attack on the supposed European Socialist superstate, did he include in that the minimum wage provisions in the EEC? Is he aware that Britain is the only country in the EEC with neither a statutory minimum wage nor any statutory underpinning of collective bargaining, which amounts to the same thing? Do the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister not realise that the risk after 1992 is not of a Socialist superstate but of a capitalist jungle in which bad employers will compete, not by improving quality and price, but by driving down working conditions?

Mr. Cope: I am surprised at some aspects of the hon. Gentleman's question. He spends a lot of time telling us that we are doing the wrong thing by introducing statutory controls and statutory arrangements into free collective bargaining, but he has just urged us to follow the example of European countries which have greater statutory controls on free collective bargaining.

Mr. Sayeed: As those without jobs are the poorest in our society, should we not try to reduce the barriers to employment rather than increasing them?

Mr. Cope: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend.

Skill Centres

3. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on progress towards the privatisation of skill centres.

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Norman Fowler): Preparations are well advanced to offer the Skills Training Agency for sale by private tender. All preliminary expressions of interest are being recorded by the Government's sale advisers, including the proposals for a management buy-out.

Mr. Dalyell: What is the figure in the Secretary of State's brief for the amount that the Government hope to raise through the sale of skill centre land and buildings?

Mr. Fowler: The straight answer to that is that we are taking advice from property advisers on that point. I am glad that we have now been able to employ property advisers. They are in the process of valuing the sites and clearly the Government will want a fair price for those sites.

Mr Paice: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that he will consider applications and proposals to purchase individual skills centres rather than just the national network? Will he also confirm that selling skill centres into the private sector will put them in a better position to provide the flexible response that the private sector has already clearly demonstrated that it is able to do?

Mr. Fowler: I entirely agree, especially with my hon. Friend's second point. At the moment we have had about 40 expressions of interest in the purchase of skill centres, and they will be considered. It must be understood that the present position of the Skills Training Agency is not sustainable. About one third of the centres are seriously underused and are now making a loss approaching £20 million per year.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Will the Secretary of State confirm that the Deptford skills centre is on freehold land which already has B1 planning permission? Will he speculate on what that site will be worth on the open market in that part of London? What did the Minister of State mean when he told me in a written answer that he would make provision for the Government to share in any development gains —not to take them, but simply to share in those windfall gains? Why are the public not to have the full value of any increase in those assets?

Mr. Fowler: It is certainly the Government's aim that the public should have the full value of the sites. However, I do not believe that it would be sensible for me to speculate about the value of a particular site, especially as we have just appointed a firm of surveyors to carry out the exact exercise required by the hon. Gentleman. Surveyors were appointed following a competitive tender, which is a sensible and businesslike approach.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Will my right hon. Friend take note of the unsatisfactory situation at the Perivale skill centre in my constituency, which is managed from the Twickenham skill centre some considerable distance away although all the jobs and industry are in the Perivale area? Will my right hon. Friend seek to achieve the division of the management of those two skill centres before any privatisation?

Mr. Fowler: It will not be before privatisation, because privatisation will take place over the next few months, but I will ask my advisers on the privatisation to take that into account.

Mr. Dalyell: In view of the unsatisfactory nature of the Minister's reply, I beg to give notice that I shall seek to raise the matter on the Adjournment at the earliest opportunity.

Disabled People

4. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to eradicate discrimination against disabled people in employment and seeking employment.

Mr. Lee: It is in the employer's interest to adopt good policies and practices on the employment of people with

disabilities. My Department will continue to encourage and help them to do so through its disablement advisory service and other appropriate media.

Mr. Wareing: The Minister's Department has not been very successful. Does the Minister realise that only 31 per cent. of disabled people below pension age are in jobs? Will he explain why it is illegal to discriminate in employment against a person because of colour or sex, but it remains lawful for any employer to discriminate against a person because of his or her disability? Will the Government legislate to do something about that problem?

Mr. Lee: On the hon. Gentleman's first point, he will know that statistics are rather thin in that area——

Mr. Wareing: There is the OPCS survey.

Mr. Lee: The Department has therefore commissioned a study to provide information on the numbers, the distribution, the characteristics and the needs of people with disabilities in the labour market. We hope to have the results by the year end.

The hon. Gentleman knows, because he has repeatedly asked for legislation in this area, that the Government do not favour a legislative approach.

Mr. Evennett: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is much better to encourage employers and to give them practical help than to legislate?

Mr. Lee: My hon. Friend is right. Through our mainstream programmes during 1987-88, we helped about 117,000 people at a cost of £193 million, and through our programme specifically geared to help the disabled we helped 78,000 people at a cost of £135 million.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Do not the OPCS figures referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) shout of discrimination against disabled people? Is the hon. Gentleman aware that even those with jobs were found to be mainly on very low pay? What is the hon. Gentleman's response to the report of Dr. Eileen Fry on discrimination against disabled people in employment? What does the hon. Gentleman have to say about the case that is known to the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation—RADAR—where a public employer recruited a disabled young woman only to exclude her from the superannuation scheme because of her disability?

Mr. Lee: If the right hon. Gentleman writes to me about that particular case, I will look into it. On his earlier points, I repeat that the Government do not favour the legislative route. Nevetheless, as the right hon. Gentleman knows, we have instituted a major review of our whole approach to the disabled in employment and, of course, there is the earlier study to which I referred.

Tourist Accommodation (Classification)

5. **Mr. Butterfill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress he is making towards agreement on a common classification scheme for hotels, boarding houses and self-catering accommodation throughout the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lee: The tourist boards for England, Scotland and Wales have now agreed common criteria for their classification and grading scheme for serviced accommodation. The English and Scottish boards have reached agreement on uniform criteria for self-catering accommodation. The English tourist board plans to begin inspections using the new criteria in September 1989, and to include the new classifications in accommodation guides for the 1991 season.

Mr. Butterfill: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend and I am pleased to hear his answer, but it seems to imply that there will be different classification schemes for the catered and non-catered sectors. I should be grateful if he would confirm whether that is the case. If so, is it not rather unsatisfactory and likely to confuse the general public? Would it not be better to have a symbol common to both but different in some way, such as a filled-in crown for the catering sector to show that the inner man is being looked after, and an outline crown for the non-catered sector?

Mr. Lee: My hon. Friend has written to me on that point. I understand that the English tourist board considered an outline crown symbol for self-catering, but it was rejected because it wanted to draw a clear distinction between serviced and self-catering accommodation. My latest understanding is that it is proposing a key containing a crown, so there is an element of compromise.

Mr. Kennedy: Will the Minister use his offices to encourage the English tourist board to reach a final agreement on the matter? The Scottish self-catering sector is concerned that the general aim, which everyone should endorse, of a common crown system throughout the United Kingdom is to some extent being thwarted because of what is probably an unnecessarily severe view on the part of the English tourist board about the discerning abilities of the public with regard to self-catering and fully-supportive holiday accommodation, as the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) said.

Mr. Lee: The hon. Gentleman is right. We want to move towards common criteria. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would welcome the fact that the changes that I have announced move increasingly towards the Scottish system, in which the classification introduces a quality assessment—something that we do not have in England.

Mr. Key: I thank my hon. Friend for his progress report, which will be welcome in Wessex where many farmers are seeking to diversify in that area. However, who is to bear the cost of the new classification and what plans does my hon. Friend have for revising and updating the guide, as that is a crucial aspect?

Mr. Lee: We hope that in the long term the classification scheme will become self-financing, but in the short term, we estimate that it will cost about £468,000 net in 1989-90, which I hope will be reduced to about £300,000 net by 1992-93.

YTS

6. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what reduction there has been in the number of people on YTS in the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement on the likely future trends of YTS.

Mr. Cope: About 390,000 young people were in training on YTS in both March 1988 and March 1989. We

keep the scope and role of YTS under review to ensure that training for young people continues to meet the changing needs of the economy.

Mr. Bruce: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer. I am surprised that nationally YTS numbers have not yet started to fall, although they have clearly evened out. In the south-east, and in my constituency of south Dorset the number on youth training schemes is declining as a result of demographic changes and extra jobs. As the number of people on youth training schemes declines, how can the current level of spending on training be redirected to other forms of training and to helping people to obtain a real technological education?

Mr. Cope: We believe in improving the quality of training and we are trying to achieve that. In particular, we are having a greater drive towards youth training schemes resulting in qualifications. That is all part of the greater concentration on the outcome of training schemes. At present about 63 per cent. of those who complete youth training schemes gain qualifications.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that in Wales and some other regions there has been difficulty in finding suitable quality trainers for YTS? Will he ensure that the training and enterprise councils have sufficient funds to recruit trainers and to keep an ongoing check on the quality of training that they provide for young people?

Mr. Cope: Yes. Part of the point of the training and enterprise councils is to involve employers more so as to improve the quality of the training offered, not only on YTS but on other schemes as well.

Mr. Latham: As the construction industry training board is the managing agent for YTS in the construction industry, and as that industry's training record is abysmal, is it not clearly important that the construction industry training board should be retained?

Mr. Cope: My hon. Friend will know that we have that matter under consideration, and that it follows from what was said in the recent White Paper.

Mr. Fatchett: Given the question posed by the Minister's hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce) and the possible decrease in the number of YTS trainees, what measures will the Government take to ensure that 16-year-olds who find immediate employment on leaving school also find employment which guarantees training opportunities? If they do not, will there not be a danger that those youngsters will find themselves with no training, no hope and no future jobs?

Mr. Cope: The labour market for young people is changing as their numbers decrease and their bargaining power in the market increases. However, the system should remain voluntary because not all young people want to be forced into a job that guarantees particular arrangements. That thinking underlies all our policies. It is also why we intend, as I said earlier, to improve the quality of YTS training.

Jobcentres

8. **Mr. Arbuthnot:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have consulted jobcentres in the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Precise information is not available. However, I would expect the total to be broadly similar to the 29 million inquiries recorded in 1985-86, the last year for which comprehensive information is available.

Mr. Arbuthnot: What proportion of the inquiries received by jobcentres came from the unemployed and from job changers, and how many people were placed in jobs as a result of those inquiries?

Mr. Lee: The last information that we have is from a sample survey in 1987, which indicated that about 83 per cent. of unemployed claimants used the jobcentre network. In 1988-89, 1·9 million job seekers, 1·5 million of whom were unemployed, were placed in jobs.

Mr. Leighton: Are not the numbers of staff in jobcentres now being reduced? The Under-Secretary of State has an opportunity to provide a better service to the unemployed. Why is he throwing that away?

Mr. Lee: I have to make the point—I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is well aware of it—that unemployment is falling substantially. Therefore, we obviously have to look at the jobcentre network. Having said that, we are at the same time trying to improve the quality of service for those individuals who are, sadly, unemployed. Even at present, the jobcentre network employs about 6,800 people.

Mr. Devlin: Why does not my hon. Friend consider merging jobcentres and unemployment offices as quite a few people still seem to get lost somewhere between the two? It seems self-evident that people who are registering as unemployed should be directed at least to somewhere in the same building so that they can be found employment as quickly as possible.

Mr. Lee: My hon. Friend has a good point. Obviously, we have been thinking about this, and there have been 79 pilot schemes in which we have considered the options for integrating unemployment benefit offices and jobcentres. As he will know, the employment service is intended for agency status.

Mr. McAllion: Does the Minister not understand that one of the main barriers against people finding work at present is that more than 150 major United Kingdom employers are buying personnel management systems which claim, on the basis of a 15-minute pencil and paper test, to establish the honesty and emotional stability of job applicants? Does the Minister approve of employers taking such a crude approach or does he intend to do something to stop that abuse?

Mr. Lee: With respect, I am not sure that I fully understood the hon. Gentleman's question. With regard to the employment service for which my Department is responsible, I should have thought that the placement figures that I gave earlier indicated the success of what we are trying to do.

Employment Training

9. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress has been made on employment training in Yorkshire since its inception; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fowler: Employment training continues to make excellent progress in Yorkshire. Almost 20,000 people are currently in training. This reflects the success of employment training across the country.

Mr. Riddick: Does not that reply show that employment training is proving highly successful in the Yorkshire area—perhaps more so there than in any other area of the United Kingdom? Would my right hon. Friend care to join me in congratulating the training agencies in and near my constituency—for example, the Kirklees chamber of commerce—for responding so positively to the challenges presented to them by employment training?

Mr. Fowler: I entirely endorse what my hon. Friend says, particularly about Kirklees chamber of commerce, which I know and admire. I am glad to say that in Yorkshire generally, unemployment has fallen by an average 24 per cent. in the past 12 months.

Mr. Hardy: There may be some effective operations in Yorkshire, but does the Secretary of State accept that he should be aware—if he is not, some of his colleagues in the Department should be—that there are grounds for serious concern in certain parts of Yorkshire, and certainly in the metropolitan area of Rotherham, which deserve serious attention?

Mr. Fowler: I shall certainly look into any points that the hon. Gentleman wants me to consider. After only eight months in operation employment training now has about 185,000 people in training—the best start for any adult training programme that we have ever launched.

Strikes

10. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the work days lost through strikes in *(a)* February 1979 and *(b)* February 1989.

Mr. Fowler: Nearly 2·5 million days were lost through strikes in February 1979. In February 1989, it is provisionally estimated that 58,000 working days were lost. In the year to February 1989, 3 million working days were lost. In the year to February 1979, 13·3 million working days were lost. It is in everyone's interest that this improvement should be maintained.

Mr. Yeo: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one absolutely certain way of increasing the number of days lost through strikes would be to repeal the Government's employment legislation, as some union bosses want their lackeys in the Labour party to do?

Mr. Fowler: That is entirely right. Those problems would be made even worse if any of the proposals on the extension of secondary action and secondary picketing were ever adopted in this country. The sort of proposals that the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) and the Labour party are putting forward represent a charter for strikes.

Mr. Bidwell: Does it not appear that as we head towards a summer of discontent, employment legislation is taking this matter out of the hands of trade union leaders to such an extent that unofficial strikes are likely to increase enormously, as inflation rises and the value of wages falls?

Mr. Fowler: That is not true. The hon. Gentleman was drawing a comparison with the winter of discontent, when the headlines in February 1979 ran as follows:

"Health warning as the rubbish piles mount up";

"Ambulance men walking out";

and

"Strike in children's wards".

That was the record of the Labour Government, of which the hon. Member for Oldham, West was a prominent member.

Mr. Madel: Does my right hon. Friend agree that after 10 years of changes in industrial relations law, management still has a responsibility clearly to explain to each employee why a particular pay claim can or cannot be accepted? To that extent, does he agree that the country is looking to employers and unions in the electricity supply industry to work out a solution to their problem without industrial disruption?

Mr. Fowler: Yes, what my hon. Friend says is wise. It is clearly not in the interests of the public or of anyone working in those industries that industrial action should take place.

Mr. Heffer: I ask the right hon. Gentleman to remember that there were no strikes in Hitler's Germany, or in Mussolini's Italy, or in Stalin's Russia, or in Franco's Spain, and that there are no strikes in any country in which legislation makes them illegal. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that we are getting close to that in this country? People's rights to work or not to work in pursuit of decent conditions are being taken away from them. The right hon. Gentleman had better understand that sooner or later the workers' dam will break—they will not stand for this for ever.

Mr. Fowler: What the hon. Gentleman has said is, with respect, utter nonsense. It will not be accepted by the vast majority of people in this country. When the hon. Gentleman talks about employment, the fact is that industrial action destroys jobs and does not create jobs. Many people in this country resent the attempt of the Labour party to put unions above the law again.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Will my right hon. Friend not agree that workers' rights have actually been increased under this Government by making sure that they have a secret ballot before they are forced to strike? What does he think of the Labour party's proposals that strikes should start before the workers have been consulted?

Mr. Fowler: The Labour party, and particularly the hon. Member for Oldham, West, have a great deal of explaining to do about those proposals, and I cannot understand the enthusiasm which appears to be coming from him and Labour Members for industrial action, which cannot be in the interests of anyone in this country.

Mr. Strang: If the dock employers continue to refuse to negotiate collective agreements with the Transport and General Workers Union to replace the dock labour scheme and the registered dockers come out on strike, will the Government give the port employers the same unconditional support they gave British Coal during the miners' strike?

Mr. Fowler: There is absolutely no reason for the TGWU to call out the dockers on strike action over the abolition of the dock labour scheme. The port employers

have offered talks at port level, which is a sensible step. The only people who will lose out as a result of industrial action in scheme ports are those in the scheme ports themselves, and I hope that will be remembered by all those working in them.

Wages

11. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many firms visited in 1988, were paying below the legal wages council minima; and how many were prosecuted.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls: Wages inspectorate statistics on compliance with wages orders are compiled on the basis of establishments rather than firms.

In 1988, underpayments were found at 5,597 of the establishments visited. There were 10 prosecutions for underpayment offences.

Mr. Clelland: Given the fact that 380,000 establishments are covered by wages councils, were not a disgracefully low number visited by inspectors last year? Why have the Government cut the number of inspectors by over 100 per cent.? Even on this small sample, over 17 per cent. of those visited were paying below the statutory minimum, so why were only 0·03 per cent. prosecuted? Is this not another example of the fact that under this Government there is one law for the employers and another for lower-paid workers?

Mr. Nicholls: No. The hon. Gentleman's conclusion is as false as the statistics that he recited. The fact is that the wages inspectorate concentrates on those establishments which it believes to be underpaying. What it finds when it goes to many of these establishments is that there may be only two or three people being underpaid. If the hon. Gentleman is concerned about the number of prosecutions which take place, he should realise that the number of prosecutions has remained constant under this Government, as under the last.

Mr. Hayes: Is my hon. Friend aware that even Left-wing economists are now saying that wages councils cause unemployment? Does he not agree that the major cause of poverty is unemployment?

Mr. Nicholls: That is absolutely right, as my hon. Friend says. The link is indeed well made out. The difficulty with Labour Members is that they cannot see that no job is worse than low pay.

Mr. Meacher: On the question of very low wages, who does the hon. Gentleman agree with? Does he agree with the Secretary of State for Social Security that wage poverty does not exist—in which case how are three quarters of a million workers caught in a poverty trap where they lose more than 70p of every extra £1 earned—or does he agree with the Chancellor of the Exchequer that workers paid less than half national average earnings are indeed poor—in which case, why have the Government prosecuted only 56 out of more than 88,000 establishments found to be paying illegally low wages?

Mr. Nicholls: One of the hon. Gentleman's many troubles is that he seems to be prosecution-happy. The point about prosecution policy is that if on a visit it is found that there has not been a blatant disregard of the law but perhaps a mistake, obviously, prosecution may not be appropriate. That was the reason—and the hon. Gentleman would have heard it if he had been listening—why I was able to say to his hon. Friend that the rate of prosecution under this Government has remained the same as it was under the previous Government. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security made a valuable contribution when he said that some people have a vested interest in poverty-mongering. From what we have heard it would appear that that includes the hon. Gentleman.

Bank Holidays

12. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many representations he has received about changes in dates for national bank holidays; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: A number of differing views have been expressed to my Department about public holidays, including the first Monday in May. The question of any changes raises several complex issues, which my right hon. Friend is considering.

Mr. Gregory: My hon. Friend will have noted that there are no bank holidays whatever from the end of August until Christmas and that we have a plethora of them in the spring, which is disruptive for industry. Will he consider resiting or allocating one of those to the autumn? Perhaps we could do our duty by Nelson and make Trafalgar Day a national day.

Mr. Nicholls: My hon. Friend makes a persuasive point, but there are probably two difficulties. One of them is to try to find some consensus about how the bunching of bank holidays might be accommodated, and the other is to find a place in the calendar to which a bank holiday might be more suited. Many people, probably the overwhelming majority of people, would rather celebrate a British occasion, such as Trafalgar Day, than some inappropriate foreign import such as May Day.

Mr. Grocott: Does the Minister not agree that the important issue is not which days are being celebrated but how many days' holiday workers are entitled to? Does he further agree that holidays for British workers compare unfavourably with those in other European countries, both in terms of bank holidays and annual holiday entitlement? Is it not time that we had a minimum statutory requirement of six weeks?

Mr. Nicholls: The issue is rather narrower than that. It is a question whether the present spread of bank holidays is appropriate or whether there is such a bunching that it would be better to dispense with the bunching. It is difficult to find a consensus about how the arrangements might be altered, and that is why my right hon. Friend is considering the matter.

Mr. Fairbairn: May I suggest to the Minister a simple solution to the need for a national day? It is to change the title of 1 May to Union Day, because that was the glorious day upon which the Act of Union came into force.

Mr. Nicholls: Not having a clapometer with me I cannot detect whether those who are in favour of Trafalgar Day outnumber those who are in favour of Union Day. Hon. Members will have to make up their own minds.

Mr. Geraint Howells: Will the Minister consider making St. David's Day a national holiday for the people of Wales?

Mr. Nicholls: Any alteration in the bank holidays which would give me the opportunity to spend more time in the hon. Gentleman's constituency would be most welcome, as the hon. Gentleman is well aware.

Self-employment

13. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the number of people currently self-employed in the south-east.

Mr. Cope: In December 1988 there were 1,080,000 self-employed people in the south-east, including London, an increase of 112,000 over the previous two years.

Mr. Rowe: Does my right hon. Friend agree that that is a remarkable and welcome achievement? Does he also agree that self-employment constitutes one of the very best opportunities for women to establish businesses of their own, that they are taking advantage of that in large numbers, and that even Opposition Members might welcome self-employment as a means of expressing in practical terms equal opportunities for women?

Mr. Cope: Yes. The number of self-employed women has gone up by about 113 per cent. since 1979.

Mr. Cryer: Could the Minister explain the basis of this estimated number of self-employed in the south-east? Could he also tell us how many self-employed businesses have gone into liquidation—have gone bust—as a result of the Government's high interest policies which are bearing down on the very small businesses that the Government are supposed to encourage?

Mr. Cope: The hon. Gentleman knows that interest rates are very important in the control of inflation. I cannot give him a specific figure, because it is difficult to sort out the reasons why individual companies do not succeed. But there is a high success rate among self-employed people and among small businesses generally.

Labour Statistics

14. **Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether the labour force survey, European Economic Community and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development surveys show falls in United Kingdom unemployment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fowler: The latest labour force survey shows a fall in the number of people unemployed in the internationally agreed definitions of about half a million between the spring of 1987 and the spring of 1988. This confirms the sharp fall in unemployment recorded by the monthly claimant count. United Kingdom unemployment has fallen at a faster rate over the last two years than in any other major industrialised country.

Mr. Sayeed: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that the measurement of unemployment as shown by the ILO and OECD figures, as well as by the latest labour force survey, reveals the number of unemployed as being lower than the number of claimants registered with his Department? Does that not give the lie to the suggestion that the Government are fiddling the figures? Can he also inform the House of the number of long-term unemployed now compared with the number six years ago?

Mr. Fowler: My hon. Friend is right on the first point, and we have entirely demolished the gloss that the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) has put on the definition. The number of long-term unemployed in January was 821,000, the lowest for more than six years.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 16 May 1989.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of her Majesty the Queen.

Mr. Evennett: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that under her leadership Britain will continue to champion a Europe dedicated to enterprise, opportunity and freedom for all its citizens? Will she also reaffirm her resolve to fight any proposals from Europe designed to deprive this Parliament of any powers over taxation and the economy?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend. Our vision of Europe is a vision of sovereign states co-operating freely in those things that we can do better together than we can do ourselves. We shall certainly resist proposals which would deprive this House of its premier standing on taxation—*[Interruption.]*—and no longer enable us to take our own decisions on taxation.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the Prime Minister say whether Conservative candidates in the Euro elections should take their lead from her or from Henley?

The Prime Minister: They will take it from the manifesto, which will shortly be published. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will read it most assiduously, and he might even agree with a great deal of it.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the right hon. Lady, in compiling that manifesto, be consulting the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath)?

The Prime Minister: The manifesto will be prepared as previously—on our stance in Europe. We are very good Europeans and we shall work within the Community. Any country—*[Interruption.]*—which gives £2 billion this year to the Community—our net contribution—which stations the number of troops in NATO that we do and which has its history with Europe as we have, is likely to be a very good European and have a vision of a free enterprise Europe based on freedom under the rule of law.

Q2. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 16 May 1989.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Arnold: In view of the disgraceful scenes of football-related violence last weekend, may I ask my right hon. Friend if she agrees that this problem will not go away and that firm action needs to be taken?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. The scenes last Saturday, when there were about 220 arrests —after Hillsborough—were absolutely appalling and utterly disgraceful, and we were all horrified by them. I believe that indicates that more steps need to be taken. There is a Bill before the House, with which we said we would go ahead on condition that it was an enabling scheme and that therefore it would come before the House before being finalised. It has other measures too, including the licensing of grounds. I believe that we should go ahead with that measure, which would be a vehicle for any further measures that it was thought necessary to take, without just waiting and doing nothing before the coming football season.

Mr. Ashdown: Does the Prime Minister realise that the House of Lords spoke for the whole nation on the Water Bill last night? Will she accept the House of Lords decision or will she condemn the British people to drinking dirty water for longer?

The Prime Minister: I believe that the Government have spoken for the whole nation in greatly increasing the amount of investment spent on improved water—investment far greater than under any previous Government. We shall look at that amendment. The question is whether it can be done in time. I hope, therefore, that the right hon. Gentleman will make it clear that the extra things that he is demanding will cost a good deal more money and will not complain when that price is exacted.

Mr. Budgen: In view of the humiliating defeat suffered by the British Government and people last night in the EEC, when a directive concerning public health was foisted on us through a majority vote under the Single European Act, will my right hon. Friend undertake that this decision will be referred by the British Government to the European court or that the veto will be exercised?

The Prime Minister: No. We shall consider the matter very carefully but, as my hon. Friend knows, under the Single European Act we agreed that, for the purpose of implementing the Single European Act and only for that purpose, the majority rule should apply in certain cases. What is a matter sometimes for the court to decide is whether a particular issue comes under the majority rule or whether it remains under article 100. It is that, which is maybe an issue, that we shall consider very carefully.

Q3. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 16 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. McFall: It is exactly one year since the Prime Minister lectured the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland on how to be Christian. In the light of the statement by the Secretary of State for Social Security, which is appalling, that poverty in this country has now been eliminated, will the Prime Minister undertake that on her next visit to Scotland she will dispense with her "Sermon on the Mound", stop turning the other cheek and address the problems of poverty which are still a reality for many hundreds of thousands of Scotsmen, women and children today?

The Prime Minister: Surveys show that people at all income levels, including those in the bottom one tenth of income levels, are far better off than they were 10 years ago. What the hon. Gentleman and many of his colleagues would prefer is that the bottom tenth should be worse off provided they pulled all other levels down with them. That is an appalling doctrine.

Mr. Hill: Will my right hon. Friend agree with me that when it comes to sovereign states working in unison there is no finer example than the Council of Europe? Indeed, only last week Finland joined, making a total of 23 countries. Does she agree that this is the genuine voice of Europe, the overwhelming voice of Europe; that it is the true parliamentary assembly of Europe and that the European Parliament needs to be told this time and time again?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that the Council of Europe does extremely valuable work and obviously goes a good deal wider than the European Community. We take a great interest in all its work, but we also belong to the European Economic Community. We are bound to it by treaty, the amended treaty, but we wish to see that in future it develops along the courses which we wish it to take and which we believe to be the right ones, and that it does not become too bureaucratic.

Q4. **Mr. Eadie:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 16 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Eadie: Can the right hon. Lady tell us what role she sees deep-mined coal in Scotland playing in the energy provisions of the United Kingdom? Does she support the proposal that deep-mined coal production in Midlothian should end despite the fact that there are very rich reserves of coal that would last well into the next century?

The Prime Minister: The question will initially be one for British Coal. As the hon. Gentleman is aware, it is not only the reserves of coal that matter but whether they can be mined competitively, so that people are not overcharged for the electricity that comes from coal. The hon. Gentleman is well aware that the mine at Longannet will continue to be worked for Longannet power station. He is also well aware that there are other proposed closures because some pits have lost as much as £20 million recently, and we cannot allow losses of that dimension to continue. There is a major place in the United Kingdom for coal-fired power stations, and the major part of our electricity will continue to be generated by them for a long time to come.

Mr. Ian Bruce: The whole House will have heard the sad news of the deaths of nine Royal Navy personnel in the helicopter crash in Africa, which comes hard on the heels of the deaths of two Royal Navy pilots who crashed in my constituency of Portland. Will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to express the sympathy of the whole House to the relatives and friends of those victims? Will she also reflect that, in these times of peace, the people who have been peacekeeping with the Armilla patrol for the

past 10 years should be recognised, perhaps by a campaign honour—which seems to have been rather slow in coming to people who have been doing a magnificent job over many years?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The whole House will wish to take advantage of his invitation to send its sympathy to the relatives of those lost in the crash to which he refers, of a helicopter that has been flying from HMS Brilliant, which had previously been on duty with the Armilla patrol. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that matter. Other matters are being considered by the Ministry of Defence, but we would like to honour those who took part in the Armilla patrol and in its extremely important work in the international waterway of the Gulf.

Q5. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 16 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. McKay: Is the Prime Minister aware that after nearly two years of negotiations by some local authorities in south Yorkshire and in Scunthorpe, an agreement was signed five months ago for a £308 million aid concession from Europe? Is she aware that the Secretary of State for the Environment decided to break that agreement so that the aid will be widespread throughout the east of England? Does the right hon. Lady agree with the Secretary of State's action, which has deprived my constituency—which has a 20 per cent. male unemployment rate—of substantial aid, or does she disagree with him and accept that the money should be spent where the EEC said? If the Prime Minister does agree with her right hon. Friend, do we not risk losing credibility in respect of our use of EEC aid?

The Prime Minister: No. Those EEC aid agreements must also take into account the Government's view as to how the money can best be spent. Every single pound spent by the EEC in this country is paid for by the taxpayers of this country. Over and above everything that we pay for, this year we shall pay £2 billion net to the European Community, so it is obviously very important that the Government's views are also taken into account.

Q6. **Dame Jill Knight:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 16 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Dame Jill Knight: Will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to welcome the interest shown by hospitals throughout the country in achieving self-governing status? Will she stress once again to the House and to the country that self-governing status does not mean that hospitals are either opting out of the Health Service or going private?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is correct. No hospital will be privatised. Hospitals will be given the choice, if they wish, to be self-governing, which means that they will have control over their own budgets so that decisions will be taken much nearer to the patient, which will in many cases mean far better value for money.—*[Interruption.]* Opposition Members dislike choice except when they choose to say that they like it occasionally. Whether or not a hospital becomes self-governing is a matter of choice.

Q7. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 16 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Skinner: On reflection, does the Prime Minister regret having used a three-line Whip and a guillotine to push the Single European Act through the House?

The Prime Minister: No, I do not. We wished to have many of the directives under majority voting because things which we wanted were being stopped by others using a single vote. For example, we have not yet got insurance freely in Germany as we wished. We strenuously contest some decisions concerning animal and health regulations, which we believe should come under unanimity and that is our understanding. We are not quite certain what will be the judgment not of the Council of Ministers but of the European Court, which makes judgments on whether a particular matter comes within majority or unanimity if it is not clear on the face of the wording.

Q8. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 16 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Moss: Is my right hon. Friend aware that Governments throughout the world are looking at ways to reform the provision of health care and that Poland and Hungary, to name but two Communist countries, are introducing methods of private insurance and charges?

The Prime Minister: Certainly, many countries are looking at the rapidly increasing cost of health care. We recall that in 1977 Alec Merrison said that provision for health care in this country could take the entire income of the country, so we are all looking to get the very best value for money, not only in Poland and Hungary, but in Germany, Italy and other countries in the European Community. Those who take out private insurance pay their full share of tax to the National Health Service and by not using it and paying further for their own treatment they are taking a very great burden off the Health Service and should be thanked for doing that.

Charities Legislation (White Paper)

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Hurd): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about our plans for charities legislation. I have laid a White Paper before the House today.

It is about 30 years since the last major charities legislation. Since then the charitable world has seen substantial changes. The number of charities has grown enormously—with a corresponding increase in the funds flowing through them. That is welcome news. The part which charities and the voluntary sector play in meeting genuine need at home and abroad is increasingly impressive and important.

But that expansion makes safeguards essential. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and I jointly commissioned in 1987 an efficiency scrutiny of the supervision of charities. The scrutiny team, led by Sir Philip Woodfield, submitted its report in June that year. We welcomed the report. The White Paper now sets out how we propose to implement it.

We have also taken the opportunity to raise some fundamental issues relating to charitable status. They are difficult and we invite views on them.

The White Paper concerns England and Wales. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will be putting forward separate proposals. We shall be considering to what extent the changes proposed in the White Paper should be extended to Northern Ireland.

Our aim has been to strike a balance between freedom and control. Charities should be able to go about their business without unreasonable interference but within a framework which ensures that they are properly accountable to the public.

At the core of the White Paper are proposals to give the commissioners new powers in dealing with mismanagement and abuse. For example, there will be a new power for the commission—in the last resort—to transfer a charity's assets to another charity.

To enable the commissioners to concentrate on their new priorities we are proposing that the commission should be relieved of some of its present statutory duties. For example, we propose to relieve the official custodian of his responsibilities for administering charity investments, and we are also proposing that the commission should largely withdraw from its present responsibility for overseeing many charity land transactions.

Other major reforms are necessary to enable the commission to monitor charities adequately. It needs more information, and in particular financial information, about charities. In future all registered charities will have to submit fuller accounts to the commission each year. Accounts of all but the smallest charities will need to be professionally audited or independently examined.

The commission's register of charities has been criticised as out of date and of limited use. An accurate, up-to-date and accessible data base is needed in which the public can have confidence and which the commission can use as its basic supervisory tool. The White Paper provides for that.

The Charities Act 1985 has improved the effectiveness of small charities. We believe that it would be right to build on the experience which has been gained by extending its effectiveness.

We have consulted widely on the reform of the law relating to fund-raising. We are proposing measures to clarify and simplify the present law on public collections and to deal with malpractice. We look to voluntary efforts to regulate the newer means of charitable appeal, such as telethons, but we propose to take powers to regulate these forms of appeal should this become necessary in future.

We believe that charities should make some contribution towards the Charity Commission's costs—now over £7 million a year. So we propose a registration fee of £25, and graduated charges for some other services. Small charities will continue to receive the commission's services free. We reckon that some 90 per cent. of the commission's costs will continue to be borne by the Exchequer.

The commission has already acted to carry out the recommendations of Sir Philip Woodfield which do not require legislation. It has improved its management and the efficiency of its procedures; it has developed its capacity to monitor and deal with abuse; and it is preparing the ground for computerisation. Those changes will fit the commission for the active exercise of the new powers that we propose, and I believe that the result will be a better service to public and charities alike.

The cost of the commission is only a small part of the Government's contribution to charities, and to the voluntary sector more generally. The proposals that we are putting forward will help to provide a framework within which the health and integrity of charities can be assured. Our duties in respect of grants to individual organisations go beyond this. Our immediate concern must be to ensure, on behalf of the taxpayer, that we get value for money and effective services in return. It is for that reason that I have today announced, in response to a written parliamentary question from my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) plans for a scrutiny of Government funding of the voluntary sector.

We shall take careful note of views expressed on the White Paper, both inside and outside the House. We hope then to bring forward legislation.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingson upon Hull, West): On behalf of the Opposition, may I thank the Home Secretary for his statement on the future of the Charity Commission.

We are uncertain about whether paragraph 5 of the White Paper goes far enough in dealing with abuse. Will the Charity Commission have all the powers that it needs to root out abuse? Have all the recommendations of the Woodfield report on the matter been included in the White Paper? If not, why not?

Paragraph 2.4 appears to leave open the question whether there will be changes in the legal meaning of charitable status. Will the Home Secretary say a little more about his feelings on that vital and central matter? Why have the Government decided to introduce charging for registration? Does not the Home Secretary accept that many very small charities might encounter financial difficulty with those proposals? Does he agree that charities would not receive services from the commission for those fees and that the real purpose of registration is merely legal recognition? Are not the Government being rather mean in making the proposals? Is it not the thin end of the charging wedge?

Does the Home Secretary feel that the White Paper goes far enough beyond the Charities Act 1985 in encouraging the large number of very small and ineffective charities to merge or to amalgamate?

Does he agree that rationalising the existing registration structure is still long overdue?

We welcome the proposal to allow the Charity Commission direct access to the courts for the first time instead of having to work through the Attorney-General. Will the Home Secretary tell the House how the relationship between the Attorney-General and the Charity Commission will work in practice?

Does the Home Secretary agree that if the commission is to be effective in tackling many of the unacceptable shortcomings in its organisation which were presented in the Woodfield report it will need resources? Will he assure the House that all the resources needed by the commission to modernise its organisation, including the means for regionalisation, will be made available?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, and will try to deal with his questions. His first point dealt with abuse. Chapter 5 of the White Paper sets out specific ways in which we believe that the powers of the Charity Commission could be strengthened, but there is a further and perhaps more substantial factor. It is not always understood that under the existing law the commissioners have the power to remove a body from the register of charities if there is evidence that it is pursuing its objectives in ways that are not to the public benefit. That is an important safeguard, and I believe that there is a strong case for clarifying it in law.

The hon. Gentleman talked about the legal definition of a charity, which is dealt with in chapter 2 of the White Paper. We have come to the tentative conclusion that the common law definition—the M'Naghten definition—is probably as good as any that could be worked out in statute, but the House and experts on the matter will no doubt wish to consider that conclusion.

If the hon. Gentleman examines the carefully regulated proposals for charging, I do not think that he will find that any charity, however small, could conceivably suffer financial hardship as a result of them. Yes, I believe that the 1985 Act deals adequately with the point about small charities.

We shall need to work out the exact procedures for the commission's direct access to the courts. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to pursue that point, I will gladly write to him.

Yes, the Charity Commission will need to strengthen its effort. A major part of the White Paper's purpose is to relieve the commission of a number of rather fiddling duties which are actually already the responsibility of the trustees of individual charities—I mentioned land transactions, for instance—so that it can deploy its resources for the important purpose of monitoring and investigation. That is already happening, in fact. The chief commissioner tells me that the commission has raised from 14 to 38 the number of people in the commission now engaged on that central task.

Mr. Tim Boswell (Daventry): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the comprehensive approach to the reform of charity law that he has set out this afternoon. Bearing in mind that this takes place on average once a generation, his apparent readiness to continue consultations widely until the very moment of the legislation is most welcome.

Will my right hon. Friend take into account one or two points of concern? The first relates to charging for the services of the Charity Commission. I accept that in principle, but will my right hon. Friend confirm that arrangements will be made in practice to ensure that the revenue is additional to that obtained by grant in aid so that the commissioners may use it, for example, for the promotion of development schemes and local reviews?

My second question relates to the linked issue of the review of funding of voluntary bodies. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that it is designed to secure more value for money rather than a reduction in the total amount paid to such bodies?

I understand that the White Paper contains no proposals relating to the Inland Revenue. Does my right hon. Friend accept that in the long run it must make sense to move towards a system whereby the registration of charities by the commission, and their acceptance of charitable status, is in parallel with and identical to their treatment by the Inland Revenue?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He is right to stress the importance of the charitable sector, whose turnover is now £13 billion a year. A new charity comes to the commission for registration about every half hour of every working day; that is the scale of it.

I cannot give my hon. Friend the exact assurance for which he asks on charges. Charges will contribute about 10 per cent.—about £750,000—a year and will clearly add to the strength and effectiveness of the commission. My hon. Friend also raised the question of the Government's contributions to the voluntary sector. Our aim is to ensure that the taxpayer, whom we represent, receives value for money. The Government contribution is now running at £293 million a year. If we add in all public sector contributions to the voluntary sector, the figure is £2 billion a year, but £293 million is a big enough sum. We need to look closely at the way in which choices are made and the criteria that are used.

I did not deal with taxation issues, but my hon. Friend knows about the closer relationship that has developed in recent years between the Inland Revenue and the Charity Commission. Nothing in the proposals will impede that.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Does the Home Secretary propose to legislate to alter the rules and laws governing the right of charities to advertise and to broadcast direct appeals for funds, especially in view of the extensive use of telethons for fund-raising?

On the regulation of collections, does the Home Secretary accept that it would be undesirable that charities should have to accept more stringent control than other forms of collection? Does he intend to deal with that?

Mr. Hurd: My answer to the hon. Gentleman's first point is that we have no intention of dealing with that. Chapter 10 of the White Paper deals at length with the problem of fund-raising. The hon. Gentleman will know that there has been some concern about possible abuses of fund-raising. We propose certain changes, such as that all funds collected should be passed to the charity in whose name they have been collected and that there should be discussion about administrative expenses after that rather than deductions being made before the money has been

[Mr. Hurd]

passed to the charity. Chapter 10 contains one or two similar suggestions, but we are open to comments. I do not want to introduce unreasonable, extra regulations for charitable fund-raising, but there has been concern about it. If, when he looks at chapter 10, the hon. Gentleman feels that we have gone too far, or that we have not gone far enough, I am sure that he will let me know.

Dame Janet Fookes (Plymouth, Drake): What assurance can my right hon. Friend give us about adequate staffing for the Charity Commission? When the old Expenditure Committee looked at charity law, it found that there was not a single accountant to scrutinise accounts at that time.

Mr. Hurd: It is precisely those initial critical reports which led to the Woodfield scrutiny, which, in turn, led to the White Paper. The Woodfield scrutiny found that the Charity Commission was so bogged down in a number of relatively trivial duties imposed on it by statute that it was unable to do the job of monitoring and investigating, which was at the heart of its duty. That is why, without legislation, the Charity Commission has shifted its priorities and I gave the figures for those engaged in monitoring and investigation compared to the past. The commission understands the importance of accountancy and it employs members of that profession, as well as having access to the talents and activities of accountants whom it does not employ directly.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): As the chairman of a small but important charity, the Bishop Ambrose Reeves Trust, I want to ask the Home Secretary about definition. Will he confirm that the future definition will be broadly the same as the present one, and that there will be no redrafting to exclude charities already accepted by the Charity Commission?

Mr. Hurd: If the hon. Gentleman looks at chapter 2, on which we spent a great deal of effort, he will see an analysis of definitions, beginning with 1601 and going on to Lord M'Naghten's definition of the four main heads of charity in 1891. We are inclined to believe that the hon. Gentleman is right and that it is better to rest on that than to try to devise some new statutory definition. It is a matter on which there are differing views and we have set out our provisional conclusion.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): The Home Secretary has used the phrase "value for money", which is understandable, but will he assure the House that none of the proposals will bring undue pressure, financial or otherwise, to bear on the small charities, especially on those that help disabled people?

Mr. Hurd: When I used the phrase "value for money", I was talking about the £293 million that central Government give in different forms each year to the voluntary sector. That will be subject to the scrutiny that I announced in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell). Value for money for charities is a wider question and, although it does not involve value for money for the taxpayer in most cases, I can assure the right hon. Gentleman that nothing in the proposals will bear heavily on the smaller charities. Indeed, the existence of a good up-to-date register and of proper safeguards against abuse will help to build up the general health of the charitable sector, including the small charities.

Sir Charles Morrison (Devizes): Is my right hon. Friend aware that if he were to step out of the corridors of power into the highways and byways he would discover that the taxpayer believes that he already receives good value for money from what he provides already to charities? Is he aware that, when my right hon. Friend introduces his welcome proposals to reduce abuse still further, the taxpayer will feel even happier without the necessity of the introduction of a charge which will upset the taxpayer as much as it will upset many small and medium-sized charities?

Mr. Hurd: The charging arrangements serve to provide a total of £750,000. This is a worthwhile exercise which will not bear hardly on the smaller charities as my hon. Friend will see if he looks at the proposed charges. Indeed, it will involve them usefully in the process. The £293 million that the taxpayer contributes direct to the voluntary sector is increasingly important. More and more we in the Home Office find activities that are performed best by the voluntary sector—indeed, better than they would be performed under a statutory scheme. However, we must ensure, both as regards our own voluntary service unit in the Home Office and more widely across central Government, that there are reasonable criteria and standards by which the money is expended. That is the purpose of the scrutiny.

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): Is my right hon. Friend standing on the answer that he gave both to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) and to the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) that he is satisfied with the current legal definition of "charities"? Is he aware that many of us feel that the definition is drawn far too wide and that we all have evidence from our personal experiences of organisations, often of a dubious religious nature, which enjoy charitable status, but which many of us feel should not enjoy the tax advantages that genuine charities certainly should enjoy?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend's objections probably do not arise so much from the professed objects of the charity as from the way in which they carry on their activities and from what they do. That is why it is important that the law should make it clear that the commissioners have the power to remove a body from the register where there is evidence that it is acting in pursuit of its objects in ways that are not for the public benefit. If we can make that clear and strengthen that power, as we propose in chapter 5, we have a hope of meeting my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Does the Home Secretary agree that the definition of "political activities" can differ widely depending on the way in which one wants to interpret the activities of certain charities? Will he give an assurance that those charitable organisations that "campaign" against certain activities of the Government, such as, from time to time, the citizens advice bureaux, will not be affected by any legislation to be proposed by the Government?

Mr. Hurd: We set that out for discussion in the White Paper. The Charity Commission's guidance on that point is perhaps worth reading. It is not very long. It is broadly to the effect that

"governing instruments should not include a power to exert political pressure except in a way which is ancillary to a charitable purpose;

—the powers and purposes of a charity should not include the power to bring pressure to bear on the Government to adopt, to alter, or to maintain a particular line of action, although charities may present reasoned argument and information to Government;

—where the objects of a charity include the advancement of education or the power to conduct research, care must be taken to ensure that both objectivity and balance is maintained and that propaganda is avoided."

That is the Charity Commission's existing guidance, and it appears to meet the case.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his proposals will be especially welcome to all genuine charities in this country because, if there is greater public confidence that all the money given to charities will go to charitable ends and that the charities are properly run, obviously, in our affluent society more people will give? However, I am not sure about the effect of my right hon. Friend's answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price). Can my right hon. Friend assure the House that action against charities whose activities are against the public interest, because they are anti-social or oppressive, will be easier to take than it has been hitherto?

Mr. Hurd: The powers exist, but I do not believe that they are widely recognised, which is why we put stress on them in the White Paper. We also propose to strengthen them. My hon. and learned Friend will find that in paragraph 5.11 especially of the White Paper we propose those powers which bear, as he knows, on what registered charities actually do rather than attempting to redefine the definition of a charity.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is the Home Secretary satisfied that the arrangements that he wishes to introduce will deal with the widespread failure of many charities nationally to present accounts to the Charity Commission, as identified in the reports of the Public Accounts Committee and the National Audit Office, and the Charity Commission's failure to examine the accounts of 96 per cent. of charities in a particular year at which the National Audit Office looked? Will the right hon. Gentleman assure us that all charities will be required to submit their returns annually and that, if they fail to do so, they will be subject to penalty? Will he also assure us that the Charity Commission will have the resources to examine the accounts of a far greater proportion of charities than is currently the position?

Mr. Hurd: As a result of the work mentioned by the hon. Gentleman, and in which he probably participated, and the Woodfield scrutiny, it is proposed in the White Paper, and it will be an obligation under the law, that registrable charities should make an annual return of their accounts to the Charity Commission, and in the case of all but the smallest those should be audited. I have already given the numbers and how they are employed, which show that in advance of legislation the Charity Commission is shifting its resources to deal with those accounts.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Did my right hon. Friend share my sense of shame when he read the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General and the Public Accounts Committee about the Charity Commission? Does he understand that, welcome and long overdue though these reforms are, they will amount to nothing unless my right hon. Friend is able at once to instil into the Charity Commission that level of competence and efficiency that has been so grievously lacking for far too long?

Mr. Hurd: I believe that that is already happening. If my hon. Friend went alongside the present Charity Commission—on behalf of the commission I warmly invite him to do so—he would find already a substantial change of the kind that he has advocated. Obviously it is limited in what it can do in advance of legislation, because the Charities Act 1960 to some extent imposed upon the commission a method of working and a choice of duties which are really not sensible in 1989, and probably my hon. Friend was right when he said that they have not been sensible for some years.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): As one who called for the reform of charities during several Finance Bills, may I defend the Charity Commissioners, who have an extremely complex job to do? I welcome the fact that the Home Secretary has introduced this White Paper and the manner in which he has put the proposals before the House.

With regard to Scotland and paragraph 11.4, what investigation of abuse has taken place? I imagine that it is the same in Scotland as in England. What has the Home Office found to be the major cause of this most worrying abuse?

With regard to paragraph 4.11 and the question of malpractice what appropriate publicity will be given to default markings and how will that be arrived at?

The Home Secretary referred to charity land transactions, but will that cover the thorny problem of inalienability? Is inalienability to be respected in relation to land transactions?

The Home Secretary referred to acting not to the public benefit, but how is the public benefit to be defined?

With regard to paragraph 4.12, how will assets be assessed? It is easy to load logical schemes on charities, but given that they have limited resources, will not they be overwhelmed by the sheer difficulty of working out proposals, particularly on the estimation of assets as outlined in paragraph 4.12?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, but I do not intend to venture into Scotland, which has a different system without a Charity Commission. As I have said, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will be making his proposals on that known fairly shortly.

I cannot add to what the hon. Gentleman has already spotted in paragraph 4.11. Default markings are clearly intended to give publicity to a failure on the part of the trustees and we shall have to work out in greater detail what form that publicity takes.

Land transactions are meant not to touch on the question of alienability or inalienability, but simply to withdraw from the Charity Commission the duties which it has now and which to a large extent duplicate the trustees' present duties.

[Mr. Hurd]

I did not haul on board the hon. Gentleman's final point about paragraph 4.12, but I will, and I shall write to him on it.

Mr. Michael Morris (Northampton, South): Is my right hon. Friend aware that one of the difficult areas in religious charities is created by the so-called cults, not so much because of their religious activities as such, but because of the way in which they impinge on society, families and individuals? I have not had the opportunity to see the White Paper, but is it his intention, under chapter 5, to address the rights of individuals and families within those organisations and how they may, in effect, escape from them?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend puts that fairly. This matter has a long rather unhappy history. As he says, it is not so much the aim of a body that is called into question—it is difficult to argue about or define aims in statutes—but rather the way in which such organisations treat individuals. It is their activities in pursuit of the objectives that they define that is offensive to many people, and that is what we must concentrate on. The law already gives the commissioners stronger powers than most people realise to remove a body from the register if its activities are not for the public benefit, and we propose in chapter 5 to strengthen that in a number of ways.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Does the Home Secretary recall the discovery about 12 months ago of the river companies that were laundering money to the Tory party? Under the proposals contained in the new report, will they be able to launder that money to the Tory party, disguised as charities? Has he noticed that the first recommendation says that the Chief Charity Commissioner should appoint a project officer? There is a charity in here that needs a job, a national charity—the leader of the SDP. Is he going to show some charity? Here is a man who appeals to everyone. He should think about it.

Mr. Hurd: I have no recollection of the first point about which the hon. Gentleman tries to remind me. I am not sure whether the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) has quite the necessary element of charity in his own nature to make him suitable for the appointment.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): My right hon. Friend obviously recognises the genuine contribution made to charity by many religious organisations. Will he assure the House that he intends that the full weight of the law should now be brought, as it has not been previously, against quasi-religious and bogus cults which use charitable status as a tax haven and are nothing more than a front for international fraud?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend will remember the statement that my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General made about a particular case not long ago. I shall return to the central point of this issue; my hon. Friend was right about the concern that it arouses. We are talking about the activities of certain bodies which may have got on the charitable register. What we need to make clear and strengthen, as the White Paper proposals do, are the commissioners' power to remove an organisation from the register if it pursues its objectives in ways which do not benefit the public.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): While it is reassuring to hear what the right hon. Gentleman said about the deregulation of cults that act against the public interest, does he recognise that, once registered, a cult can remain on the register for a considerable period, sometimes years, while it goes through a pyramid of legal procedures? Therefore, will he give the Charity Commission powers to examine and regulate religious charities before they are registered to ensure that they act in the public interest from the moment of registration?

Mr. Hurd: That is the purpose of registration. Due to the shift in its priorities, the Charity Commission will be increasingly able to monitor and investigate at an earlier stage. I shall look into the point made by the hon. and learned Gentleman about enforcement procedures because that is important.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Is my right hon. Friend aware that those of us who served on the Public Accounts Committee for some years thought that the inquiry into the Charity Commission came to some of the most woeful findings that we have seen, which is saying something? The commission was extraordinarily complacent and passive, and needed a jolly good boot up the backside. Is my right hon. Friend satisfied that the proposals will instil into the staff the new attitudes which are required and which were certainly lacking then?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, Sir, I am.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): Will the Secretary of State give some assurances about those charities which operate in the front line of social controversy, particularly in view of the recent statement by the Secretary of State for Social Security about the Low Pay Unit, Child Poverty Action Group, Shelter and War on Want? Will he give an absolute assurance that, when dealing with cults, the Government will not widen the issue into an all-out attack on charities such as those which I support and which campaign for social justice in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Hurd: I have already read to the House, and shall forbear doing so again, the guidance which the Charity Commission puts out about the political activities of charities. It is crucial for the health and reputation of the charitable sector that it should respect this guidance and not tread beyond it. Many of us have occasionally been worried by charities which seemed to tread beyond the clear guidance which I have laid down.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Is my right hon. Friend aware that after that trailer I cannot wait to read his interesting document? Will he consider the possibility that, when a charity is under investigation, its fund-raising activities might be suspended? Will he also consider the fact that when small charities are asked to return their accounts on an annual basis, those accounts should be accepted in a simple form? If they are not returned, will the power to suspend or roll up those charities be used? In the past, the problem has been that, although the powers existed, nothing was done.

Mr. Hurd: I will look at my hon. Friend's first point. It might be considered rather high-handed and, perhaps,

subject to judicial review, if the commission attempted to suspend a body's activities before making any findings against it.

As for my hon. Friend's second point, the whole purpose and thrust of the White Paper is precisely what some of my hon. Friends have urged that we should do —to brisk up the activities of the commission so as to strengthen its powers of investigation and enforcement.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): My right hon. Friend will be aware that some organisations have used their charitable status to hoodwink and to milk a kind-hearted British public in order to line the pockets of the organisers. They have used their charitable status as a vehicle to evade the proper payment of taxation. When there is clear evidence of a major abuse, can my right hon. Friend confirm that draconian powers will be used— including the repayment of tax that has been avoided by a so-called charitable organisation, and quite possibly the imposition of Mareva injunctions to freeze assets and the institution of criminal proceedings against the organisers?

Mr. Hurd: These matters often depend on evidence, and if my hon. Friend has evidence about recent activities of this sort, I am sure that he will let us or the police know.

The whole point of the existing law, which, I acknowledge, is rusty and creaking, of the reinvigoration of the Charity Commission which has already started, of the proposals in the White Paper, and of the legislation that we hope to introduce after it has been digested, is to safeguard the charitable sector by making it easier to spot and then to deal severely with any charity or individual connected with a charity who is tempted to act in the way that my hon. Friend has criticised.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I shall put together the two motions relating to European Community documents.

Ordered,

That European Community Document No. 10449/88 relating to Community financial procedures be referred to a Standing Committee on European Community Documents.

That European Community Documents Nos. 5211/88 and 10166/88 relating to health and safety be referred to a Standing Committee on European Community Documents. —*[Mr. Chapman.]*

Private Residential Special Schools (Registration)

4.11 pm

Mrs. Gillian Shephard (Norfolk, South-West): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to require the registration with local authorities of private residential special schools in respect of their use and residential facilities.

I am grateful for this chance to raise this important and topical matter in the House. It is important because it is about the welfare of children who are amongst the most vulnerable people in society—those with learning or behavioural difficulties or with physical or mental handicaps. It is important, too, because it concerns their placement in such schools by local authorities at tax and ratepayers' expense, and it is topical because, although the vast majority of these schools in England and Wales do a very good job, there have been some notorious cases in the past few years and recently which illustrate that, because of the current state of the law, those responsible have been unable to prevent such cases from occurring, to discover them promptly, or to take swift and effective action when they have been discovered. This Bill seeks to suggest ways of putting that right.

Children in need of special residential education are dealt with in one of three ways. They can be educated in a special school run by a local authority; they can be maintained by a local authority in a non-maintained special school, of which there are now 88 in England and Wales—they are non-profit-making concerns, usually run by trusts and in receipt of direct grant from central Government; or they can be educated, often on placement by a local authority, in a private residential special school.

Stringent requirements, in the form of the Education (Approval of Special Schools) Regulations 1983, govern the setting up and running of special schools run by LEAs and non-maintained special schools. Among other things, these regulations require that schools and their government be approved by the Secretary of State; that the premises must satisfy statutory requirements; and that non-maintained schools must not be run for profit. There are also requirements governing pupils' health, diet and religious worship. Regular reports have to be made to LEAs on statemented children and the teaching and care staff must be "suitable and sufficient".

In the case of non-maintained schools access must be allowed to representatives of local authorities which maintain a child in school, and the Secretary of State may withdraw his approval of a school if it fails to comply with the requirements either in these regulations or those in force under either section 10 of the 1944 Education Act or section 27 of the 1980 Education Act.

The contrast between these requirements and the regulations for the third category of school, the private residential school, could hardly be more striking, yet the same vulnerable group of children is involved. Private residential special schools are merely required to register and make annual returns under the Education (Particulars of Independent Schools) Regulations 1982. These, with their schedule, require information on numbers of pupils, details of public examinations, change of ownership and address, and any dismissals of staff on the grounds of misconduct. The numbers of statemented pupils, with staff qualifications, also have to be reported.

[Mrs. Gillian Shephard]

Section 11 of the 1981 Education Act points out that where an LEA makes arrangements for the provision of a statemented child at an independent school, the Secretary of State must approve it as suitable for statemented children and must consent to the child being placed there. There are 170 such private residential special schools in England and Wales at the moment, and of these 135 are approved under this section.

Schools are approved as suitable as a result of an inspection by Her Majesty's inspectors, who expect the school to meet the same standards as local authority schools and, according to the Department of Education, the inspection covers all the arrangements for the welfare of the children outside the classroom. An inspector may be accompanied by members of the social services inspectorate.

I make no criticism of either Her Majesty's inspectors or social services inspectors, but it must be accepted that nowhere in the legislation are there any requirements other than those criteria laid down 40 years ago in section 71 of the 1944 Act, that registration may be refused or withdrawn if the premises are unsuitable; if the accommodation is unsuitable or inadequate; if efficient and suitable instruction is not provided, or if the proprietor or any teacher is not a proper person. There is no mention anywhere of the arrangements that should be made for the care and welfare of the children or for their physical or moral wellbeing.

I have already tried to draw the attention of the House to the contrast between the regulations for this category of school and those governing local authority or non-maintained special schools, but there is an even more striking contrast between the paucity of regulation of these special schools and the arrangements for registration, to be enacted, I hope, through part 8 of the Children Bill, now in Committee, for registered children's homes. These arrangements are comprehensive and drawn up in accordance with professional realities, and indeed, could apply to private residential special schools, were these not already registered under section 11 of the 1981 Education Act, yet, I repeat, the same group of vulnerable children is involved. If these children require the care and protection afforded to them by the provisions made for local authority and non-maintained special schools and for residental homes, they cannot and should not be denied that same care and protection if they happen to be placed by a local authority in a residential special school run privately.

Unfortunately, examples of disaster are not difficult to find. In Norfolk events at the Buxton Red House school five years ago and at the then Walker Foundation school in Burston caused immense concern. In Suffolk, tragically, at the Four Elms school, consistent abuse of the children was discovered to have taken place over a long period, and eventually the home was closed, but not before one distraught parent, who had learned that her mentally handicapped child had been regularly abused, arrived at the home and shot the teacher and officer in charge. Only last week, according to a press release from the West Mercia police, the co-proprietor of the Castle Hill school in Ludlow appeared before Ludlow magistrates on 14 charges of serious child abuse.

The law must be changed to allow more control to be exercised more effectively and with more accountability. If the state places children, especially vulnerable children, in a school at public expense, the state must provide an effective legal framework to protect them. To expect her Majesty's inspectorate or social services inspectors to perform a monitoring role at such schools when the law does not require them to do so and, in any case, her Majesty's inspectorate does not have the necessary expertise, is simply unrealistic. What is needed is expert monitoring carried out locally and on a regular basis.

The Bill therefore proposes that the Secretary of State for Education through her Majesty's inspectorate should retain responsibility for the education in private, residential special schools. Requirements for them should be brought into line with those expected of local authority and non-maintained special schools. The responsibility for registering the care, residential and welfare facilities of such schools should be placed with the social services department of the local authority in which the school is situated. Such dual registration would be welcomed by social services, would provide a balanced appraisal of the schools, retain a consistent role for both the Secretary of State for Education and for social services departments and, most importantly, would protect the interests of these vulnerable children. I hope that the House will support the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mrs. Gillian Shephard, Mr. Andrew Mitchell, Mr. Ian Taylor, Mr. Simon Burns, Miss Ann Widdecombe, Mr. Tim Boswell, Mr. Anthony Coombs, Mr. Steve Norris, Mr. Keith Mans, Mr. David Evans, Mr. David Davis and Mr. Christopher Gill.

Private Residential Special Schools (Registration) Bill

Mrs. Gillian Shephard accordingly presented a Bill to require the registration with local authorities of private residential special schools in respect of their use and residential facilities: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 7 July and to be printed. [Bill 141].

Opposition Day

[10TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Government Publicity (Cost)

4.21 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): I beg to move,

That this House deplores the soaring cost of the Government's publicity machine; and calls for an end to its deployment for party political purposes.

Mr. Speaker: I must announce to the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Dobson: There is widespread and growing concern about the scale, propriety and timing of much Government publicity and advertising. It is an issue that goes to the heart of the relationship between political parties, the people, public servants and the state. In 1985 the Government acknowledged that in their evidence to the Widdicombe inquiry when they said:

"The unregulated use by any public authority of highly developed media techniques, particularly for persuasive purposes with a strong political undertone, is perceived as a dangerous trend in a democratic society."

At the time the Government were talking about local authorities. Since that statement, spending on Government publicity has soared. The regulations laid down to minimise the party political content in Government publicity have been partly ignored and secretly relaxed. It has become increasingly difficult to distinguish between Government publicity and Tory propaganda, in terms both of the content and of the personnel and agencies producing it.

Since that statement was made, without the benefit of statute, industries owned by the public have run privatisation advertising campaigns co-ordinated with those of Government Departments and the Tory party. The only good feature of that is the growing public revulsion against some of the more patronising claptrap that they see on television. People believe that this has gone too far. In particular, they object to the £30 million of their money that is being spent on advertising by the water industry which has a monopoly product that none of us can do without. As *The Economist* asked last week:

"Who benefits from the campaign? The ten authorities' tied customers will not get cleaner or cheaper water, merely bigger bills. The authorities themselves can hardly increase their sales or market share. Indeed, after the dry winter, some of them might be glad to be asked to supply less, not more, water."

That advertising appears to have been counter productive because after the milk float water advertisement, some people thought that privatised water would be sold by the bottle. That may turn out to be right.

Spending on Government publicity has continued to soar, and that fact cannot be disputed. Publicity spending by public bodies controlled by the Government will this year total well over £220 million. That is a lot of money. To give only one example, it would pay for building four big new district hospitals. Instead of that, it is all going on paper and television.

About £120 million of that massive sum will be spent by Government Departments, and the rest by the armed forces, Government agencies and the water and electricity industries. The £120 million spending by Government Departments is a sixfold increase on the £20 million publicity spending by Government Departments in 1979. No wonder the taxpayers are beginning to think that it has all gone too far.

In 1987, according to *The Daily Telegraph*, the Government overtook Unilever as Britain's biggest spender on advertising. Strange to think that a Government who proclaim that they want to roll back the frontiers of the state insist that their propaganda rolls into the front room of every family in the land. The Government now spend so much on TV advertising that they get a special discount rate from the TV companies.

In March of this year, the top five spenders on advertising were B and Q, £3·6 million; Renault, £2·2 million; the Department of Trade and Industry, £2·1 million; Midland bank, £2 million; and the water industry, £1·98 million. The Government Departments that spend most taxpayers' money on publicity include the Department of Employment, with £17 million, and the Department of Social Security, with £16 million.

The Department of Social Security should spend money on publicity in an effort to raise the appalling take-up level of some benefits. It is trying to spend money now to increase the take-up that its incompetent advertising in the past failed to raise.

This year, though, the star spender is the Department of Health, the spending of which is set to soar from about £10 million to about £19 million, an increase of 87 per cent. At the same time, the Department has given the National Health Service just 5 per cent. to cope with inflation. Yet the Secretary of State for Health has had the gall to go around the country complaining about the money that doctors are spending to campaign against the NHS review. The doctors have one singular merit that the right hon. and learned Gentleman does not have: they are spending their own money.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): I could not understand from what the hon. Gentleman said whether he welcomed the increase in expenditure on advertising by the Department of Social Services.

Mr. Dobson: There is no Department of Social Services in national Government. There is a Department of Social Security, which has misspent money on pathetic, rather trendy advertising that did not work. It is now having to spend more money. It would be better, of course, if we saved the money now spent on advertising and gave people benefits which were easy to take up and were not dependent on advertising to get them taken up in the first place.

The other big spender is the Department of Trade and Industry, headed by Lord Young, who is supposed to be the apostle of Government advertising. I suppose that that is because, being in the House of Lords, he is sure that, however much is spent on Government advertising, none of it will go on his election expenses. Wherever he goes, Government publicity expenditure soars. As the amendment refers to value for money, I suggest that the Government look closely at spending by the Department of Trade and Industry, because it is clear from the figures that the more that Department spends on advertising, the worse our balance of trade gets.

It is not just the scale of the publicity machine that has changed; it has become much more party political. So

[Mr. Dobson]

much so that in 1988 *The Daily Telegraph*, describing what had happened in election year 1987, referred to what it called

"the Government's lavish publicity campaigns on such issues as job training and health education . . . little more than an expensive vote-catching exercise."

You will note, Mr. Speaker, that the expense was borne by the taxpayer; the vote catching was to the benefit of the Tory party.

But it is not just that the old regulatory arrangements are being ignored; they have been relaxed, and they have been relaxed furtively and in some cases secretly.

The director of the Central Office of Information used to be the head of profession for Government information officers, the person to whom civil servants in information departments could turn if they had doubts about the propriety of what they were being asked to do. Earlier this year that role was handed over to Mr. Bernard Ingham, of whose relationship with professional propriety I shall say no more than that it was amply demonstrated in the Westland affair.

Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones (Comptroller of Her Majesty's Household): What does the hon. Gentleman know about it?

Mr. Dobson: The non-silent Whip the hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) asks what I know about it. I read it in the report of the Defence Select Committee, on which there is a majority of his hon. Friends.

Until recently the Central Office of Information had what was called a central role in advising on the propriety of Government publicity. In a change made early last year the Central Office of Information lost that central role in advising on propriety and it was handed over to, of all people, the Cabinet Office, the organisation which gave the world the phrase "economical with the truth". The change was kept secret from the Treasury Select Committee, which was then looking into the Central Office of Information. It was not even disclosed in the Treasury response to the Select Committee report when it was published in February this year.

Finally, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, we now understand, has been given a special role as a ministerial point of reference on publicity matters. He will advise on propriety. This would clearly be a difficult role for any Minister to fulfil. Obviously, it could not be carried out by anyone who was vindictive, petty minded or highly partisan. Instead, such a role, as we all realise, would require someone with breadth of vision and a willingness to respect the points of view and sensitivities of political opponents; a person capable of distinguishing between the interests of his party and the interests of the country as a whole. In other words, someone who likes mixing it could not possibly properly carry out that job. Hon. Members will be able to judge from his speech today the extent to which the present Chief Secretary meets these not particularly demanding criteria.

Time after time Ministers, including the Prime Minister, have referred to the conventions published in 1985, but it took a series of questions before the Prime Minister eventually revealed two weeks ago that the conventions had been reviewed at the beginning of last year. Nobody had been told about that—at least, no one outside Government information offices. Notwithstanding those recent changes, the Government conventions on publicity are still supposed to apply to advertising and press notices and other similar material. Section 4(ii) reads:

"Content, tone and presentation should not be party political. The treatment should be as objective as possible, should not be personalised, should avoid political slogans and should not directly attack the policies and opinions of Opposition parties or groups."

Those conventions were designed to protect the taxpayer and the public and to protect the integrity of public officials who may be asked from time to time to carry out party political tasks in the name of their ministerial masters or mistresses.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Relaxed though the hon. Gentleman considers those regulations to be, does he think that those relaxed limitations should be applied to local government?

Mr. Dobson: As the hon. Gentleman ought to know, the unrelaxed regulations are applied by law to local government and it was the suggestion of the Treasury Select Committee that they should be applied by law to central Government as well.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): Does my hon. Friend agree that double standards operate among Conservative Members? Is he aware that not long ago the Strathclyde local authority in Scotland distributed cards to every household so that people would know of their entitlement to social security benefits? The Government criticised it for doing so, but now we can see how they operate double standards.

Mr. Dobson: My hon. Friend is spot on, as ever. Having double standards is almost the least of the criticisms that I would make of some Conservative Members. Whenever local authorities throughout the country—mainly Labour, but not exclusively—attempt to increase the take-up of benefits by people who are badly off, they are criticised by a Government who themselves have incompetently spent millions of pounds on advertising while achieving some of the lowest take-up levels in the history of the social security system.

In 1981, when a Conservative Government were in power, the Central Office of Information published a document on the role of Government information officers marked "For official use." I do not know whether the House of Commons counts as official use but I shall still make use of that document. It states:

"If a Minister includes in a speech an attack on his political opponents, it would be improper for the Department to issue it as an official text or use the COI news distribution service to distribute it to Fleet Street. Such action would open the Minister and his Department to the charge of using taxpayers' money to further party political attacks. In this case the political attack would have to be omitted from an official handout, otherwise the text must be issued by the party's publicity machine."

No mention is made of which party. It is rather like something from the Soviet Union in referring to the party. Official documents mean only one party—the Tory party.

Those rules are being broken. Civil servants complain that they are forced to

"expound half truths, produce dodgy material, and to leak in the Government's interests."

We are back to No. 10 Downing street. If civil servants wish to complain about being pressurised, they can always

go to No. 10 Downing street and see Mr. Ingham, the head of profession, and see what sort of change they get. Everyone knows that the rules are not observed.

Another recent example was a press release issued by the Department of Employment in September 1988 containing an attack by the Secretary of State for Employment both on the Leader of the Opposition and on the shadow Employment Secretary by name, in clear breach of the rules I have quoted.

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): Why was it not stopped?

Mr. Dobson: Such practices are not stopped but are being encouraged.

More blatant than that example was the concerted effort by the Department of the Environment's press office earlier this month to back up the poll tax leaflet campaign. The Department faxed syndicated articles to at least 15 local newspapers purporting to be written by the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer)—and for all I know, he did write them. Those articles had a standard content but incorporated local variations. Those sent to Nottingham newspapers contained an attack on my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen). Those sent to Leicester included an attack on the chairman of Leicester city council's finance committee. The fax sent to the *Leicester Mercury* clearly came from the Department of the Environment's press office and was signed by Nick Gammage. Again, that was done in clear breach of the published conventions.

Government press officers have also been pressured into what I can accurately describe as lying about statements made by my right hon. and hon. Friends and by me. On one occasion a radio reporter quite properly rang the then DHSS press office in my presence for its comments on a report that I issued. The press officer to whom the reporter spoke lied about the figures in my report. When I took the matter up with the Department's head of information, she sought to justify her colleague's lie, and no apology was forthcoming.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): My hon. Friend highlights significant abuses of Government power. Had they been perpetrated by a local authority, there would be demands for its councillors to be surcharged. Can my hon. Friend say what recourse the taxpayer has to get back from Ministers some of the money that they are clearly squandering on abusive and offensive practices?

Mr. Dobson: The taxpayer has no redress in such matters because the Government have no statutory authority to carry out any advertising; as far as I understand, they do it under their prerogative powers. There are no statutory restraints on what they do, but they have imposed statutory restraints on everyone else who might be involved in publicity.

One recent publicity campaign cost a lot of money—more than was originally intended—broke the conventions and blurred the distinctions between the Government, the Tory party and its public relations advisers. As for value for money, which I understand is the main interest of the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, it was a washout. I am talking about the launch of the National Health Service review, which was more unpopular after it was launched than it had been when it was just a leak.

The campaign had no statutory backing and was scheduled to cost £1 million. It actually cost £1·4 million —a 40 per cent. overspend. Unless the parliamentary answers on the matter are misleading, the vast bulk of the money was paid to one agency. I understand that in the trade, if an agency bids to do something for £1 million and spends £1·4 million, the extra £400,000 is paid by the agency and does not come out of the funds of those for whom it is carrying out the work. But that did not apply here. The money was spent on eight tele-conferences totalling £440,000, six road shows costing £179,000, communication packs at £302,000 and videos at £174,000.

The rules say that publicity campaigns should not be personalised, but it has to be said that that campaign was heavily personalised around the Secretary of State. For example, copies of NHS Management Bulletin No. 19 were sent to all GPs. The envelopes containing the bulletin were marked in the way usually reserved by the Department of Health for letters notifying GPs of vital clinical matters such as outbreaks of infectious diseases or warnings about contaminated batches of vaccine. It may be appropriate that there was some warning, because the envelopes contained a document emblazoned with no fewer than five pictures of the Secretary of State. His name was mentioned 10 times on the first page and more than 30 times in total. However, it is a serious matter when, for the sake of trying to make sure that every doctor opened his or her bit of propaganda, the Government devalued the franking that they normally reserve for matters which are important to doctors and patients. If the Secretary of State wants to know why the doctors are so offended by what has been going on, that is one reason.

But we should consider who mounted the campaign for the Government. That substantial contract was given to a little-known company, NML Presentations Ltd. The company's accounts show that it declared no dividend in 1986 or 1987. It made a loss in 1987, but its report said that the directors expected it to be profitable in 1988. The net value of its assets excluding motor vehicles was just £7,286. On the face of it, that outfit does not seem to have very much going for it, certainly not enough to justify getting a £1 million contract that the Government considered very important. But it did have one vital asset—it had close connections with the Tory party. Its ultimate holding company was Lowe Howard Spink and Bell plc—the Bell in question being Tim Bell, who masterminded the Tory general election campaign. It is a pity that he did not do that as badly as this campaign; if he had, we would all be better off.

Many of the problems that Government Departments, some decent Ministers and a lot of decent civil servants face spring from what appears to be an increasing inability on the part of the Prime Minister to distinguish between the interests of the Tory party and the interests of the country. The motto seems to be that what is good for the Tory party is good for the country, and vice versa.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that it is one of the supreme ironies of history that at the same time as the Tory Benches are praising President Gorbachev for trying to separate the party from the state, they are doing exactly the opposite in Britain? Did my hon. Friend ever think that the day would come when any political party in Britain would take lessons from the Soviet Union and would bring in corrupt practices using taxpayers' money?

Mr. Dobson: I recall as a student having to learn about the government of various overseas states. I found it difficult to unravel the relationship between the Communist party of the Soviet Union and the Soviet Government because such a close, interwoven relationship had not occurred in western democracies. My hon. Friend is right. Perhaps it is not just Mr. Gorbachev who is learning something when he comes here; the Prime Minister seems to have been learning quite a bit about how to run the state when she goes there.

The confusion between the interests of the Tory party and the state leads one to think of the one-party state which is a threat to our democracy, as the Government have said. The curious, interwoven relationship is best exemplified by the interchanges of publicity advisers between the Government, the Tory party and those industries scheduled to be privatised. As my hon. Friend the Member for——

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): The hon. Member should not lose his place.

Mr. Dobson: I have not lost my place. I hesitated because I was trying to remember the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair). As my hon. Friend pointed out, Mr. Brendan Bruce used to be a senior executive of D'Arcy Masius Benton and Bowles, known as DMB and B, the agency that had the contract for the present softening-up round of the water campaign. He was recently appointed director of communications at Conservative Central Office, we understand, to mastermind the party's media coverage in the run-up to the next election. DMB and B, which was responsible for the Tory party political broadcast on the Health Service—that does not say a lot for it—and for the current phase of the Department of Trade and Industry 1992 campaign—that does not say a lot for it, either—is engaged simultaneously in a bid to get the contract for the Conservative party election campaign.

Mr. Tim Bell, who has already been involved in these sordid matters, and who is a long-time image builder of the Prime Minister and the Conservative party, is now employed as a public relations adviser to Thames Water, the most profitable of the water authorities. Perhaps the Chief Secretary, when looking at getting value for public money, could tell us whether it was Mr. Tim Bell who suggested to Thames Water that it should spend some of my money as a Thames Water user to pay for a water privatisation advertisement in the booklet "Thatcher—the first 10 years" obtainable from the Tory Central Office at £1·95. I do not think that there has ever been a closer relationship between party and Government than that, even in the Soviet Union. The appointment of Mr. Bruce may eventually fulfil the headline in *The Times* in August 1987:

"Propaganda role for Tory headquarters".

That rather startled some of us who wondered what else would happen while the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) was chairman of the Tory party. [HON. MEMBERS: "Winning elections."] Are Conservative Members suggesting that they had a propaganda role at the time, or that they did not? I think that that press briefing—clearly from the Tory party to *The Times*—suggested that the Government would have to take over the propaganda role that it had ceded substantially to the public sector and the public purse in the run-up to the 1987 general election.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne) *rose*——

Mr. Dobson: I do not think that I should give way to someone to whom one of the Whips has run up and said, "Please intervene on Mr. Dobson's speech", or words to that effect.

That brings me to the question of the timing of some of this spending. During general elections, by convention, all Government advertising is suspended, in the words of the Independent Broadcasting Authority,

"to avoid any risk of controversy about the use of public money for electoral purposes".

Mr. Gow: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. I think that he will want to adjust this part of his speech to take account of the judgement of the High Court, delivered this afternoon, in which both judges found in favour of the Government and against the London borough of Greenwich. Furthermore, an order of costs was made against the borough. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman, who referred to the matter earlier, will now adapt his remarks to take account of his new-found friends the judges in the High Court.

Mr. Dobson: I was aware of the outcome of the case of Greenwich *v* the Department of the Environment before the debate began. The fact is that, as every Conservative Member knows, it is extremely difficult for anyone to succeed in an action against a Government Department, even over a breach of statute and even with the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley) in charge of the Department. When what is being questioned is expenditure carried out under the royal prerogative, the chances of success in the courts are fairly poor, and they were always poor in this case.

Let me point out to Conservative Members that the judge in the initial hearing said that he believed that aspects of the leaflet were capable of misleading people.

Mr. Harry Greenway: If, as the hon. Gentleman predicted, the money of taxpayers and ratepayers of the London borough of Greenwich was so grossly wasted, why did the borough bring the action in the first place?

Mr. Dobson: I did not suggest for a moment that the action of Greenwich council was a waste of time, effort or money. What the council did was observe and then seek legal advice on the basis that aspects of the leaflet were inadequate, and that one important aspect was mentioned in the Welsh leaflet but not in the English leaflet. The borough succeeded in the courts initially; now it has failed. The odds are against success in any court case against a Government who are relying on prerogative powers, as Conservative Members know. But there is always a chance, and it was wholly proper and reasonable for Greenwich council to do what it did.

Dr. Reid: Does my hon. Friend recall the judgment by Judge McCowan some years ago, when he decreed that the interests of the state were synonymous with and identical to the interests of the Government of the day—a view also held, apparently, on the Conservative Benches? Does my hon. Friend recall that, when that judgment was put to a jury of 12 good men and true, they threw it out of court and released Clive Ponting?

Mr. Dobson: It seemed to me at the time that any judge who, in advising a jury, came to the conclusion that the interests of the state coincided with the interests of those

who, for the time being, were in government was getting on to rather dodgy ground. As my hon. Friend has pointed out, however, the common sense of the Old Bailey jury overrode the rather peculiar and absolutist advice of the judge. *[Interruption.]* I have now got as far as provoking the ultimate Trappist, the Government Chief Whip. He has asked me whether I was pleased with the judge's judgment. The judge made no judgment in that case: it was the jury who made the judgment. What was wrong was the judge's advice to the jury.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. David Waddington): I was talking about the current case.

Mr. Dobson: If the Chief Whip wants to ask me about this case he should understand, as a lawyer, that more than one judge has been involved. It was reasonable for me to assume that he was talking about the case involving only one judge.

I can sum up my response to what has happened in court today by saying that it was perfectly reasonable for Greenwich council to challenge the Government, and most people in this country will be glad that it did so. Greenwich knew, however, as we all know, that the chances of success in an action involving the prerogative powers are not very good.

Let me repeat what I said earlier, as it was shouted down before. During general elections, by convention, all Government advertising is suspended, in the words of the Independent Broadcasting Authority,

"to avoid any risk of controversy about the use of public money for electoral purposes."

I have been in touch with the IBA to find out whether it proposes to stop the Government and public bodies from advertising on television during the forthcoming European elections. The IBA tells me that that is a matter for the Government rather than for it.

The convention that Government advertising stops during a general election is, of course, only a convention; it has no statutory authority, just as there is no statutory authority for the general conventions on Government advertising. Nor, for that matter, is there any statutory authority for the Government to advertise in the first place. The Government acted to restrict by law the use of publicity by local councils, and we believe that whatever restrictions are applied by law to local councils should be applied by law to Government Departments. We now call on the Government to cease their advertising and publicity throughout the period of the European election campaign, following precedents set in previous general elections. If the Government refuse to do that, we call on the IBA—in observance of its own code of advertising standards and practice, which states that no advertisement may be directed towards any political end—to prevent the showing of privatisation and other Government advertising during the European elections, because we are convinced that it is impossible to look on any such advertising as not being directed to a political end.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): My hon. Friend should refer to the six-week run-up to the local government election campaign, when £8 million was spent on advertising the privatisation of the water industry, which was a major issue in the elections. If the Government are prepared to spend that kind of money to promote themselves for local government, how much will be spent to paper up the cracks between the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) and the Prime Minister over European issues?

Mr. Dobson: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend about water advertising. However, it so irritates people that it is probably counter productive for the water industry and for the Government.

In the longer term, the Government should give statutory force to the conventions governing Government publicity. In the meantime, they should change their behaviour and ensure that the existing conventions are enforced. They should reinstate the Central Office of Information as the centre of advice on propriety. They should publish full details of all publicity campaigns that they intend to mount. The contracts for Government publicity campaigns should be awarded only on the basis of open and competitive tenders. Above all, the Government should stop using taxpayers' money to promote party interests. Finally, they should direct the water and electricity industries to desist from their profligate and preposterous campaigns.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): What about Greenwich?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. If the hon. Lady wants to make an intervention, perhaps she will say so.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The hon. Gentleman referred to taxpayers' money. Taxpayers contribute money to the borough of Greenwich, which spent money on a fruitless exercise.

Mr. Dobson: Greenwich council is perfectly entitled to bring legal actions within the statutes, just as Governments are entitled to appeal against judgments—although it was not an appeal in this case. If we were to suggest that public authorities could not bring legal actions, we would apply that not only to local authorities, but to Governments. However, we are saying, in short, that publicity at public expense has gone too far and it is about time it stopped.

5.1 pm

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John Major): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"recognises the responsibility of Government to provide advice and information to the public; and commends the Government's firm adherence to the long standing conventions governing propriety and value for money."

Let me make it clear to the House at the outset that I reject without qualification the criticisms made this afternoon by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). The worst thing that I can say, having heard his speech, is that the speech was worthy of him. In recent weeks, the hon. Gentleman has been engaged in what one can only call a campaign of misinformation and misrepresentation on a scale that merits parliamentary rebuttal. I am pleased, therefore, that he has at last brought his campaign to the House, so that it can be examined—pleased, but a little surprised that the Opposition regard this subject as more important than defence, when they have a brand-new review about which they want to talk. To express a concern about political propaganda and then to seek to avoid discussing their defence policy seems very odd.

[Mr. John Major]

I am surprised, too, that this artificial debate is more important than parading their new tax and public spending policies about which they have been boasting, or explaining their new policy of "activity funding" for the National Health Service, which caused such mirth in the House last week. If misleading propaganda concerns them, they might have brought those matters before the House, rather than the trivial conspiracy theories the hon. Gentleman has described.

This debate was clearly timed to coincide with the court case brought by Greenwich council over the community charge leaflet issued by the Department of the Environment. As my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) has already told the House, judgment has been delivered this afternoon. I understand that both judges gave unqualified support to the Government. The Government have always believed that the leaflet was clear, concise and accurate and we are pleased by the vindication of our position in the High Court. It is highly desirable that the public should have early information about the community charge and we are anxious to resume distribution of the leaflet. However, despite the fact that we are now entirely free to do so, as a result of the court's decision, we have given an undertaking not to resume distribution before tomorrow, during which time Greenwich council will consider whether to appeal. If it does appeal, we shall not resume distribution until the Court of Appeal has decided the case, provided that the appeal can be heard within the next few days. I am pleased to see that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is here with us this afternoon while the House is informed that he and his Department have acted wholly properly.

It has long been accepted by successive Governments that they have a responsibility to ensure that members of the public are properly and fully informed about their rights, entitlements, responsibilities and duties. One way of achieving that has been to use publicity and advertising in the press, on television and through leaflets. That responsibility has led to campaigns on matters such as crime prevention and benefit entitlements, which have run throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The hon. Gentleman seemed to oppose the advertising of benefit entitlement, although I recall many of his hon. Friends suggesting that the campaign might have been extended. There is nothing new about such campaigns and I trust that they are not a matter of contention today—indeed, we are often asked to increase them.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Before my right hon. Friend leaves the subject of the leaflet, will he accept that it is urgent for delivery to be resumed as soon as possible as an honest means of countering the highly mendacious leaflets about the community charge put out by many Labour authorities at huge cost to taxpayers and ratepayers?

Mr. Tony Banks: Which ones?

Mr. Greenway: Greenwich and Ealing in particular.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind all right hon. and hon. Members that the motion and the amendment relate not to local authorities, but to the Government's publicity machine and cash.

Mr. Major: I take your point, Madam Deputy Speaker, so I will not read the long list of Labour local authorities that have provided misleading information about the community charge. However, I accept without qualification what my hon. Friend had to say.

Dr. Reid: Will the Chief Secretary accept that no Opposition Member is opposed to supplying information, especially on benefits, although I am surprised that he should cite that example? As my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) pointed out earlier, when Strathclyde regional council issued information on benefits, the Government were the first to criticise.

Can the Chief Secretary tell us what information or useful function is provided by the large billboard hoardings we see throughout the country advertising the employment training scheme? Can he tell us why every firm used in the advertisements is also a huge financial benefactor to the Conservative party?

Mr. Major: It must be clear even to the hon. Gentleman that the purpose of those advertisements was to bring the scheme to the attention of those who might benefit from it. The hon. Gentleman should welcome that advertising.

Some elements of advertising have long been accepted and are not partisan or contentious and nor are many other large areas of publicity. The Government have a clear responsibility to promote health education and safety campaigns and the extensive AIDS campaign is an example of that. Energy conservation and training programmes are further examples of the Government's responsible use of publicity, both to inform and influence behaviour. Other examples of more general information campaigns are those on road safety, Government recruitment and the statutory advertising that all Governments are obliged to carry out.

The misinformation we have heard in recent weeks has been of two kinds. First, there have been comments about the propriety of expenditure and, secondly, about its cost.

Mr. Dobson: If energy conservation is so important, why has spending on publicity by the Department of Energy—excluding expenditure on privatisation—been reduced?

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman cannot play it both ways. He cannot on one hand complain about levels of expenditure and on the other hand ask for more. However, he has drawn attention to a point that needs to be clearly understood. The advertising in which the Government are engaged is legitimate, proper, necessary and serves a good and useful purpose.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the Chief Secretary give way?

Mr. Major: I will give way a little later.

I want to turn to the matter of propriety, because the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras made some contentious comments about it. He told the House that the conventions on Government publicity had been secretly relaxed. I must tell him that they have not been, nor will they be. The basic conventions applied by successive Governments for many years have remained in place and their operation has been tightened up. The conventions have a clear purpose—to ensure that public funds are not used to finance publicity for improper or party political purposes. We are firmly committed to those conventions and observe them strictly on all occasions.

Nor do Ministers act without professional, independent advice from the Civil Service on propriety. Until July 1988, advice on propriety was the responsibility of the Central Office of Information. That responsibility was removed from the COI solely because of the changing nature of the COI's business relationship with Departments. The more contractual basis on which COI now operates made it inappropriate for it to act as an authoritative and final source of advice on propriety. The responsibility for this advice was therefore transferred to the Cabinet Office, which has traditionally been the source of advice in Government on other questions of propriety.

That has been the case for many years under many Governments. The responsibility is not located where the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras suggested. The responsibility is located in the machinery of Government division, within the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service, under the ultimate direction of the Cabinet Secretary, the head of the Home Civil Service. That is where the responsibility lies.

The established conventions governing Government publicity remain unchanged, and publicity campaigns must continue to meet important tests. First, they must deal with a subject for which the Government are responsible and on which they need to communicate with the public. Secondly, they must provide good value for money. Thirdly, they must not be open to question that the primary purpose, or principal incidental purpose, of a campaign is party political advantage.

The primary responsibility for ensuring that the conventions on propriety are observed, and that value for money is being achieved, rests with Ministers and their Departments. All Governments have accepted that. In the light of the strengthened guidance we have given, most issues under the conventions will in practice be sorted out in Departments, or between them and the COI. There will be a residual category of cases, not many, on which Departments look either to the Cabinet Office or to the Treasury.

As the hon. Gentleman trailed, at ministerial level I have been asked to act as a point of reference on Government publicity matters, and am responsible for the adjudication of conflicting departmental approaches to the presentation of Government publicity. My services in that respect are seldom required but, if and when they are, I look to the machinery of Government division for advice on propriety, and to my Treasury officials on value for money. I should make it clear to Opposition Members that when I have been asked to make a ruling I have not hesitated to turn down a proposal which seemed possibly inconsistent with the guidelines. I or my successors with that responsibility will no doubt continue to do so if it seems appropriate.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Major: I give way to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell).

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Before we leave the question of propriety, does the Chief Secretary believe that his predecessor, Sir Leon Brittan—*[Interruption.]* I am asking a factual question. Does the Chief Secretary believe Sir Leon Brittan when he said that approval was given by Mr. Powell and Mr. Ingham for the improper disclosure of a Law Officer's letter? Does the Chief Secretary believe Sir Leon?

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman raises this matter repeatedly but it is not within this debate and I have no intention of getting involved in that debate.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Although the right hon. Gentleman was not the Chief Secretary at the time, he may recall that shortly before the last general election the Ministry of Defence issued a video and a publicity pack that not only argued why Britain should have an independent deterrent, but stated why it should be Trident as opposed to any other possible deterrent. Clearly that was politically contentious, no matter what the rights and wrongs of the matter were. What was the need for that information to be imparted to members of the public?

Mr. Major: If the hon. Gentleman wants to run that sort of argument, I shall ask why, in the past, his party supported the publicity produced by Labour Governments on, for example, a new deal in Europe, on devolution—which is hardly uncontentious—and on the attack on inflation—"A Policy for Survival". The hon. Gentleman has wholly misunderstood the conventions and he is wholly and entirely wrong.

Mr. Tony Banks: The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) is not a member of the Labour party.

Mr. Major: In early 1988—*[Interruption.]* Hon. Members may shout "Don't bring in the Labour party," but I do not need to bring in the Labour party and nor will the electorate for many years—if ever.

Mr. Banks: I realise that the Minister is getting a bit hysterical, but I did not say, "Don't bring in the Labour party," I said that the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland who was accused of being a member of the Labour party has never been a member of the Labour party.

However, since the Minister has graciously given way, will he tell me what recourse the taxpayer has if he believes that money has been spent on something that is essentially party political advertising? In local government such people can go to the district auditor, so what is the machinery that allows the taxpayer to make a formal complaint? Finally—I know that the Minister will never give way to me again—why do all these Government publications have to include a picture of the Minister concerned?

Mr. Major: On the central point in the hon. Gentleman's question, the recourse is the recourse that we are exercising this afternoon—the fact that Ministers are answerable to this House and to Members of Parliament. That is the central recourse and that is the distinction between central and local government——

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin) *rose*——

Mr. Major: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman later if he can contain himself for a moment.

On the first of the three points to which the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) referred in his intervention, I was referring to the period of the Lib-Lab pact, and on his third point, as many of my right hon. and hon. Friends are highly photogenic, it seems entirely reasonable that their photographs should be on such publications.

Mr. Grocott: Which does the Minister think is the most effective sanction—having to appear before this House in a debate or being bankrupted by surcharges?

Mr. Major: If one appears before the House in such a debate or, in case of need, before the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service and other Committees of the House, that is a significant sanction that cannot be beaten anywhere. It is a sanction that no Member of the House would overlook at any stage or would treat lightly.

In early 1988, the Government reviewed the arrangements needed to ensure the compliance of Government publicity campaigns with the accepted conventions, as well as the role of the COI in those matters which I have already mentioned.

The review confirmed that the conventions had stood the test of time well, and led to strengthened and tighter guidance to Departments. This covered the interpretation and operation of the conventions such as the use of public relations consultants and direct marketing, and the need for professionalism, both of presentation, and in making sure that publicity expenditure provided value for money. This covers aims, the means used, the cost proposed, and proper measurement of the results. The guidance was widely circulated to heads of Departments and Ministers and is available in the Library.

The reality, therefore, is that the principles of propriety and value for money on which we operate are unchanged and fully observed—I repeat to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras that the principles are unchanged and fully observed—notwithstanding the general background of rapidly developing publicity techniques and the fact that the Government need to compete for attention with a vast array of messages from others. We have also clarified and tightened up the operation of these conventions and set new machinery in place to ensure compliance, both in terms of propriety and value for money. Nothing that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras has pointed to or can point to can shake that fact.

Mr. Dobson: Why did it take the passage of 14 months and some questions from me before the fact that the review had taken place was disclosed and the document published?

Mr. Major: There was nothing whatsoever secret about the review, which was predominantly about the internal workings of the COI and other bodies. The moment that the matter was raised, the documents were made fully available. Although I accept that in retrospect it might have been better if the Government had unilaterally produced them before the hon. Gentleman asked his question, the reality is that the moment the question was asked, the information was made available. However, it was essentially an internal review, predominantly about the role of Government Departments rather than necessarily about the conventions which remain unchanged.

As the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras mentioned the codes of conduct for local authorities under the Local Government Act 1986, he should put that in proper perspective. Indeed, if the rules and conventions that govern central Government operations had been observed as closely and honourably in local government, there would have been no need for the Widdicombe report and the subsequent legislation, but they were not observed.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras mentioned publicity by local government on benefit entitlement. The reality is that Widdicombe was needed to correct abuse of the ratepayers by local authorities—predominately Labour—on a monumental scale. Quite apart from extravagance and inefficiencies, many Labour local authorities had also badly misused public money for advertising. Lambeth council spent thousands of pounds of ratepayers' money on anti-Government propaganda, and Haringey council ran an advertisement out of ratepayers' money that said that it would campaign for the next Labour Government to repeal all privatisation laws. The next Labour Government, mark you! So it was not even campaigning against Government policy. It was using ratepayers' money to campaign against Labour policy.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I must remind the Chief Secretary and other hon. Members that I have already put down a marker that the debate concerns the Government publicity organisation machine and does not refer to local government.

Mr. Major: Of course, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I shall obey that injunction. I am happy to concede to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras that I obey it reluctantly in essence, because the amount of information, which indicates clearly the way in which Labour local authorities have behaved in recent years, is massive and deeply embarrassing for them. However, in any event, there is plainly no need for statutory control of Government publicity, because Ministers are firmly committed to the conventions, which have been fully published so that the House can always call on Ministers to justify their actions. That discipline cannot be applied to local government, and that is why legislation was necessary to deal with local authority abuses.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras made much of the increase in expenditure since 1979. But he is neither making sensible comparisons over time nor dealing with the merits of the expenditure. In cash terms, of course, he is right. Expenditure on behalf of Departments by the COI has moved from £35·4 million in 1978-79 to £151·6 million, including flotations, in 1988-89. There are good reasons for that increase. The elements that must be taken into account include general inflation over the period, the introduction of VAT on press advertising, and an even more substantial rise in the cost of buying time on television and radio and space in newspapers and magazines. For television, for example, which is increasingly important in effectively communicating to the public, that increase is estimated at up to two and a half times the general rate of inflation. In addition, there is included in those figures the new item of flotation advertising in pursuit of privatisations.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras and some of his hon. Friends have referred to the water authorities' current campaign as being "propaganda for privatisation". That attack is nonsense, and the water authorities have made clear that it is nonsense. We should be clear, too. The water authorities, like other nationalised industries, must make their own commercial judgment about corporate advertising within overall levels of finance set by Government. The present corporate campaign is run by the water authorities, and they pay for it.

The water authorities have made clear that the purpose of their campaign is to improve consumer awareness of the industry and the industry's image. Of course, it is true that, in planning it, the industry recognises that the circumstances in which it operates will change radically. It knows—subject to Parliament's approval—that it will be privatised and that its efficiency and standards of service will come under close scrutiny by consumers. Of course, it knows that. But, irrespective of that, it knows that the environmental concerns of the public are growing, and that it will have to meet those concerns. It knows, too, that a great deal of attention has been focused on the water industry in recent months and a great deal of nonsense has been talked about it and the services that it provides—often by the Opposition. It is its judgment that the current campaign will go some way to improving customers' knowledge of the industry and the Government share that view. The Opposition criticise the corporate campaign on entirely false grounds. The only reason that they do so is that they are opposed to the Government's policy towards the water industry.

Mr. McCartney: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Major: I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman. This is a brief debate and I have given way on a number of occasions. I hope that on this occasion hon. Members will excuse me.

Opposition Members, of course, dislike denationalisation—as I prefer to call privatisation—as a principle. We understand that. They prefer state ownership with rigid control. We understand that, too. That is the nature of their philosophy. That is why they have been critical of the spending on flotation advertising that has accompanied privatisation. I cannot agree with them about that. Flotation advertising campaigns are designed to publicise a forthcoming offer for sale, and convey information about the availability of prospectuses and the application procedures. The Government believe that it is important that the opportunity to gain a direct and personal stake in the future of British industry is given to all investors, large and small alike. It must, therefore, be brought to everyone's attention and not just to the attention of the large institutions, and those familiar with the markets. Indeed if it were not, the Opposition could rightly criticise us for that. But advertising on flotations is undertaken only after Parliament has approved the policy and in order to carry it out successfully.

It is also eminently justifiable expenditure. All costs incurred by Government in relation to a privatisation, including advertising costs, are netted off against the proceeds that advertising the sale brings in. Nor is the advertising excessive. The overall Government cost of those advertising campaigns has represented only a small percentage of those proceeds—0·3 per cent. for British Telecom, 0·4 per cent. for British Gas, British Airports Authority and British Petroleum. They help the Government to get a good price for the sale and represent, therefore, a very good bargain for the taxpayer, and a popular one, too. More than 2 million people bought shares in British Telecom and around 5 million in British Gas, and the number of shareholders has tripled, largely due to the privatisation programme.

Of course, some justified publicity takes place in areas of political contention, as the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras said. That is not new or unique to the Government. What is new, and I hope will be unique, is the hon. Gentleman's argument that, because he does not like the Government's policies, publicity for them is wrong. Provided the conventions are observed, that is not so. But, if we take his line, we find that the 1974-79 Labour Government, with its Liberal support, must have had some difficulty with the conventions. I wonder on the hon. Gentleman's argument whether their publicity on counter-inflation or selective price control would have passed a value for money test. I very much doubt it. Would their material on devolution for Scotland and Wales have got very far? I doubt it; that was hardly uncontentious then or now. The hon. Gentleman would have to argue that the European Economic Community referendum was done in order to get that Government out of a party political hole. That is the result of the hon. Gentleman's logic when applied to his own party when in government. However, I do not take that view. I exonerate the Labour Government of impropriety. The better view is the one that we hold. They took their responsibilies for the conventions on Government publicity expenditure seriously and responsibly, just as we do, and they took advice, just as we do, on propriety. The hon. Gentleman cannot have it both ways.

Mr. Dobson: The right hon. Gentleman should concede that, both in the case of the money spent on the European referendum campaign and on the national devolution referendum campaigns in Wales and Scotland, money was provided for both sides to put their cases. In the document published in 1981, the then Government justified the Labour Government's expenditure on the counter-inflation campaign, because a very big majority of supporters of all the main political parties agreed with the points made in the advertisements. That does not apply to the contentious political advertising of this Government.

Mr. Major: I think that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras has missed the point of what I was saying, which was specifically to exonerate the then Labour Government from impropriety in those advertising campaigns. That is what I expressly said just a few moments ago. What I said was that, if the hon. Gentleman criticises us now, he should have condemned the last Labour Government even more roundly. If he does so, in the spirit of Robespierre-like purity I can tell him that he was wrong about them then just as he is wrong about us now.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras set out a number of criticisms. None is justified. All should be rejected. Our systems ensure that spending must come from within departmental budgets, and that it meets strict tests of value for money and cost-effectiveness. All publicity expenditure is also subject to the scrutiny of the House, of the Treasury Select Committee, and of the Comptroller General in the National Audit Office. We welcome that, and, of course, that scrutiny will continue.

In addition, the Government not only support the traditional principles of propriety and strictly observe them, but in recent months they have strengthened their operation and published the guidelines implementing them. The controls are rigorous and the propriety is absolute. The Opposition's criticisms are baseless, they are shallow, and I invite my hon. Friends to reject them.

5.29 pm

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): The Minister presented his case today with a grace and charm that few hon. Members can rival. He is more confident at the Dispatch Box than he is when he answers questions to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, of which I am a member. I remember him telling me two years ago that he had had a hard life, with no education and that he was ignorant on complicated matters such as economics. Having heard him today, nor does he seem to know how to bring the Government's publicity machine under control.

The Minister said a lot about water, but, if he will allow me, I shall make that my last point. My first point is that many years ago Bertrand Russell, the philosopher, wrote a prophetic book on the Government's attitudes on expenditure and publicity. The book was called "Mysticism and Logic". In it Bertrand Russell said:

"Better the world should perish than that I or any other human being should believe a lie . . . that is the religion of thought in whose scorching flames the dross of the world is being burnt away."

Today's debate is about the Government's rejection of Russell's rationalist creed.

Much later Gerald Kersh, in a book called "Night and the City", caught the flavour of the Government's unacceptable treatment of and expenditure on propaganda and publicity when he said:

"The habitual liar always imagines that his lie rings true. No miracle of belief can equal the childlike faith in the credulity of the people who listen to him: and so it comes to pass that he fools nobody as completely as he fools himself."

Which Minister, I ask myself, will step forward today and admit to being Kersh's habitual liar? If truth prevails, there will be a positive stampede from the Government Benches.

As I look at the huge and burgeoning amount of money spent on publicity by the Government, I am reminded of Swift's aphorism that

"All political parties die of swallowing their own lies."

But, of course, I try to be fair minded. I try to give the Government the benefit of the doubt. God knows, I try. But every time that I pick up a Government leaflet or see a television advertisement on a controversial issue, my mind turns first to she who is in charge at Downing street, and then to Somerset Maugham, who said of the constant wife:

"She's too crafty a woman to invent a new lie when an old one will do."

Then, as images of the villain of the piece—the Secretary of State for the Environment—whom people have tried to exonerate today, I am reminded of Harry S. Truman who, in an ugly mood, said of Richard Nixon:

"I don't think the son-of-a-bitch knows the difference between truth and lying."

We are told that the Secretary of State has been exonerated by the courts today. As a barrister, my advice to Greenwich would be that it should appeal. With the greatest respect, I say to m'luds that they have forgotten Robert Louis Stevenson's perceptive aphorism:

"The cruellest lies are often told in silence."

It is basically the omissions from that pamphlet to which m'luds have not properly directed themselves today and to which I imagine the Court of Appeal will direct itself shortly if Greenwich has the money to appeal.

I want to intervene briefly, but let me give one example of what I consider to be expenditure on publicity that has got completely out of hand. It relates to the Government and the water industry. We all know that the same Minister is involved. I was in my car today—a Vauxhall Cavalier—coming in from Hackney, when I saw a little crowd in Kingsland road looking at a poster that was 50 ft high and about 105 ft across about water privatisation. I thought that I would make some inquiries today and find out exactly how that poster got up there and how the Government, or the water industry, or both, or the Conservative party, or all three of them, justify its existence. I shall not say now what is in it; I shall keep that for the moment.

I do not want to give away confidences, but I understand that the water industry employed an advertising agency which gave the job to two of its crack whizzkids, people with the finest intellects in the land, whom I shall call Jeremy and Nigel because all whizzkids in the advertising industry are Jeremies or Nigels. Jeremy and Nigel met together and they had with them the Cabinet Office guidelines. Jeremy was sitting over the table with his head in his hands looking pig sick. He was trying to think what advertisement he could do for the privatisation of the water industry. My hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) quoted the annexe of those guidelines, but paragraph 2 says that the advertisement must be relevant to Government responsibility, objective and explanatory and should be produced and distributed in an economic and relevant way having regard to the need to justify the cost as expenditure of public funds.

Then Jeremy turned to paragraph 5 and he thought, "Oh my God, what am I going to do?" That paragraph says that Government publicity should always be objective and should be directed at informing the public even where it also has the objective of influencing the behaviour of individuals and particular groups. Jeremy did not know how he was to inform the public. What was he to inform them of about the Water Bill? He had in front of him a series of tables on the test discount rate and the real discount rate in the water industry; diagrams of sewage works and chemical formulas for purifying water. He had everything, but, as he said to Nigel, "There's no buzz in this, Nigel." A good advertisement needs buzz and it needs information.

Then—I have not yet said what is in the advertisement—a flicker came into Jeremy's eye, a smile came across his face, and he started to jump up and down excitedly. He said, "I've got it. I've done it. It's brilliant. It's super." He hugged Nigel and there were tears streaming down his face because that is the way that genius works in the advertising world. It was extraordinary. He said, "We'll tell the public that water comes from rain". And so it is that in Kingsland road and in every borough in the land we can look up and see these posters. This is not a joke. Those posters have nothing other than a picture of a cloud. The whole thing is one picture of a cloud and underneath it says, "This is the beginning of our production line." Millions of pounds of taxpayers' money, our money, is being spent on telling the public that water comes from rain—can anyone believe the perceptive abilities, the limits of human intellect?—and that rain comes from clouds. Surely that is the grossest example of waste in the history of the world. I defy the Minister to tell us what that is about when he replies.

I have one last brief point which refers to the letters that my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras has written to the Treasury and Civil Service Select

Committee about the fact that we were grotesquely misled. Civil servants from the Central Office of Information gave evidence to the Select Committee and referred to the 1985 guidelines. They made no mention of the fact that new and more extensive guidelines were published in 1988 concerned with all kinds of new advertising which opened up a hornet's nest of questions which would have embarrassed the Government. The Government's response also referred to the 1985 guidelines and made no mention of the fact that those guidelines were no longer in force but had been replaced by the 1988 guidelines.

I want to be fair. I do not think that that was a cock-up or a cover-up; I think that it was a nasty conspiracy on the part of the Executive to deceive Parliament. We shall call those Ministers and civil servants to account, bring them back in Committee, and challenge them in the Lobby tonight.

5.39 pm

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): I know that Conservative Members will stand up one by one during the debate and bitterly criticise the Opposition's attitude and their calling of this debate. They would be wrong to do so. Conservative Members should welcome the Opposition calling this debate. They should certainly welcome their new-found vigilance on behalf of the taxpayer. It is right that Opposition Members should be vigilant on behalf of the taxpayer, although there are few of them here to support their Front Bench spokesmen. However, it is a shame that the Opposition's vigilance slips a bit on local authority spending. I can see the Opposition Front Bench spokesmen twitching at the very thought that the subject of local government's high spending on publicity will be raised.

I hope that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, will not rule me out of order if I mention the fact that the Department of the Environment decided to issue this leaflet partly to counter the smears and misinformation about the community charge that were being put out by local government. Strictly in that context, I shall point out that, over the past couple of years, Derbyshire county council has spent huge, almost unaccountable sums of money on criticising the Government about the community charge.

So-called free newspapers contain headlines such as "Your privacy invaded—poll tax threat". That sort of expensive misinformation has not been considered a suitable subject for the Opposition's new-found vigilance over the spending of public money on so-called political publicity. On one occasion, when Derbyshire county council spent more than £1 million on a television publicity campaign, the county council's leader said that that was a "mere pin-prick."

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Is not the difference that the national Government virtually tell the newspapers what to print and do not need to buy adverts for their policy, whereas Labour councils, which are in an overwhelming minority and face a predominantly Tory press, even in the regional newspapers, not to mention the national newspapers, have no option but to buy advertising?

Mr. Oppenheim: I am pleased that the hon. Gentleman raised that point. In our county of Derbyshire, much of the local press toes the council's party line. I and many other people in Derbyshire believe that one reason for that is that certain newspapers in Derbyshire receive huge sums in advertising revenue from the county council, which encourages them to toe the line of the council's ruling group.

May I remind the hon. Gentleman that the rules on publicity which bind local government are far less strenuous, tight and onerous than the Treasury and Civil Service rules which bind the Government. That is why it would have been especially appropriate if Opposition Members had raised the subject, and were as vigilant about local government's spending on publicity as they are about the Government's spending. I would hazard a guess that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government has not received a single representation about local government spending from the Opposition.

I fully agree with the Opposition's vigilance on the spending of public money on publicity. However, I cannot agree on one point. They have persisted in mixing the spending of public money on the promoting of privatisation issues with more general spending to inform the public about the Government's policies and legislation. The money spent on privatisation issues has been recouped many times over. Opposition Members would have been the first to criticise the Government if they had not spent money on promoting those issues and, as a result, had not gained the best possible price for those issues for the taxpayer.

The attitudes of Opposition Members have also changed sharply since 1977, when they were forced by the International Monetary Fund to sell part of their stake in British Petroleum. The then Labour Government spent millions of pounds, at today's prices, promoting their forced share sale of part of their stake in British Petroleum. I ask any Opposition Member: was that Labour Government wrong to spend money on promoting the privatisation of their stake in British Petroleum in 1977? If that Labour Government were not wrong to spend the money then, why are this Government wrong to do so now?

It boils down to the fact that Opposition Members do not mind one little bit if public money is spent, as long as it is spent in propagating their point of view. However, they object vigorously, vehemently and strenuously when the Government spend money promoting information to the public about their policies and legislation. I do not criticise them for that, nor do I think it hypocritical; it is merely the stuff of politics. At the same time, it is not a matter that Conservative Members have to take seriously.

I welcome the Opposition's new-found vigilance and the calling of this debate today. The Opposition have shot themselves badly in the foot by drawing attention, not only to their double standards, but to the millions of pounds spent by Labour councils in promoting Labour policies.

5.47 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I disagree with what the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) said about the disciplines imposed on local authorities as opposed to the Government. Government Ministers, unlike local authorities, are not surcharged if they overstep the law. One wonders if anyone might have been disciplined for the £500,000 campaign that was mounted at the end of last year to rehabilitate the egg, following some disastrous words uttered by the then Under-Secretary of State for Health. The hon. Lady might

[Mr. James Wallace]

have thought twice before opening her mouth if she thought she would be surcharged for the public expenditure consequences of her mutterings.

When I intervened in the speech of the Chief Secretary to the Treasury he thought that he had scored a bull point in return when he talked about the Labour Government. However, I was not a member of that Government. He talked about two issues: the devolution referendum, which took place six months after the Lib-Lab pact, and the European referendum which took place two years before the Lib-Lab pact. As the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) has already mentioned, in both those cases, both sides were given the chance to put their argument. There is no suggestion from Conservative Members that public funds will be made available to allow people up and down the country to put forward their arguments about why the poll tax is not good. In the previous cases, there was an element of fairness.

In the few moments that I have had, I have thought back, and I suspect that the last major publicity campaign mounted by a Liberal Government was that with the poster showing the face of Lord Kitchener, with the message "Your Country Needs You". I suspect that that was good value for money because we still remember Lord Kitchener. Who, in 70 years' time, will remember Sid? Given the straitened circumstances of that time, perhaps the Minister will exonerate the last Liberal Government in the way in which he has exonerated the last Labour Government.

In the past 10 years there has been a sixfold increase in the amount of money spent on Government advertising, which, by any stretch of the imagination, is a significant development. Four years ago, the Government were in tenth place in terms of general advertising spending. They are now in first place, ahead of Unilever. That has been at a time when the Government have embarked on a crusade against public expenditure.

I recall the words of Mr. Robert Harris, a journalist, who, of one of the privatisation issues, said:

"People are being forced to pay for adverts they do not notice in order to buy shares they do not want in an industry they already own."

He could have added that they had been asked to do so with their own money. As the Government regularly tell us, it is not the Government's money but the money of the people and the taxpayers that is being used.

At the same time, there has been a whiff of hypocrisy. I shall not stray into the subject of local government, but you, Madam Deputy Speaker, have no doubt heard the comments, which are a good example of the kettle calling the pot black.

We have heard other examples of hypocrisy. The Secretary of State for Health launched an attack on the British Medical Association for trying to spell out to patients what the Government's proposals mean. It is hypocrisy for him to attack it when the mere launch of the White Paper involved more than £1 million. It involved a relay with his face being flashed up on screens across the country, a specially produced video and a video designed specifically for Scotland that featured the Secretary of State and the Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth). I am told that nurses were flown in from various islands to Kirkwall in my constituency to see this. Afterwards, some of them said that they had never seen anything more like a Conservative party political broadcast; it was counter-productive, too, as the nurses also told me that it was the best recruiting advertisement for the opposition parties that they had seen in a long time. It failed to hit its target.

Increasingly glossy brochures have also been mentioned. I have here a White Paper. Once, they were really white. The Beveridge White Paper sold tens of thousands of copies, printed on ordinary white paper. Now they are all glossy and contain photographs—there is inevitably one of the Secretary of State for Scotland at the front. I remember the day when "Scottish Enterprise" was announced. I was sitting here with my hon. Friend the Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), who noticed a rather nice picture of his brother's flat in the document. He did not know what relevance it had to "Enterprise Scotland", and five months later we are none the wiser. It was just another example of Government money being spent on glossy publicity.

Then there was the White Paper on the ending of the dock labour scheme. I make no bones about it: our party supports the Government on that, but to introduce a White Paper at great cost on one day and then bring in a Bill the next begs the question of what is being done with public money.

I turn next to the ministerial presentations on the inner cities initiative and on the Government response to the Settle-Carlisle line. Those glossy presentations were made at press conferences, not in the House, and should have been delivered at the Dispatch Box, from which the Ministers would have had to answer questions from hon. Members on both sides of the House. That is another abuse of publicly funded Government PR work——

Mr. Ashton: Has the hon. Gentleman forgotten the wining and dining that takes place when Ministers meet the press off the record? That is what the Secretary of State for Transport did over an expensive lunch; he gave the press a story and frantically denied it two days later. It happened again when the Chancellor of the Exchequer gave the press a briefing that was recorded on tape and then denied that the tape had been switched on. That is a mammoth waste of public money to impart a message that does not get across.

Mr. Wallace: I share the hon. Gentleman's view, but I suggest that the lunch to which he referred was paid for by the journalists, not the Secretary of State for Transport. Whether they got value for their money is another matter.

Of course, we accept that there is a serious dividing line between genuine advice and information and what might be described as propaganda. Information advertising campaigns to bring to public attention the fact that smoking can damage people's health are, we would all agree, legitimate, as are advertising campaigns to encourage the take-up of social security benefits. I encouraged the Minister of State at the Scottish Office to advertise the availability of and opportunities under the agriculture development programme in my constituency after the storms which greatly damaged agriculture there. The Government said that there was no special scheme, but they were willing to promote the programme that already existed to help farmers. That was legitimate.

The Chief Secretary mentioned the sums spent on energy conservation, but I notice that the Department of Energy's budget for advertising has shrunk. The

Government are cutting back on promoting energy conservation at a time when they claim to be concerned about the greenhouse effect. However, through their agencies, British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. and the Atomic Energy Authority, the Government are promoting day trips to Windscale, or Sellafield. That is another PR trick—when Windscale became unpopular, they changed the name to Sellafield, just as the poll tax has been changed to the community charge. All this is part of the Government's use of slick PR.

The conventions that have already been referred to state:

"Public funds may not, however, be used to finance publicity for party political purposes; this rule governs not only decisions about what is and what is not to be published, but also the content, style and distribution of what is published."

The contents should include not only the truth, but the whole truth. I am not surprised that the judges decided the Greenwich case today as they did, but it cannot be denied that, even if there was no abuse of spending which, in their view, merited an injunction, the whole truth was not told.

As a Scottish Member of Parliament, I have witnessed in the past year the sending out of the registration forms. One aspect which especially alienated people was the statement on the forms that a person who was designated a responsible person was not liable for anyone else's poll tax. The form omitted the fact that a spouse in the house could be jointly liable for the tax. The leaflet that was the subject of the Greenwich case will misinform people in the same way.

The original GP's contract was sent out containing helpful diagrams showing what would happen to a GP's pay, especially in rural areas. The contract said that a GP with a list of 1,000 would receve an increase in pay. It was less clear that he would also suffer a drop of £10,000 in basic pay, which he would have to make up with special payments. The contract did not say, either, that the examples of special payments in the diagrams related to doctors with lists of well over 2,000. Such misinformation strays over the dividing line of legitimacy.

At present, there is a campaign in Scotland by the Scottish Office to encourage parents to stand for school boards. A lady in my constituency wrote to say:

"I have just watched a government advert for school boards. At one point it says 'Every parent can stand for election and every parent can vote'. I think I can vote but I have been led to believe I do not have the right to stand for my son's school board.

Whalsay only has the one primary school and I teach in it, therefore I believe I do not have the same rights as my friend up the road whose son will start at the same time as my son."

She is right—she does not have the same rights, but the Government advertising does not make that clear, and the letter that I sent the Minister asking him to clarify and explain remains unanswered.

Objections have been raised to advertising the privatisation of water. I am told that there is now more advertising of water than of any other product—more than of Pepsi-Cola or Nescafé. The problem is that Parliament has not yet approved the privatisation plans. They may well be Government policies but they have not been put into operation and the Bill has not completed its passage through both Houses. That is an abuse of public money.

The guidelines mention not only content but style, which I should like to examine in the context of the Department of Employment's promotion of "Action for Jobs". It is a classic example of what the Government complain about when done by local authorities. It is persuasive about controversial issues and it tends to promote the Department. What is more, it can hardly be said to be a sober presentation of factual information. The title, "Action for Jobs", was used at the same time as the "Action" slogan appeared as the theme at the Conservative party conference.

I am also advised that the Department of Trade and Industry has taken it upon itself to advertise the enterprise initiative with a soaring arrow, a logo that also appeared in a remarkably similar form in Conservative posters in the recent county elections.

We are told that the Scottish Office is to be given a face-lift by PR consultants to improve its image. Everyone in Scotland knows that that has much to do with the Government's need to give their party a political lift there. We need independent advice which is seen to be independent and not to come from the Government. There is a dangerous blurring of public information and party propaganda, of the state and the party. Perhaps we should not be surprised, because in 1987 the Prime Minister took about £600,000 more from the Exchequer to run her office than the Queen, and last year the gap widened to almost £1 million.

5.58 pm

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) closed his remarks by saying, "Publicity at public expense has gone too far and should stop." I suggest that that is humbug. The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) talked about the pot calling the kettle black, but the deception practised by the Opposition in this matter is more like a cauldron calling the kettle black.

The Labour party has abused public funds disgracefully to promote its political causes in the past. Perhaps the most striking example of that, as my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary mentioned, was the campaign from 1975 to 1977 under the last Labour Government. Hon. Members will recall that their economic policies were in complete disarray. They then decided to try to spend themselves out of trouble. I am not thinking of the attempt to pay the taxpayers' money in the normal sense through the Treasury; this was a new device. This was the device of the so-called counter-inflation publicity campaign. It must be one of the most disastrous publicity campaigns in the history of advertising because, of course, by 1979 inflation was running at more than 27 per cent.

It is well worth studying what the papers said of the Labour Government's campaign at the time. *The Guardian* said:

"The Government's campaign to win support for its anti-inflation policy begins officially tomorrow, when all national newspapers will carry full-page advertisements paid for by the taxpayer, and Mr. Wilson will return briefly from his Scilly Isles holiday."

In *The Times* we read that:

". . . the Government's anti-inflation publicity campaign, the largest since the days of Sir Stafford Cripps more than a quarter of a century ago, will enter its third phase."

This is December 1975. Already £1·5 million has been spent, and the specially created counter-inflation publicity unit has another £1 million at its disposal. If that is not an instance of a Government using publicity to get their way and to get themselves out of trouble, I do not know what

[Mr. David Tredinnick]

is. This shows quite clearly the large degree of hypocrisy among Opposition Members. In this campaign they spent £300,000 on television advertising and £800,000 on press advertising in 1975-76 alone.

Another campaign supported by the Opposition a Parliament ago was the campaign of the late, unlamented Greater London council to denigrate the police in London. I know that you do not want me to stray into local government politics, Madam Deputy Speaker, but it suited the Labour party to use the GLC to get at the Government during the presentation of the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill 1983 and the subsequent Bill, which they did by spending money on a spurious magazine, of which the name escapes me—it might have been "Policing London". They put out propaganda which was intended to prevent local groups from using the new consultative procedure Lord Scarman had suggested should be set up in his historic report into the Brixton disorders.

That was a disgraceful misuse of public funds, but perhaps it pales into insignificance when one looks at the attempt by the GLC to save its now unlamented neck by spending £12 million of the taxpayers' money, despite the fact that Londoners had voted at the previous general election to abolish the GLC. The view at county hall went blatantly against the democratically expressed wishes of the voters.

The hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) mocked the privatisation of water. He talked about adverts for clouds. Some of us might have said that he had his head in the clouds. The whole point of the advertising campaign is to stress the purity of water. *[Laughter.]* Opposition Members may laugh, but they have been the first to try to make mischief by suggesting that there are problems with the purity of our water. I know that there is concern in my constituency about the purity of water, but surely it is right for the water boards, which are being privatised, to point out the good things which will happen as a result of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's policy. That seems to me perfectly reasonable.

The Government are introducing reforms in areas of life which the Labour party has never even tackled, such as moving from rates to the community charge. Are we really supposed to do that without any publicity? The pamphlet which has been so criticised says in the first paragraph:

"This leaflet tells you about the main points of the new community charge system."

It is hardly propaganda. It is giving people an overview to counter the propaganda of the Labour party, which has frightened in particular elderly people in my constituency. The Labour propaganda makes out that everyone will pay the same, whereas we know, of course, that with the community charge there will be protection for poorer people. *[Laughter.]* Opposition Members may laugh but it is the truth, and it is quite right that we should make that point.

There is categorical evidence that the Labour party abused public funds during its last administration and aided and abetted local government organisations. We on the Government Benches have an absolute right and duty to present the very important reforms of our Government and party, and our constituents want to know what they are.

6.5 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I begin with what is meant to be a non-party point. When I first arrived in the House of Commons in 1962, if a motion of this sensitivity and potential importance had gone down on the Order Paper, the Prime Minister of the day would probably have been present and Hugh Gaitskell certainly would have been.

If there are to be motions like this on the Order Paper, they should be regarded, in my opinion—which may be old fashioned—with the utmost gravity, because the charge is extremely serious and this is a weighty matter. If people do not mean them, they should not put them down in the first place. *[Interruption.]* I said that it was a non-party point, and I was speaking, I hope, as a House of Commons man on this issue. Unless it is a major debate, I do not think that the Chief Secretary—incidentally, I do not entirely blame him for this—should feel that, having spoken, he can go off to some Cabinet Committee meeting or some other doubtless important engagement. If there is a Cabinet Committee meeting, the business of the House of Commons on an issue like this should take precedence.

On 8 May I tabled a question asking the Prime Minister to publish in the *Official Report* the text of Mr. Ingham's letter to Mrs. Elizabeth Jenkins on a code of ethics for Government information officers. Mrs. Jenkins is the professional civil servants' representative most concerned, and we are to understand that this was an important policy letter, inside the Civil Service at any rate. The answer was a monosyllabic "no". Letters like that should be made available to Parliament because Parliament has few more important internal matters than to reflect on the ethics of the Civil Service.

My first question to the Minister is why was this important letter not published in the *Official Report*, or at least put in the Library of the House? Secondly, is it true, as we read in the press, that a number of senior information officers in Whitehall—I will not name them; their names are in the press—are leaving? There may be personal reasons, it may be coincidence, but we are at least entitled to ask why so many seem to be leaving at this moment. I do not jump to conclusions about the recent appointment of Mr. Ingham in this respect because, frankly, I do not know and I do not make assertions about matters I know nothing about. This is a genuine question about why it is happening.

Thirdly, at 14 minutes past five this afternoon I interrupted the Chief Secretary. I am sorry that he is not in the Chamber. I asked whether, in the context of propriety, he believed Sir Leon Brittan when he claimed that Mr. Powell and Mr. Ingham had fully approved—I repeat the word "approved"—the improper disclosure of a Law Officer's letter in January 1986. The Chief Secretary's reply was that he had no intention of getting involved. That is often the reply that we get in one form or another from other Ministers. Hon. Members can check the actual wording in *Hansard*, but I do not think that I am distorting it when I say that his reply was, "I will not get involved in that."

Three or four minutes later the Chief Secretary said that the principles of propriety were unchanged and fully observed as between Governments. That is simply not so. Never before has a chief press officer or, much worse in a way, a senior private secretary to the Prime Minister authorised and approved, knowing that it was improper,

the disclosure of a Law Officer's letter for the specific purpose of damaging another Cabinet Minister—in this case the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine). To my knowledge, or to the knowledge of anyone I have talked to, that has never happened before.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) made his point brilliantly earlier in the debate. He is a former civil servant and a private secretary to a Minister. He nods in agreement when I say that never has a senior private secretary behaved in that way.

Such behaviour is corrupt and quite improper. I do not yah-boo the word "corrupt" across the Chamber. I stick to what I said in a lead letter to *The Times* some weeks ago —I never shout, bawl or interrupt from a sedentary position. However, I mean every word that I say. If Mr. Ingham and Mr. Powell behaved in that way, their behaviour was corrupt.

I gave the Chief Secretary every opportunity to say that Sir Leon Brittan was wrong, but he did not say anything of the kind. No one in a responsible position has ever said that. They might have thought that Sir Leon was a bit of a cad to do it, but they did not say that he was factually wrong. This issue touches the most sensitive and delicate areas of the propriety of the way in which 10 Downing street and the leadership of our country operate.

This matter should be cleared up, and I shall tell the House how it can be done. The Prime Minister must come to the House to do one of two things. She must explain either that Mr. Ingham and Mr. Powell did this off their own bat or they did not. I am not a man of malice or vengeance, but I say that if they did it off their own bat without telling the Prime Minister, Mr. Ingham has no right to occupy this unique position. After all, there is the issue of example and propriety.

However, if he acted on authority with the approval of the Minister responsible—and only one Minister is responsible—that Minister must come to the House and say, "Yes, Mr. Ingham and Mr. Powell kept me fully informed about the progress of my quite improper idea to get the Solicitor-General to write a letter and then leak it. Mr. Powell and Mr. Ingham kept me fully informed about the role of Sir Leon Brittan." The Prime Minister must also say to the House, "On 27 January, when I was under pressure, I told a self-preserving lie to the House of Commons." Parliament cannot operate properly if senior Ministers and the most senior Minister can get away with lying to the House on a matter of losing two Cabinet Ministers.

6.16 pm

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): I shall not try to follow the arguments advanced by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). It was strange to hear him complain about the absence of the Chief Secretary when the lead speaker on the hon. Gentleman's own Front Bench was absent for a good part of the debate. The hon. Gentleman did not level any criticism at his hon. Friend.

I welcome the debate on the Government's publicity machine. Some of us feel that it is not the most crucial issue that our constituents write to us about. I have received no letters from my constituents complaining about the cost of the Government's publicity machine. However, I have received letters complaining about the cost of publicity. Perhaps that is one of the reasons why the Government have felt in necessary to spend a certain amount on trying to put over a particular case. I have a letter from a constituent, or from somebody whom I think is a constituent. It says:

"I enclose a copy of Workforce. Surely something can be done about this blatant abuse of ratepayers' money for Labour propaganda. This practice is rife. Note particularly the name on the back of this publication. I dare not reveal my name for fear of victimisation as I work for Derbyshire County Council."—*[Interruption.]*

Opposition Members seem to find that quite funny.

When the Education Reform Bill was passing through the House a leaflet was issued by the county council and shortly after that the Government issued a booklet on the Education Reform Act 1988. The council leaflets were distributed in schools and children were asked to take them home to their parents. The use of pupils in such an outrageous way should be wholly condemned. It is noticeable that the Labour party, deliberately and perhaps understandably, tries to distance itself from some of the things that Labour local authorities have done and the way in which ratepayers' money has been spent.

My hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) has adequately listed some of the abuses relating to the community charge. I do not want to go over that ground again because the argument has been ably advanced. I asked the Library for some figures about the amounts spent on Government publicity over the past three years, and I asked about the increase between 1986-87 and 1988-89. I was slightly surprised to find that during that period there was not an increase but a reduction of 10·4 per cent. That did not compare favourably with financial assistance to Opposition parties, commonly known as the Short money. From 1986-87 to 1989-90 that amount has increased by 54 per cent. In other words, the provision for Opposition parties increased from £632,000 in 1986-87 to £1,164,000 in 1989-90. So the idea that the Government have not been assisting Opposition parties, or that those parties do not now have their own vastly increased finances, is a strange idea to put about.

Mr. Wallace *rose*——

Mr. McLoughlin: I will not give way because time is short and a number of hon. Members still wish to take part in the debate.

It is interesting to consider some of the leaflets that were put out by previous Governments. I, too, have examined the document:

"Britain's new deal in Europe"

—and whatever might be said about money having been provided for the opposite view to be put, nothing could have been more blatant than that pamphlet. Lord Wilson, who was then Prime Minister, stated on the front of that document:

"Her Majesty's Government have decided to recommend to the British people to vote for staying in the Community."

On the final page appeared this absolutely misleading statement, about which we have heard nothing in the debate:

"When the Government came to power in February 1974 they promised that you, the British voter, should have the right to decide—for continued membership of the European Community . . . or against."

That gave the impression that the referendum was to decide whether or not we stayed in the Community. That was nonsense; at the end of the day no referendum could tell Parliament what it was or was not going to do—*[Interruption.]* That pamphlet stated at the beginning:

[Mr. McLoughlin]

"The Labour Party manifesto in the election made it clear that Labour rejected the terms under which Britain's entry into the Common Market had been negotiated, and promised that, if returned to power, they would set out to get better terms."

That clearly said that the document was part of the Labour party's pledges.

Mr. Dobson *rose*——

Mr. McLoughlin: I will not give way in view of the shortage of time. In any event, the hon. Gentleman spent far too long at the beginning of the debate giving his side of the story. He can now listen to what others have to say.

I regard that document as a blatant use of Government money. The Chief Secretary was generous in his remarks, not to say that he found some of the wording in that document open to question, to put the matter no higher. I regard as wholly right the Government's use of taxpayers' money to put over factual matter concerning legislation, particularly in view of some of the propaganda put out by Labour local authorities which has been blatantly untrue and which has stirred up worries and fears which people need not have.

I understand that under the rules by which the Government are bound, they can spend money on legislation only once it has become law. While prospective legislation is going through its Committee and other stages in Parliament, literature explaining it to the public cannot be put out. I regret that, and suggest that in future we should pay more attention to putting forward the reasons why we are making some quite radical changes.

I refer again to the letter which accompanied the leaflet on education that I cited earlier. It said:

"this Bill will not deliver the improvements needed and I hope this short document will illustrate some of the problems."

That was clearly party political. It was paid for by the ratepayers of Derbyshire. The document was even printed in the Labour party colours of the time, although Labour seems to change its colours quite regularly these days.

The Government have nothing for which to apologise. Indeed, we have strong grounds for saying that the money we have spent has gone some way to counter the false claims that have been made by some local authorities. We should be proud of the radical reforms that we are making, and at the same time we should be explaining fully to the public what we are doing.

6.24 pm

Mr. Thomas McAvoy (Glasgow, Rutherglen): My hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) outlined the Opposition case extremely well. I shall expand only on the Scottish dimension of the issue.

I wish at the outset to hark back to the atmosphere that previously existed between Government and Opposition in matters such as we are discussing today. At the time of the February 1974 general election, the "Switch Off Something" campaign was allowed to continue under an agreement between the Government and the then Labour Chief Whip. That contrasts starkly with the current situation and illustrates how dramatically it has changed. I fear that that change has been to the detriment to standards of conduct in public life.

The Chief Secretary referred to civil servants. I feel duty bound to state that when Labour is next in government, I shall press for an inquiry to be conducted into the behaviour of Ministers now in office, and civil servants, to discover how they conducted various negotiations in the sphere of publicity, particularly from the point of view of public propriety. I promise them that it will be no excuse for them to say in the future, as they have said in the past, that they were only carrying out orders. We will get to the bottom of how the Government and their Ministers have brought down standards in public life.

When we look at the Scottish scene, it is interesting to peruse a document issued by the Scottish Office. It refers to the activities of that Department and states:

"One of the objectives of the new Government advertising campaign in Scotland is to publicise Ministers by showing how services in Scotland derive from the Scottish Office under the direction of the Secretary of State and his Ministers."

It goes on:

"The aim is to show how the work of Scottish Office agencies reflects the policies and decisions of the Secretary of State and his ministerial colleagues in the Scottish Office."

It adds:

"It is the wish of Ministers that the benefits of Government action in Scotland should be more clearly attributed."

I assure the Government that they do not need an advertising campaign to put that point across. We know the details only too well.

Scottish Ministers are now clearly crossing the dividing line between publicising Scotland and advertising themselves. They are no longer just imparting facts but are pushing out propaganda about themselves. The new campaign clearly breaches the rules set out in central Government conventions, which tell us that the achievement of Government policy issues should not be personalised and that the presentation of publicity, as well as the concept and tone of it, should not be party political.

The present purely party political use of Government money in Scotland—this has a bearing on the inquiries that we will institute when Labour is in government—is confirmed by the fact that a Government Minister, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), led the briefings of an advertising agency on a publicity job that he wanted done. It was not left to civil servants to tell the advertising agents what was required. A Minister chaired the meeting and made sure that the agency was well aware of what he —a politician and a Minister—wanted to achieve.

The figures were made clear on 15 March 1989 when we were informed—the details appear at column *226* of the *Official Report* for that date—that the budget for the Scottish Office for information campaigns had been £2·1 million in 1988-89 and was £2·9 million for 1989-90, an increase of £800,000. I suppose that one must bear in mind the information about the poll tax that the Government have been putting out. I assure them that it has all been to no avail. We in Scotland know who to blame for the poll tax. We do not want it. As soon as Labour takes office, we will get rid of it.

The Scottish Office asked a consultancy to carry out the survey of parents' views on skill education. According to a written answer, the consultancy is due to report in June 1989. Therefore, it will be reporting after the Self-Governing Schools etc. Bill has been initiated by the Government. The Opposition therefore believe that the survey has been commissioned for political reasons. Comments and submissions to the survey will be selectively quoted and misinterpreted to give retrospective justification for the schools legislation. This is quite clearly political use on the Government's part.

It seems to be common knowledge that senior Scottish Office civil servants are becoming increasingly concerned that the boundary between Government and party propaganda is being eroded rapidly, especially since the appointment of the hon. Member for Stirling as a Scottish Office Minister. According to the central Government conventions, publicity and advertising should not be personalised, but the hon. Member for Stirling is constantly to the fore in these surveys I should have thought that the Secretary of State for Scotland would be extremely wary of allowing his hon. Friend any scope for personal publicity, because it is clear that the hon. Member for Stirling is determined to replace the Secretary of State irrespective of whether the Secretary of State finds another post.

In the *Glasgow Herald* of 14 March 1989 there was an article which I have not seen denied by any Government source, although I am ready to be corrected on this point. The article quotes a senior civil servant in the Scottish Office as saying:

"My impression is that there has been more use of public funds for things like publicity and polls than was the case in the recent past. The consciences of some senior civil servants are being tested more than has ever been the case previously."

To my knowledge, that has never been refuted by any Minister. It is a serious situation when senior civil servants go to the press and make statements such as that.

I heard the Chief Secretary to the Treasury being magnanimous and exonerating the past Labour Government from any misspending or abuse. If that attitude has been genuine, bearing in mind the delicate nature of this subject, there would have been consultation between those on the Front Benches, taking in the minority parties, too. That did not happen. They tried to keep it quiet and it was only through the persistent pursuing by my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras that this was exposed publicly.

The Government are treading a dangerous path. They are abusing their power in a classic illustration of elective dictatorship. It seems to us that there are no voices of fairness and sanity on the Government side to call a halt to this business of politics on the taxes. One would have thought that, merely in the interests of self-preservation, the Conservatives would call a halt, because there is no doubt that they have initiated a course of action that contains the seeds of their own doom. The Government have demeaned the standards of public life and have added to the list of their squalid actions, cutting corners and sailing close to the wind. All these actions combine to expose this Government as one of the seediest in the western world. It is that aura of shadiness and shiftiness that will ultimately lead to a Conservative defeat in the next general election.

6.32 pm

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): It is a fact that some of the Government publicity is born out of the activities of Labour councillors. I had expected the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) to draw attention to, dissociate himself from and condemn the councillors responsible for this misinformation and propaganda that is being pushed out.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Patnick: I have five minutes. With the greatest——

Mr. Banks: I know something about liberty——

Mr. Patnick: The only liberty the hon. Member knows is the statue of liberty.

I had expected the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras to notice the real scandal of the gross abuse of ratepayers' money being perpetrated by members of his own party.

I welcome the fact that the Government give a balanced view to counter some of the activities of Sheffield city council, which seems to think that the community charge will vary from some gross figure to another gross figure based on what it would have been if it had been levied in 1987. We all know that that is nonsense.

Surely the Government have a clear responsibility to provide advice and information to the public about their rights, entitlements and duties. That responsibility has led to campaigns on such things as crime prevention, health education, the prevention of car tax evasion, rabies prevention, job clubs, income support and teaching as a career. None of those was mentioned by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras.

The Widdicombe conventions governing the form and content of Government publicity were published in 1985. I accept that the Government have a duty to ensure that citizens of places such as Sheffield have the facts presented to them in a way that is non-party-political, as opposed to some of the rubbish disseminated by some councils. The council of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and my friend Councillor Jones is one of the greatest exponents of this. The Government have to communicate effectively—

Mr. Banks: Give way.

Mr. Patnick: Government-funded publicity has to compete harder for public attention.

Some Government publicity which clearly passes the test of propriety inevitably relates to subjects that have been politically contentious. This is neither new nor surprising. The truth is that Labour is running a campaign of misinformation and misrepresentation about legitimate publicity campaigns that wholly meet the test of propriety and value for money simply because it is opposed to these policies, but the public have a right to know about policies that affect them. The Government must continue to ensure that those policies are explained to the public.

6.35 pm

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) wants to put the final nail in the coffin of the Government on this subject but I want briefly to remind the Chief Secretary that in his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) he denied any involvement by the Government in expenditure on water privatisation or the Water Authorities Association. Yet I have in my possession, as have other hon. Members who served on the Standing Committees on the Electricity Bill and the Water Bill, confidential minutes of meetings including officers of the Treasury and the Department of the Environment in negotiations with the Water Authorities Association on the level of expenditure, the types of expenditure and the dates on which that expenditure would be made.

For example, on 18 May 1988 a Mr. Hood, a latter-day Robin Hood who robbed the poor to promote the rich, indicated in minute WAA/C/88/20 that a recent meeting

[Mr. Ian McCartney]

between the Treasury and the water authorities had come to an agreement about the nature of the publicity and the possible split of costs on a 50:50 basis with the Department of the Environment and the water authorities prior to the bill going through the parliamentary process and getting the approval of the House.

The consequence of that has been an unprecedented use of public resources this year on the privatisation of the water authorities. Something like £8 million has been spent in the last six weeks alone by the water authorities, and presumably under the secret agreement the taxpayer is picking up at least 50 per cent. of the cost of the television advertisements. Over 3,300 spots across the 15 ITV regions in Britain have been purchased by the Water Authorities Association with the explicit agreement of the Treasury and the Department of the Environment. That agreement was reached as far back as 18 May 1988.

The Minister has deliberately misled the House on this matter. It is not the first time that Ministers have misled the House about expenditure on the promotion of privatisation. The whole issue stinks. The Government are prepared to spend millions on the flotation of public assets at knock-down prices to people who wish to speculate on assets owned by the public.

If this debate has shown anything, it has shown the extent to which Ministers will go to hide the activities that are taking place involving so-called independent civil servants being embroiled in party political activities, and consultants, some of whom are now employed at Conservative Central Office, who are prepared to organise and promote party political propaganda so long as the cost is met through the public purse. The scandal of paying for that publicity out of the public purse should be ended.

I hope that the debate will mark the beginning of the end of the Government's attempts to utilise public resources and millions of pounds to promote the Conservative party in the run-up to the next general election.

6.39 pm

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): It is remarkable that throughout the debate no Conservative Member has attempted to refute the Opposition's central proposition that the cost of Government public relations and advertising is soaring. Although it is extremely difficult to obtain accurate figures, we estimate that spending on publicity is six times greater than when the Government came to office. However, as the Government would be reluctant to accept my figures, it is worth establishing what the advertising industry itself thinks of the Government's various advertising accounts. Recommended reading on that subject is the advertising industry's house magazine, "Campaign," which listed advertising's big spenders in one of its April issues.

The reference to Government advertising in "Campaign" is particularly interesting, when it comments that

"the Government was still the third biggest advertiser last year. Criticisms of waste and politicking hid a maturing relationship with its agencies. And there is more—much more—to come."

One can imagine the industry licking its lips at the prospect of the advertising that is yet to come. In that article, the Government are listed as a holding company, appropriately enough, together with Unilever and Proctor and Gamble. The "Campaign" article continues:

"Many senior figures in the industry believe that the Government's rush to embrace advertising has happened so fast that it was in serious danger of spinning out of control."

The feature goes on to make predictions about the level of Government advertising expenditure in the years ahead, saying that

"there is no evidence to suggest that the Government's love affair with advertising is showing any signs of becoming less ardent or that 1989 will see any let-up in its activity . . . The poll tax and proposals to reform the NHS will also give Whitehall a lot of explaining to do. 'One thing is certain,' says one COI agency man, 'this year's spend is going to be astonishingly high'."

That is how the advertising industry views Government expenditure.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that the advertising expenditure he mentions will include campaigns on road safety, crime prevention, benefit take-up, and protection against AIDS—all of which are perfectly legitimate subjects of publicity as part of that advertising budget?

Mr. Grocott: If the hon. Gentleman has been present for the entire debate, clearly he has not listened. Why is six times the amount of money required to undertake essential factual campaigns, about which nobody argues and which any Government must undertake? Our argument is that under the present Government the content and style of that advertising has changed, and it is that which I find particularly sinister. I find most worrying of all the comment in "Campaign" that

"it is equally true that the style and content of that advertising will change as the Government matures into a more sophisticated client . . . 'It really works on its agency relationships. Also, government departments themselves are more experienced and ad literate'."

I do not know what is meant by "ad literate" but I can guess, and it sounds pretty unpleasant to me.

The Government are moving from conveying factual information into that murky area of changing the public mood. They are massively increasing their expenditure on television advertising. We all know well enough that television advertising is not good at communicating factual information, but it is very good at conveying a mood—perhaps a false one, such as the impression that industry is prospering or that one can find a job if one only looks hard enough.

It is surely a legitimate exercise for any hon. or right hon. Member to obtain information about the way in which various Government Departments use their budgets for commercial television advertising. I put down a fairly simple question asking each Government Department to say how much it spends with the independent television companies. The replies come back, one after another, "This information is commercially confidential." I am sure that it is also politically embarrassing, and that is why the Government will not spell out those figures.

Being a persistent soul, I tried again. Knowing that the Departments would not reveal their expenditure, I thought that they might at least divulge how much air time they purchased, so that I could then do the sums for myself in calculating how much they spent with Tyne Tees, TVS, Yorkshire Television and the other commercial

companies. This time, the reply was even more sophisticated. The Minister of State, Department of Employment, replied:

"Information on TV advertising expenditure in the form requested is not held by my Department, nor is it available centrally through the Central office of Information and can only be supplied at disproportionate cost. It is also commercially confidential."—[*Official Report*, 15 May 1989; Vol. 153, c. *51*.]

The Department hit me with both barrels with that one. I am surprised that the Department did not say also that it is a matter of national security.

It is an abuse of ministerial power not to answer a simple question with an answer that can be obtained by anyone owning a video recorder. However, one answer did slip through the net. It came, surprisingly enough, from the Department of Trade and Industry, which responded in rather more detail. It could not have been part of the conspiracy. Although the DTI would not spell out the names of the independent TV companies with which it places advertising, it did reveal that its total expenditure on television advertising in 1984-85 was £32,000; 1985-86 and 1987-87, amazingly, nil; 1987-88, £4·6 million; and 1988-89, the absolutely staggering figure of £13·2 million.

As right hon. and hon. Members know from their own appearances on television, people often say, "I thought that you were good"—or bad, as the case may be—"but I cannot remember a word that you said." Television is simply to do with changing the public's mood, which is what has been attempted in the Government's constant advertising recently. If the Government's sixfold increase in television advertising was part of an overall mission to inform, I would have greater respect for it.

The truth is that in just the same way as the Government increased the slick packaging of their policies, they run away from examination of those policies in any forum in which their worth can be challenged. The Prime Minister has a perfect opportunity to spell out Government policy in this House any time that she wants, and receive massive publicity when she does so. However, she shows a marked reluctance to come anywhere near the place. Between 1979 and 1983, she spoke in the House 20 times, or an average of once every two and a half months. Between 1983 and 1987 she spoke 10 times, or once every five months. Since the 1987 general election she has spoken twice, or just once a year. That was once a year too often for my sensitivity, but such an attendance record is a barely acceptable minimum. We know that the last thing that the Prime Minister wants is television coverage of her performance reading her notes at the Dispatch Box.

A measure of the increase in the Government's spending on advertising illustrates that they are trying to sell an increasingly shoddy package in an increasingly glossy envelope. Even the advertising industry admits that. The copy of "Campaign" to which I referred earlier quotes the industry's view of the Government:

"Too often the products being advertised have been found wanting."

That is a commentary on the Government's products. The Government find it impossible to distinguish between the national interest and party interests, and, more disgracefully, find it almost impossible to distinguish between the national interest and the survival of one individual in Downing street, and that is even more dangerous. Our central proposition has been unchallenged by the Government and I urge my hon. Friends to vote for it.

6.50 pm

The Minister of State, Privy Council Office (Mr. Richard Luce): The Opposition's motion focuses on two main points—first, that the cost of Government publicity has increased and, secondly, that some of that publicity is becoming increasingly party political. On both counts I strongly recommend that the House should reject the motion.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) said that the Opposition and the Government should treat such a motion extremely seriously. I noticed that throughout the debate only a smattering of Opposition Members have been present. If they really treated the motion seriously, they would have taken the trouble to attend the debate. That almost answers their case. As for the rest, my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury has given clearly the reasons why we reject the motion.

First, on the matter of costs, my right hon. Friend made it clear that in the past 10 years or so publicity costs have increased within tightly drawn up rules and regulations which are available to the public. But I must emphasise strongly that the Government have a duty to inform the public, and people want to be better informed. The public are entitled to be better informed. My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) made that point extremely strongly. I suggest that an informed democracy is a stronger democracy, and that the Opposition, who hope and aspire one day to be in government, should hold the same opinion.

The Opposition's second point was that much of the advertising is party political. The conventions are properly and fully laid down in detail, and that was never the case when a Labour Government were last in office. They are in the Library for the House to see. It is forbidden that any publicity of that nature should be party political. Throughout the debate, the Opposition have failed to produce any evidence of any abuse whatsoever. That is in marked contrast to the tendentious propaganda that Labour councils have distributed around the country in the past year.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Luce: No. I am here to answer the debate.

My hon. Friends the Members for Hallam, for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin) and for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) made those points extremely effectively.

I stress that one of the reasons for the Widdicombe inquiry which led to the 1986 Local Government Act was the abuse by a large number of Labour authorities using party political propaganda. That led to the Widdicombe proposals and the 1986 Act which tightened the rules. If I did not think that you might rule me out of order, Mr. Speaker, I should have drawn attention to some of the unbelievable examples of the propaganda put out by Labour councils. I had such an experience concerning libraries in Derbyshire, where the Labour leader, who has the unusual name of Mr. Bookbinder, put out some propaganda on behalf of the council which was totally and utterly tendentious and misleading.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that the Minister will not pursue that line. The debate must focus on the motion on the Order Paper.

Mr. Luce: I accept your ruling, Mr. Speaker.

I shall move on to answer one or two of the specific points raised in the debate. The hon. Member for Linlithgow raised a number of issues. He asked whether there were a large number of resignations among information officers. There is no clear evidence of a large number of resignations. Indeed, the resignation rate today is lower than it was in the period 1976-82. Three senior information officers have recently left the service, but the rate of turnover and the rate of resignation is not high. I hope that reassures the hon. Gentleman.

Without being drawn into issues that are well beyond the terms of the motion, I shall respond once again to the implication that some civil servants—the hon. Member for Linlithgow mentioned Mr. Powell and Mr. Ingham—are corrupt officials. That must be utterly rejected. Let us take Mr. Ingham as an example. Mr. Ingham served for many years as press officer to the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). He also worked in the press office of Barbara Castle. If he can do that and then serve my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, he must be a man of the utmost impartiality and the highest calibre.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I did not refer to any officials being corrupt. I asked a very much more precise question as to whether it was proper——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That should not be raised with the Chair under the guise of a point of order.

Mr. Luce: Reference has been made to the conventions. The House knows that the various conventions that are set out and have been revised and supplemented are extremely thorough. They are available to the House and they set out quite clearly the parameters and the guidelines for Government publicity. There is no evidence that there has been any abuse.

The Opposition cannot have it both ways. They continually say that they want more information from the Government. They always want the Government to reveal more. When we have more publicity to reveal more information, they turn round and criticise us.

Mr. A. J. Balfour once said that democracy is Government by explanation. The Government have a positive duty to inform the nation, and to do so within very clear rules. We have clear rules on costs. We must have proper value for money and the expenditure on publicity must be within departmental budgets. We have clear rules on propriety. It is stated quite clearly that there must be no publicity which is party political.

If we examine the publicity that the Government put out and that we have been discussing today, are the Opposition really saying that it is not right to inform the public about the benefits to be derived from the single market in 1992? Are they seriously saying that it is not right that people should be informed about employment and training opportunities? Are they seriously saying that it is not right that we should put out information about crime prevention, about AIDS and about health? Are they really saying that it is not right that we should put out information about benefits, pensions and other public information about road safety or about expenditure on recruitment to the services, or, taking education as an example, the new rules for school governors? The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) recently pointed out that he thought that the Government should spend more money, not less, on such publicity. The charge that we are wrongly spending money is absolutely refuted.

It has been pointed out that in the 1970s the Labour Government, supported by the Liberal party, spent money on advertising about issues that were politically controversial—counter-inflation policies, selective price controls, devolution and the European referendum. Those were politically controversial matters but this Government in no way disputes their right to publicise them.

The tactic of the Opposition is hypocritical. They should get their own house in order first. Of course, the abuse by Labour councils led to the Widdicombe inquiry and to the 1986 Act.

On propriety, the conventions are clear, thorough and detailed. More than ever before on any aspect of the guidelines for Government publicity, there are clearly laid out parameters; for example, the activity should not be party political. Ministers are accountable to the House, to Select Committees and to the Public Accounts Committee for their own publicity. The Government set the highest possible standards.

The real problem for Her Majesty's Opposition is not one of cost or of propriety; it is the message itself. They do not like Government policies but they know that the public broadly support the Government. They know that the message is succeeding. That is what the debate is really about. They do not like it. That is why they initiated such a spurious debate. I therefore ask the House to reject the Opposition motion.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 204, Noes 287.

Division No. 201] **[7.01 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael

Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen Adams and
Mr. Martyn Jones.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alison, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*

Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John M. Taylor and
Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House recognises the responsibility of Government to provide advice and information to the public; and commends the Government's firm adherence to the long standing conventions governing propriety and value for money.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

Many right hon. and hon. Members wish to participate. If it had been possible, I would have applied the 10-minute limit on speeches, but unhappily that would have caught the Front-Bench speakers as well, so I have not been able to do so. I hope, however, that Front-Bench Members will bear that limit in mind, and that Back Benchers will limit their speeches to 10 minutes or less.

7.15 pm

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): I beg to move,

That this House, alarmed at the huge deficit in trade in manufactures and at continued closures and job losses in industries as varied as textiles, electronics, shipbuilding and aircraft, reaffirms the vital importance of manufacturing to the country's economic future; and calls on Her Majesty's Government to abandon the policies which have done, and are doing, so much damage to manufacturing output, investment, employment and trade.

The significance of manufacturing industry may be a matter for debate and the future of manufacturing industry may be open to question, but I hope that the facts about manufacturing industry and its present circumstances will not be disputed.

Let us first consider manufacturing output. Most people, I think, would accept that manufacturing industry was thrown over a precipice in the first couple of years of this Tory Government. As a consequence of quite avoidable mistakes in economic policy—which I believe in their more honest moments even Ministers would acknowledge—fully one fifth of British manufacturing industry was simply wiped out. No other industrial country has ever suffered such a sharp fall in output.

Since then, inch by inch, we have clawed our way painfully back up the cliff face over which we were thrown; and, as we reached the top—the point that we left in 1979—the bands played, the drums were beaten and the flags were waved. It was proclaimed an economic miracle. Throughout the period of the present Government, however, manufacturing output has been no less than 6 per cent. lower than under the previous Labour Government. I think that it must be a record for any 20th-century Government to establish a level of manufacturing output lower than that established by their predecessor.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley) *rose*——

Mr. Gould: I will not give way. I have already accepted from Mr. Speaker an injunction to be brief.

The pity of it is that the mistakes that led to that slump in output are now in danger of being repeated. At 1985 prices, manufacturing investment in 1988—the last full year—was £11·035 billion, still short of the level established in 1979 when the Government began their term of office. That has applied in every one of the 10 years of Tory government, despite—even in recent times—constant investment intention surveys showing an intention on the part of industry to increase investment. Throughout the period of the Thatcher Government, manufacturing investment has been 16 per cent. lower than it was under the preceding Government.

As for manufacturing employment, I hope that I need hardly remind the House that nearly 2 million jobs have been lost in industry since 1979. Every advanced industrial country has found that manufacturing has shown a

declining proportion of employment because other sectors —services and so on—have tended to take up the slack. What has not happened in other countries is the huge and quite unnecessary slump that we have suffered, and from which we have still not fully recovered.

Perhaps the saddest story resides in the figures that tell us what has happened to our manufactured trade. We all know that this country once prided itself on being the great workshop of the world and the leader of the industrial revolution. For 200 or 300 years, we paid our way and built our living standards on the strength of what we could make and sell from our factories. That remained true until 1979, when the Government took office. In 1979, we enjoyed a surplus of almost £5 billion in today's prices. I hope that I need not remind the House that last year that surplus had not only already turned into a deficit—I believe that it turned into a deficit in 1984 for the first time in our history—but that deficit had grown to the staggering proportions of £14·5 billion. A turnround of £19 billion in our manufactured trade is so immense that it is difficult for the ordinary person to grasp what that represents. Perhaps I can help the House by saying that by my calculation—which would be the general calculation —if we were to set about producing £19 billion of manufactured goods, which we now import, in British factories, we would have to take on no fewer than 1·5 million extra full-time workers. That is the significance of the turnround in our trade in manufactures.

Not surprisingly, although the Government try to obfuscate our true position, our share of world trade in manufactures has also declined. The world trade in manufactures over the period has risen by 48·5 per cent., but our exports of manufactures have risen by only 36·6 per cent. I hope that I do not need to convince Ministers or Conservative Members that the market place is the test, as the Government constantly tell us, of how well our economy is doing. The answer that the market place gives is that Britain is no longer paying its way and that British industry cannot meet the competition.

At first sight, the trade figures may cause some puzzlement. The immensity of the trade deficit took even Ministers by surprise. They were, after all, forecasting only a year ago a deficit of £4 billion for 1988. There is an explanation, although it is not a full rationalisation. Unfortunately, it runs directly contrary to much of the propaganda that Ministers constantly put out. The House and the British public are always told by Ministers in every interview that whatever the pain, whatever the difficulties we have been through and however many problems British industry has faced over the past 10 years, at least British industry is now leaner, fitter and more competitive. Day after day I hear that phrase on the lips of Ministers.

Neither I nor the Labour party bother to keep the statistical series that measure the competitiveness of British industry but the Government and the Department of Trade and Industry do. There are at least five that are often used and two are especially widely used. It is astonishing that on each one of the five indices, British manufacturing industry today is not more but less competitive than it was in 1979, and that is true not only of today, but of every year throughout the period of Tory government. The indices that show the greatest loss of competitiveness are those which are the most widely used. Relative export prices for manufactures show that we are now 15 per cent. less competitive than we were in 1979. The International Monetary Fund index of normalised relative unit labour costs shows that we are 24 per cent. less competitive than we were in 1979.

The mystery about why, despite the wonderful success story, we are running such a huge balance of payments deficit that we cannot hold on to our own markets or retain our export markets is now unravelled. The Government's own statistics show that British industry is less competitive than it was when they came to power. I could go on about that subject, in which I take a particular interest, but even those indices understate the loss of competitiveness of an economy whose competitiveness has declined over a period. First, the index on relative export prices for manufactures, for example, measures only what we try to charge and the prices we actually obtain in the market place. It does not tell us about all the products that have become so uncompetitive in price terms that we have simply ceased to make them and offer them in the international market.

Secondly, the labour cost indices measure cost right across the economy. They take no account of the fact that in the really successful exporting economies, such as Japan and Germany, costs in export-oriented industries are razor sharp and the cost structure is more favourable than in the economy as a whole. Any index that measures costs across the economy simply understates the competition we face from the successful exporting nations.

I now offer the Government a little ray of light or a twig to hold on to. They will raise, rightly and understandably, the question of productivity and they will say that, despite this gloomy picture, productivity in manufacturing has risen extremely sharply. I am the first to concede that it is a good story to tell on that, but productivity is not as good as the Government would have us believe and it is not as good as in the much maligned 1960s, when manufacturing productivity was higher than it has been in recent years. One also has to take account of some of the statistical peculiarities of the figures and the fact that today much that used to be counted as manufacturing is now contracted out, including peripheral services such as cleaning and canteen facilities, which were low productivity areas so they do not affect manufacturing productivity figures. I would also point out that if one constantly eliminates one's weaker capacity, without anything else changing, there will be an improvement in productivity —or at least an apparent improvement in productivity— for what remains. It is rather like a cricket captain claiming that because he has shot his tail-end batsman he can congratulate himself on the fact that the batting average has risen, although he is ignoring the fact that the team is scoring fewer runs and has lost the match. That is what our productivity record largely shows.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gould: No. I would like to, but I am under a time constraint.

There is a more important point to explain another paradox. If the productivity figures are to be believed— and I am prepared to give them some credence—it is hard to see why the economy in the other respects I have mentioned has performed so badly. The reason is—and I admit that this is no more than a supposition, but it answers the paradox and is increasingly attracting the attention and support of many expert commentators—

[Mr. Gould]

that in Britain a great deal of investment in manufacturing industry is designed to replace labour, rather than to improve and increase output. That is why in the bits of the economy that remain as a result of some new capital application, but have fewer jobs than previously, productivity has risen, whereas in those bits of the economy where that effort has not been made the capacity has simply disappeared. That means that we have the appearance of high productivity in the bits of the economy that survive, but the economy as a whole is producing less well, its output is sluggish, it is able to compete less effectively and we are having to import so many more manufactured goods.

I ask Conservative Members to agree with me in one respect. Surely there cannot be a single Member who has not had the experience of visiting factories in his or her constituency or further afield and noticing, if he or she has eyes to see, that all the modern machine tools are made abroad. If one asks the factory managers why a particular machine is made in Germany, Italy, Canada or the United States, they say sadly, with a shake of the head, "We would like to buy British, but there simply isn't a British manufacturer who can supply us". That gives some support to my contention that large parts of British industry have simply passed out of existence as a consequence of what has happened to manufacturing industry in recent years.

Productivity may have been a miracle in those parts of industry that have survived, but it has failed to produce a manufacturing economy which does what is essential—to compete, to increase output and to provide good, well-paid jobs for an increasing number of people. We cannot congratulate ourselves on a productivity achievement if the only end result is that we now produce about the same quantity of goods with far fewer people and that we are therefore able to compete much less comprehensively across the board.

As we face not only our present but our future, we are faced with an economy that is ill-equipped, badly trained and under invested. We face our future in that condition with the cushion of North sea oil much less comfortable and reliable than it was—I accept that North sea oil is not yet running out and that it will be with us for some time —with 1992 and the single European market, meaning much more intense competition in what will be our home market, with newly industrialised countries around the Pacific basin and south-east Asia coming on stream. We face our future in all those circumstances and, although the race will go to the technologically proficient, we have not made the effort. We have wasted the oil. We are under-invested and are woefully ill-prepared for that competitive future.

As is probably wearyingly familiar by now, we spend less on research and development than the West Germans, the Japanese, the Americans, the Swedes and the French. In terms of civil research and development, we spend less than the Italians. Uniquely, half of what we spend goes on defence. I was at a seminar this morning where I saw a breakdown of the way in which the West Germans spend their much greater total and the way in which we spend ours. The Germans said, apologetically, "Our R and D defence expenditure has been rising recently and we are worried about it. It is now as high as 20 per cent. of our total R and D expenditure." However, we spend 50 per cent. of our pitiful R and D expenditure on relatively unproductive defence spending.

The Germans have a much clearer answer— *[Interruption.]* I am talking about the spin-off for the rest of industry. The Germans have a much clearer idea of the correct priorities. While they spend on R and D, on industry, in the higher research institutions and the universities and on major issues such as the environment, we make mistakes by concentrating our puny efforts on unproductive defence. We spend less on basic science and pitifully less on training. We do not invest in our manufacturing industry. As I have pointed out, such expenditure has been 16 per cent. lower during the past 10 years than it was even when the Tories came into office. We do not spend on the infrastructure that we shall need if we are to compete technologically in the coming decade.

The pity of it all is that, having brought us to this position, where the North sea oil bonus has come and has largely gone, having left us with a legacy of ill-preparedness, we are now trying to re-establish the Chancellor's control of an economy of which he has lost control. We are in danger of repeating the same old mistakes which destroyed one fifth of British manufacturing between 1979 and 1981. They are again on the agenda, wreaking their damage, exercising their malign influence and doing damage by way of the closures, job losses and lost output with which we were so bitterly familiar in the early 1980s.

The evidence is there. Surveys by the Confederation of British Industry which for so long were held up as great proclamations of confidence now show a sharp fall in expectations for export orders and a sharp decline in the confidence felt by business men about the future course of the economy. Specialist manufacturing employers' organisations, such as the British Textile Confederation, express again, as they did in the early 1980s, their lively fears about what will happen to their industry as a consequence of the appreciation of the exchange rate against their major competitors.

That is why a programme of closures is already beginning in the constituencies of some of my hon. Friends, and it is not limited just to textiles; it applies across the board. I fear that unless we can persuade the Government to change their policy and to avoid those mistakes, we will again face a programme of closures and a lengthening total in the number of people unemployed. Indeed the mistakes are already there. High interest rates are a disincentive to investment. The CBI has complained but the Government take no notice because they do not believe that the voice of manufacturing industry really counts or should be heard. As a consequence of the high interest rates, not only is investment damaged, but the exchange rate is held at an uncompetitive level and is crippling competitiveness.

Only a few months ago and earlier last year, the Chancellor was telling us—at least by implication—that his preferred rate of exchange against the deutschmark was 3 deutschmarks to the pound. He then said specifically that, in his view, a rate of 3 deutschmarks 10 pfennigs would be unsustainable. However, for many months now, we have had a rate that is above 3 deutschmarks 18 pfennigs. Little wonder then that we are finding it increasingly difficult to meet the competition in Europe. Little wonder that we find it difficult in the wider markets around the world when our exchange rate has appreciated against the American dollar by 40 per cent. in the past four

years. One cannot put up prices against major international competitors by 40 per cent.—or even by 10 per cent. as in the case of the West Germans—and expect the customer not to notice. Such rises have an immediate, direct and calamitous effect on investment, output, employment and manufacturing industry. Indeed, they show the Government's contempt for manufacturing industry that they believe that they can introduce such policies without causing the sort of damage that is now being so painfully felt across the country.

An over-valued exchange rate does many damaging things. It not only destroys our competitiveness; it does something perverse in respect of the Chancellor's stated objectives. It damages the competiveness of the corporate sector and it stimulates consumption because it means that every pound in the consumer's pocket will buy more imported goods than it should. That is why over-valuation not only stops us exporting, but sucks in the imports that are doing so much damage. *[Interruption.]* Of course, that does not cause concern to Ministers who can laugh if they wish, but such over-valuation sucks in the imports that put British workers in the dole queue and close British factories.

Does any of it matter? We have already had part of our answer from the guffaws of Ministers who clearly find it difficult to take the subject seriously. Indeed, that has betrayed their attitude to this matter throughout the 10 years of their period of office. They have treated the decline and difficulties of manufacturing industry with cavalier insouciance. They have simply maintained that it does not matter. When I taxed the Chancellor of the Exchequer some months ago about the turnround in our trade in manufactures, he remarked from a sedentary position that it was "neither here nor there." Let him try telling that to business men who are trying to keep their enterprises afloat. Let him try telling it to workers whose jobs are now threatened or being lost as a consequence of those foolish policies——

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): What about small businesses?

Mr. Gould: My hon. Friend mentions small businesses, which in particular are suffering. The regions, which are so dependent on manufacturing, are where the burden will be felt most keenly. That is where the branch-plant economy that the Tories have allowed to develop during their period of office will come home with a vengeance because those branch plants will be closed first when the bite is felt. That is the problem with the Chancellor's current policies.—*[Interruption.]* Yes, of course manufacturing matters to us because we can no longer rely on North sea oil to keep us afloat.

Our wealth creation for the future depends on the strength of our manufacturing industry and it depends on that manufacturing industry being in the right condition, in the right areas, with the right equipment and the right skills. To use another of the Chancellor's notorious phrases, we cannot afford a "low-tech economy". If we are to compete, we must compete with new skills and with new technology. We must be clear that the new technology has a role to play, not just in new industries, but in old industries, too. It is in textiles, shipbuilding and car manufacture that the new technology has its most direct and important application. That new technology must be applied and we must invest in it. That is the important element of our future and of our capacity to earn our living in the future decade.

We were told that we need not rely on the old pejoratively described sunset industries, because it would be the sunrise industries that would take us forward. I wish that that were true. I wish that we could say that other industries may have suffered some difficulties, but, at least, the electronics and information communication industries have done well. However, again the facts are against such an argument. I believe that any attempt to scrutinise the trade figures would demonstrate clearly how fatuous has been the Government's claim. Last year our trade deficit in electronics was £3·9 billion. It has risen by 40 per cent. over the past four years. So much for preparing us for that technological future and so much for an economic miracle. We know the immense importance of manufacturing to wealth creation and to our national prosperity. It will need a Labour Government to put that right.

7.30 pm

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Trade and Industry (Mr. Anthony Newton): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"welcomes the renewed strength of manufacturing industry, reflected in major increases in productivity, record levels of output, increased exports, greatly improved profitability and a sustained high level of investment; and notes that the flow of inward investment testifies to the substantial improvement which the policies of Her Majesty's Government have brought about in the climate for doing business in the United Kingdom.".

I suppose that I should not have been surprised—though I must confess that I was—that the Opposition should choose to debate a proposition so totally divorced from reality as one entitled the "Decline of Manufacturing Industry". So it was with some corresponding interest that I waited to see how the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) proposed to delineate this so-called decline. It was clear, despite his contorted efforts, that it could not conceivably be by reference to production. Output in the manufacturing industries has risen in every single year since 1980, and in the past two years alone by more than 12 per cent. It is not only higher than in 1979, when the Government first took office; it is higher than in 1974, when the preceding Labour Government took office. That is, of course, another way of saying that, whereas that Labour Government departed unlamented with manufacturing output lower than when it arrived, under this Government it has reached a record level. I am certainly not surprised that we have heard little about that.

Equally clearly—and the hon. Member for Dagenham fairly acknowledged this—that alleged decline could not be by reference to productivity. Productivity in manufacturing industry has so far improved in this decade by no less than 50 per cent. and, by comparison with our major competitors, that represents a quite astonishing improvement in our relative performance.

Mr. Gould: Where do we rank?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman asked me where we rank and I shall tell him.

In the 1960s our productivity growth was lower than any other of the seven major industrial countries, and only about two thirds of their average. In the 1970s, it was again lower than in any of them, and less than half of their

[Mr. Newton]

average. So far in the 1980s—and my figures are for 1980-88—it has been far and away the highest of those self-same seven: substantially higher than in France and Japan and more than twice as much as in Germany.

Nor could the hon. Member for Dagenham justify his talk of decline by reference to the profitability in manufacturing industry. I do not think that he even sought to do so, because, of course, the profitability in manufacturing industry is at its highest level for 20 years. That in turn is reflected in the powerful revival in manufacturing investment, which has grown by not far short of half since 1983, by more than 9 per cent. last year alone, and is expected to show a further healthy increase in the present year. Moreover, that revival in manufacturing investment is an important contributor to one of the most important and significant changes for the better which has taken place in the British economy in recent years. That is the shift from a pattern in which we persistently tended year in year out to increase consumption faster than investment to one in which, over the past seven years, total investment—I want to make it clear that I am talking about total investment and not just in manufacturing—has grown at more than twice the rate at which consumption has grown, and more rapidly than in any other country in the European Community. In other words, after decades in which we persistently tended to let our consumption run ahead of our willingness to put money into developing industry in the future, that picture has changed and the growth in investment in manufacturing industry is a part of that change in the picture.

One thing that I did expect in this debate—I have not been disappointed—was that the hon. Member for Dagenham would make the most that he could of the fact that investment is still fractionally lower than in 1979. I will make two points about that. First, I think that events will take even that fig-leaf of argument away from the hon. Gentleman before too much more time has passed. Secondly, I hope that he will direct his attention not only to the total, but to the pattern within the total.

The pattern of the late 1970s in particular was one in which we put great quantities of investment into industries which manifestly were among those that the hon. Member for Dagenham described—it is not a phrase that I would have chosen—as sunset industries, usually in the form of massive taxpayer-financed subsidies of one kind or another and which in consequence made it difficult for the industries that were manifestly the growth industries of the future to find the resources that they needed to invest.

What is of more practical importance than just looking at the quantity of investment is the quality of manufacturing investment and the efficiency with which it is used. Undoubtedly, in that area there has been a large improvement. A good deal of industrial capacity was scrapped at the beginning of the decade. Much of it was technically and economically obsolete and, frankly, had been for some time. Most manufacturing investment since then has been for replacement purposes, but the standard of the new capacity for such things as operating costs, quality standards, its impact on the environment and energy use is far higher than that of the old equipment. That improvement in the quality of investment has made a major contribution to the improved productivity to which I have referred and to the greater competitiveness of British manufacturers.

The hon. Member for Dagenham made some play of competitiveness figures. I have in front of me those figures that the IMF produces, which are based on relative unit labour costs. I am not sure whether those were the ones to which the hon. Gentleman referred. Certainly, on the figures that I have, there was little change on that single statistical measure between 1979 and 1988. There are some fluctuations in between. However, the point that the hon. Gentleman misses, and, indeed, all his colleagues persistently miss, is that competitiveness in the real world is not something that can be measured in such statistics. It is a matter of people's confidence in whether British goods will be delivered, because of the bad industrial relations record during the late 1970s. It has to do with quality and reliability and all the things that have manifestly improved in British manufacturing industry in the past few years. Improvements in working practices, in maintenance standards and in the timely availability of material components cannot be so readily measured, but I have no doubt—nor do I believe does any serious observer of the scene—that improvements in those factors over the past decade have greatly increased both effective manufacturing capacity and British competitiveness on the world markets.

So we come then to the line of argument on which the hon. Member for Dagenham sought to build so much, which is the deficit on the balance of payments current account, and within it the deficit on manufactures.

Whatever else may be said about those figures, I do not believe that any serious analysis of them—alongside the figures that I have already given—could sustain the case that they show a decline of manufacturing industry in this country. If they could be shown to result from a failure of exports, perhaps that could be so, but they cannot. On the contrary, exports of manufactures have been rising strongly—by nearly 18 per cent. in value in the past three years and by over 5 per cent. last year alone. If the figures could be shown to be associated with a fall in our share of world trade in manufactures, perhaps that could be said. But that cannot be shown either. On the contrary, the signs are that that decline has been halted or even reversed.

Mr. Thurnham: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Newton: If my hon. Friend will forgive me, in the light of what Mr. Speaker said at the beginning of the debate, it is right that I should press on.

The most important single factor in the deficit, far from being the weakness or decline of our manufacturing, arises from the growing output and the increasing investment to which I referred earlier. Some three quarters of it is the corresponding rise in imports of raw materials, of components and semi-manufactures and of capital equipment. In other words, it is associated with the recovery of our industries and the strengthening of their capacity to expand production and exports still further in the future.

Inevitably, it takes time for that to feed back on the other side of the account, but I see no reason to doubt that it will. Indeed, there are already some signs of that. If we take the first three months of this year against the last three months of 1988, the volume of manufactured exports rose faster than that of imports, and that is against the

background of official and independent forecasts which suggest a greater improvement in the volume of manufactured exports in 1989 than in 1988, alongside a much smaller increase in the volume of manufactured imports than we experienced last year.

The other point on which the hon. Gentleman based a good part of his argument was the numbers employed in manufacturing industry. It is indisputable that there has been a substantial decline since 1979, but that is in part the consequence of tackling the overmanning and the under-productivity which nobody could seriously question the existence of up to that time. That improvement in productivity and removal of overmanning was essential if our industry was to restore its competitive position.

No less important, as the hon. Gentleman fairly acknowledged, is the fact that it is a feature of virtually all modern industrial economies that the balance of employment shifts away from the production of goods towards the supply of services. I think that the hon. Gentleman referred to an expectation that it should be possible to employ more people in manufacturing, but he put no particular period on that. However, I know of no major industrial country which has not seen employment in manufacturing decline as a proportion of total employment since the early 1970s. Since 1979, to take the period that is at issue in the debate, in most such countries the absolute number employed in manufacturing has fallen, as it has here.

Those facts are also reflected in the fact that in virtually all advanced industrial countries the percentage of GDP accounted for by manufacturing has fallen and that of services has risen. We are no exception to that, nor should we seek to be. The figure fell from just over 25 per cent. in 1979 to just under 22 per cent. in 1986, the most recent year for which comparative figures are available. The comparable figures in the United States were a fall from 23 per cent. to just under 20 per cent. and in Italy from just over 30 per cent. to just over 23 per cent. Only Japan is an exception to that general trend.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the Government being in some sense contemptuous of the CBI, or the CBI making remarks completely different from the picture that I have sought to set before the House this evening. As it happens, I was on the same platform as the Director General of the CBI in Sheffield barely two weeks ago and I have with me the text of the speech that he delivered on that occasion. He said:

"The last five years have seen a major turnaround in the UK manufacturing sector, and this has of course spun off into demand for services and jobs. Output, export volumes, productivity and business investment—in skill-training, plant and equipment and innovation—are all at record levels. So are profits, which makes investment possible and worthwhile."

That is what the CBI was saying a fortnight ago. Mr. Banham went on to make the point that we export some 20 per cent. more per person than Japan. Opposition Members may like to reflect upon that.

Let me make one other point which will lead me to the conclusion of my speech in a moment or two. The most conspicuous omission from the hon. Gentleman's speech was any reference to inward investment. Whatever his view of manufacturing and the strength of the British economy may be, some of the best companies in the world are voting with their feet by coming to do business in Britain. In one week alone we heard recently of major cases of inward investment totalling well over £1 billion in various parts of the country. It is not just the Japanese who are coming, even though they have tended to make the biggest headlines. A third of all American investment in the Community comes to the United Kingdom. Over the past year investment from other European countries, particularly Germany, has also been particularly strong. I wonder how many German firms would have invested in Britain 10 years ago.

I want to make it clear tonight, as I have on other occasions, that we welcome that inward investment and will continue to do so, both for the balance of payments boost that it brings to the United Kingdom and for the added competitive spur that it provides to industry already here. Wherever such firms locate in the Community, and many of them will come anyway, the impact of the extra competition will be felt in Britain. But when they locate in Britain as so many of them are now doing, we have not only the jobs and the economic activity but the stimulus of new manufacturing methods, quality standards and management techniques in our economy. We shall continue to try to attract as much of that mobile investment as we can.

Those firms are at times almost queueing up to come here as a direct result of the Government's policies which have given priority to curbing inflation, to restraining the weight of public expenditure and public borrowing, which have reduced the rates of taxation on companies and individuals, improved industrial relations and made Britain a country in which people, whether British or from abroad, want to invest and are investing.

The Opposition's motion invites us to abandon those policies in favour, as is increasingly clear, of returning to precisely the policies which made their time in office a period of overmanning and inefficiency, of misdirected investment, of roaring inflation and dismal industrial relations, when the only reason for business men from overseas to come here was not to take part in our economy but to try to learn how not to run an economy. Neither the House nor the country will want to go back down that path.

7.58 pm

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): Listening to the Minister, I do not recognise the area that I represent in Greater Manchester which has lost tens of thousands of jobs in manufacturing. My city of Salford, which had a large engineering base, has virtually no engineering industry left. Just across the canal, Trafford Park has become a storehouse. Before the war it was a rival to the Ruhr as a major world industrial centre. That is the difference that the Minister fails to recognise.

I declare an interest in the debate as a Member sponsored by the Amalgamated Engineering Union. That union has 750,000 members in manufacturing industry and 2 million workers in the engineering industry, and it wants a share in Britain's prosperity and in manufacturing industry.

We cannot just dismiss the disappearance of 2 million jobs and say that the same thing is happening in Japan or West Germany. The same thing is not happening in those countries. I accept that there has been a reduction and an inevitable change in some of the older industries because of the decline in those industries. The Government have made the notion of small is beautiful one of the key factors in their approach, but it should be remembered——

Mr. Thurnham *rose*——

Mr. Orme: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman.

It should be made known that 60 per cent. of Britain's gross national product is contributed by 150 of the large firms. Nobody denies that small firms are important, and we welcome them into our areas and constituencies. However, they do not replace the tens of thousands of jobs that have been removed from the basic industries.

The Minister said that Britain is booming, and investment and output are up. He made great play of productivity. Assuming that what he said was correct, the important factor is that we are starting from a much smaller base. The problem facing Britain is that its manufacturing base has shrunk. In terms of productivity we are, perhaps, equal to the Germans, Americans and even the Japanese, but our base is small. Therefore, we are faced with the problem of importing many goods. With that small base we cannot produce the products that our economy wishes to consume and, therefore, we have to import them.

The Minister made great play of inward investment. We must be careful when we consider that investment. At the moment, as everyone acknowledges, the balance of trade deficit is horrendous. The manufacturing industry is at the centre of that trade deficit. Last year, the deficit on manufactured goods was £14·4 billion compared with a £2·7 billion surplus in 1979. Imports jumped 127 per cent. between 1979 and 1988, and by 13 per cent. last year. During that period, exports increased by only 2 per cent.

Despite what the Minister says, part of the problem is the underinvestment in the manufacturing industry which is still below the 1979 levels and now forms only 2·7 per cent. of GDP, compared with 3·6 per cent. in 1979. That compares badly with our main competitors in Germany, Japan and the United States.

The opportunity to use oil revenues for such investment has been lost and, instead, they were used, as we know, to fund the increasing unemployment that was created by this Government. That is one of the crimes that the Government have committed. They have left us with a weak economy. The rundown in manufacturing industry is visible for all to see. We were a great manufacturing centre in which the industrial revolution started. However, the rundown that has taken place within that manufacturing centre is now evident for all to see. The new industries that have been introduced have not proved sufficient to prevent that rundown.

The motor car industry is one of the prime causes of our inflated imports. It is worth noting that the cost of our imports of road vehicles in 1987 was greater than the cost of our total imports of food and live animals. The Minister did not refer to that comparison. Japanese firms such as Nissan and Toyota have moved into Britain. Why are they doing so? They want to move inside the ring fence of the Europe of 1992. On the surface—*[Interruption.]* If hon. Members will allow me, I shall continue. On the surface, that looks a welcome development because it creates manufacturing jobs, which we all want. However, we should insist that those firms do not become screwdriver firms, mere assembly plants. The engines should be made in the United Kingdom. There should be a foundry content, and, above all, research and development should not rest solely in Japan. If we allow that to happen, we shall be at the mercy of foreign and inward investment.

Car imports form a major part of our trade deficit. In 1982, there was a deficit in the car industry of £1 billion, which rose to £6·1 billion in 1988. That forms a substantial part—about 40 per cent.—of our overall deficit.

The Engineering Employers Federation has estimated that mechanical engineering, which is one of the United Kingdom's consistent exporters, will move into deficit in 1989. That is another tragedy. One effect of Britain becoming an assembly plant is that we shall lose a skill which is so essential for modern industrial development. We are losing ground in new technology and computers.

As somebody who served an apprenticeship in industry and who is a skilled engineer, I think that it is an absolute tragedy that we have thrown away existing skill. Who closed the skillcentres and cut back training boards? If ever there was a short-sighted policy, it was that. At the moment, in the south-east, where there is a demand for labour, there is also a shortage of skilled workers. If we are to get the economy moving again and get people back to work, where are the skilled workers to come from? Training to obtain skills and apprenticeships are essential. While there may be high flyers in the City, in an area in which we need to expand in order to live, we are cutting our own throats, and the Government should take note of that.

People who work in the manufacturing industry are often seen as the poor relations in our society. That is not true in West Germany, the United States or Japan. In those countries, people who work in the manufacturing industry, both factory workers and management, are at the top of the tree. Here, they are hidden away and people seem to be ashamed of those who work in industry. That is one of this country's problems. How can that happen in the country in which the industrial revolution began?

The Minister referred to certain industries. I shall quote what Sir John Harvey-Jones, the previous chairman of ICI, said on 16 April:

"the huge areas of activities on which our industrial foundation was founded are being destroyed . . . where are the British Engineering firms to rival the Germans or the Japanese, where is our machine tool industry, our car industry, our electrical engineering and our electronic industries?"

The report by the House of Lords Select Committee, on which people such as Lord Weinstock served, asked the same question, and the Minister did not answer it tonight.

Manufacturing industry is a major priority and the Minister should have a policy for it which would include planning, investment, research and development and skills —they should all be brought together. The policy being pursued now of high interest rates and a balance of payments deficit should be recognised as wrong and destructive of our seed corn. The Government have got it wrong, and the only alternative is a Labour Government.

8.10 pm

Mrs. Maureen Hicks (Wolverhampton, North-East): I welcome a debate on manufacturing, but I must confess to a certain disappointment at the negative response from the Opposition on this important subject. Where have they been all these years? Industrialists who read the Opposition motion tomorrow in *Hansard* will despair because Labour has learned nothing. They would panic at the thought of a Labour Government continuing blindly to advocate failed policies that so largely contributed to the weakening of British manufacturing industry in the

1970s. Secondary picketing and the thought of Labour threatening to undo all the good that has been done would distress them immensely.

I did not hear a single constructive policy on how to move forward and build for the future from the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould). Everything he said was destructive. I suggest that we bring the Opposition back to the real world of the 1980s, in which manufacturing output is at its highest ever and manufacturing productivity has risen by more than 50 per cent. since 1980—faster than any other major industrial nation, including Japan. Those statistics floor the Opposition's motion. If we are the failure that Labour continues to suggest, why are foreign companies flocking to invest here? We are their favourite country in which to invest now, but under the Labour Government we were the laughing stock of Europe. Imagine trying to compete in 1992 under a Labour Government!

I do not ask the Opposition to believe me or the industrialists; I do not even ask them to believe the foreign investors. I ask them to join me on a tour of the west midlands and see for themselves what is commonly described as a manufacturing miracle. More than 20 per cent. of all foreign firms setting up here have chosen the west midlands, compared with only 6 per cent. in 1983. Manufacturing industry in the west midlands has made greater progress in the past 10 years than it did between the end of the second world war and 1979. Unlike Labour Members, I am proud to shout that success from the rooftops to future investors.

Business is booming and there is a renewed faith in the region and its huge investment, new jobs, new factories, full order books, record productivity, record profitability, investment in training and investment in research and development. Acres of derelict land have been turned around under this Government and put to good use. I welcome the Government's support for the heartland of the industrial United Kingdom in the shape of a black country urban development corporation which will produce 1 million sq ft of industrial premises, create 20,000 new jobs and attract £1 billion of new investment. One has only to go around the west midlands to hear the buzz of thriving industry in small and large companies and to feel the excitement. I feel it regularly as I mingle with workers who are now associated with success. It is wonderful to hear from one-time shop stewards—in private—that they are thankful for the trade union reforms that the Government had the guts to instigate.

I speak as a Member representing a black country constituency which, admittedly, was devastated during the recession. Not a week went by in those days without bankruptcies and redundancies and it was hard to imagine how a recovery could ever take place. But families who suffered first hand have had the honesty to recognise that good has come out of bad and that the Government have created the conditions in which industry can flourish. Many of them were longstanding Labour supporters, but they recognise that the country was crying out for strong leadership to deal with the decline of our traditional manufacturing industry and to create an atmosphere in which workers would care about the success of their companies and produce British goods that could compete successfully throughout the world.

In the black country, we used not to be able to give land away. Industrial land values in 1988 doubled because of the demand for sites. A few years ago jobs could not be found for love or money. Now, with the biggest reduction in unemployment in the west midlands, the vacancies cannot be filled. What is more, firms cannot keep up with the demand for skills to meet the demand for their goods. We continually hear of companies training their workers only to have them poached by other companies down the road. Industry and Government together must continue to tackle that problem and ensure that we provide the skills necessary to fill those vacancies.

Given the reduction in the number of school leavers, we must devote even greater efforts to forging links between schools and industry. I take the point made by the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) about the anti-industrial culture that has grown up; we must ensure that industry gets its fair share of the declining market of school leavers.

I am happy to report that in the manufacturing industries we still employ 33·2 per cent. of the working population of the west midlands, which is more than any other region. It will be a great tragedy for our region if excessive wage demands and days lost through industrial action are allowed to hamper our remarkable progress. Against a background of success and falling unemployment it is often too easy to forget the way things used to be. It is worth quoting an industrial analyst of the early 1970s in this connection. He said that 90 per cent. of a manufacturing manager's time here was spent in industrial relations, as opposed to his Japanese counterpart, who used to spend 10 per cent. The Government have redressed the balance, and that can nowhere be seen more clearly than in the major industries in my constituency.

I shall not quote the sort of hollow statistics that we heard from the Opposition tonight: I shall cite living, breathing industry. Goodyear, a flagship industry producing tyres in my constituency, struggled for survival in the 1970s, when the local Labour council did not want industry and was pushing Goodyear out of the region by setting high rates. Then, in the 1970s, Goodyear's labour force was more than half as big again as it is now and its manufacturing costs were well above those of its competitors and sister Goodyear companies. In the 1980s, the company has embarked on a major modernisation, in the form of a multi-million pound investment and rationalisation programme which has led to reduced manufacturing costs and a realistic attitude to success among the work force.

I can report in 1989 that that company is now so successful that it has switched from a five to a seven-day a week operation, 24 hours a day, which has resulted in an extra 1,000 jobs, taking the work force to well over 4,000. Similarly, another company, employing 750, Marston Palmer in the aerospace industry, whose markets in the 1960s and early 1970s centred in the United Kingdom, is today a leading company. It is well known and respected both in Europe and the United States for its technical excellence and is well prepared to compete favourably with the opportunities to be provided in 1992.

These are just two success stories from hundreds I could quote. They are examples of the manufacturing progress we are now witnessing under this Government, and long may it last. I say to the gloom and doom merchants on the Opposition Benches, "Open your eyes and see the success story once considered impossible." In the words of John Banham, the Director General of the Confederation of British Industry:

[Mrs. Maureen Hicks]

"We have made a quantum leap from our dismal performance in the 1970s."

8.20 pm

Mr. Stan Crowther (Rotherham): I do not claim to know very much about economics. I used to think I knew a little about it until I learnt from experts such as the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster that a record trade deficit, massive unemployment, rising inflation and very high interest rates are actually indicators of a strong economy. I always thought it was the other way around; now I realise that I got it all wrong.

However, no one needs to be an economist in an area like mine to see the appalling social cost of the decline of our manufacturing industries, because the ghastly physical evidence is there for all to see. The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Hicks) is inviting us to go and see for ourselves. Perhaps she would like to come and see for herself what I am talking about, because between Rotherham and Sheffield there are great areas of dereliction and desolation where once stood wonderful steel-making and engineering plants, which were in the old days the very backbone of the British economy. They have largely gone, and up to now at least they have not been replaced.

Of course, we are still making steel in Rotherham, but nothing like as much as we did. About 3,000 people are still working in the steel industry at a very high rate of productivity, but in steel alone my area has lost 10,000 jobs in the last 10 years, plus many thousands of other jobs in the coal industry and other industries—some manufacturing industries, but all directly related to manufacturing, whether in the manufacturing sector itself or in the energy-creating sector on which manufacturing depends. This collapse of manufacturing has led to a massive loss of jobs in my part of the world.

Some new jobs have been created, of course, many of them in a very unsightly, out-of-town retail development in the enterprise zone, where people are employed largely part time on very low wages in monstrous blue boxes pretending to be buildings, and they contribute precious little to the local economy. I am very pleased to say that there are a number of new small businesses in manufacturing and, like my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme), I strongly support small business. I am very much in favour of helping small companies to get established. However, it would take literally 300 new small firms, each employing 40 to 50 people, to create the jobs we need in the Rotherham area not in five years, not next year, but now; that is the measure of the problem. Quite clearly, with the best will in the world, these new small firms, which I strongly support, will not be able to solve that.

Everyone knew a long time ago, and we do not need to be told, that the traditional manufacturing industries would not be able to continue employing the number of people they once did. We all knew technology would take care of that because, of course, the whole purpose of technology is to reduce the need for labour. No one disputes that. Even if manufacturing were booming in Britain today, which it certainly is not, we would still be shedding jobs. However, the tragedy is that the benefits of technology and the potential wealth that technology can create have been dissipated, just like the wealth from North sea oil. That wealth ought to have been harnessed and used to develop new industries and create new jobs, but that has not happened. That is the great tragedy of the last 10 years. Where are the sunrise industries that we ought to be developing with the benefit of the wealth we have produced? They are not here, or not many of them are.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): They are in Cleveland.

Mr. Crowther: The hon. Gentleman says they are in Cleveland. He is extremely fortunate if they are in Cleveland, but there are not very many or we would not be running this massive trade deficit in information technology, electronics and telecommunications, the very industries on which any advanced country has to depend in the future to be able to revive the manufacturing base. It is an appalling tragedy that the country which led the first industrial revolution is now trailing so far behind many other countries in the world in the second industrial revolution.

Much of the problem stems from the fact that successive Secretaries of State for Trade and Industry—and, my goodness, we have had an awful lot in the last 10 years—have all failed to take the slightest interest in manufacturing. The Minister shakes his head, but it is a fact. We have met them all in the Select Committee on Trade and Industry. We have never managed to persuade any of them that manufacturing really matters. We have drawn attention to this problem time after time.

Lack of time will not allow me to quote very much, and I draw the attention of the House to only one of our reports, produced in May 1984, when we were very concerned about the great imbalance in trade in manufactures between this country and the rest of the EEC. It was already running at £8 billion a year, and our Select Committee, in its unanimous report, found it necessary to describe the attitude of the then Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), as short-sighted and complacent, which indeed it was.

The essence of what we were saying in that report five years ago was that if we did not do something urgently to revive our manufacturing industries, we would be in very serious trouble in a few years' time. The question we were putting to the House and to the Government was: what do we live on when the North sea oil starts to run out? Of course, the chickens have come home to roost in this record and still rising trade deficit.

I had always understood that this country was a trading nation—we were all told that at school—and I cannot, for the life of me, understand how it can be argued that a trading nation which spends enormously more buying goods than it receives for the goods it sells can be regarded as successful. I may be taking a very simplistic view, but that is certainly a simple concept, which I should have thought would be easily understood by the grocer's daughter who leads the Conservative party and has the benefit of being Prime Minister for another couple of years or so. I do not think that Alderman Roberts of Grantham would have stayed in business very long if he had operated on the basis of developing a huge and increasing deficit year by year. Traders do not stay in business that way, and I do not think that the Government can pretend that we are doing nicely on that basis.

I greatly admire the companies that are exporting manufactured goods and struggling against the enormous difficulties created by high interest rates, for example, and the quite unrealistic exchange rate, to increase those exports, but they cannot compensate for the fact that we have an absolute flood of imports coming into the country, largely because our manufacturing industries in many important sectors have been completely wiped out; they are just not there any more. In other fields they are being run down to the point at which they can no longer even meet the demands of the home market. When we relate all that to the profligacy of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's taxation policy, no one should be surprised at this huge inrush of imports.

Ministers frequently proclaim the virtues of private enterprise. If the Government had been managing any ordinary private sector company in the way that they manage the country, they would have been sacked years ago.

8.30 pm

Mr. Lewis Stevens (Nuneaton): The hon. Members for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) and for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther) may have given to our competitors in Europe and elsewhere a picture of the British economy which they will be delighted to see. All the gloom that they portrayed was such that no one could believe that we now have a manufacturing industry that is likely to be able to compete with any worthwhile economy in the world. As my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Hicks) said, the picture of doom and gloom is completely false.

The pessimism of the Opposition about manufacturing industry is that it has not over the past 10 years come out of the shadows of the trade union domination in which it suffered for 20 years. In the last 10 years, improved technology, productivity and industrial relations have brought British industry to the position where it is able to engage in genuine competition better than at any time since the last war.

The impression that we do not want to invest in industry, that people do not want to know about engineering and that manufacturing is always the poor relation has perhaps an element of truth in it. Many things said by the Opposition often have. However, it is the emphasis on that which is so wrong. Companies such as Rolls-Royce have not only developing technology but are able to compete in world markets much more successfully than one would have envisaged even 10 years ago. The orders won by Rolls-Royce in the last few months are some of the most substantial that the company has ever had. We must congratulate the company, the workers on the shop floor and those in design and development and in other departments on their success.

I have a Rolls-Royce company in my constituency. It manufactures marine engines, but in the near future it will move to other products. The Opposition tried to talk down the privatisation of Rolls-Royce. They said that it would not be able to do its job in the private sector, but it has proved that it can do a very good job indeed. The Opposition talk about the loss of manufacturing jobs, and the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) mentioned textiles. Certainly the textile industry went through a rough time during the major recession. It is interesting to note that in my constituency some of the developing industries are textile companies that are competing and exporting.

The second largest employer in my constituency is a textile company. It has built a new factory, is bringing in new techniques and is able to employ more staff than it did a few years ago. Not only are existing companies developing because of the better climate, but new companis are coming into an industry that was always in decline. Many companies, including those in textiles, have developed in the last 10 years because the Government have provided a framework that has encouraged large and small companies to develop and take part in the necessary development of our total economy.

Manufacturing has many more problems than most other types of industry, and it is necessary for Government to be conscious of the importance of an industrial base to the total economy. The wealth-creating aspect of manufacturing is fundamental to a country's development in terms of jobs and the balance of payments and in the general wealth of people. We can ensure that wealth creation only by continuing the attitude to development that we have adopted in recent years.

Some years ago we had a machine tool industry, in which, among others, I worked, but it largely disappeared. However, there should not be too much gloom about that, because anyone who attended the machine tool exhibition at the National Exhibition Centre will have seen that independent British manufacturers and British manufacturers in collaboration with other companies have developed British machine tools. Those tools have started to appear again on the market and to compete. From the ashes of the former machine tool industry there is now a growing industry. It is not as big as it was before, but it is growing.

We must also recognise that in order to develop as fast as we should like manufacturing industry may sometimes need special Government measures. The Government have provided such measures to help manufacturers, especially small companies to which they have given various grants, particularly to those involved in high technology projects. However, we may have to look at other measures to encourage some of the smaller companies. Measures that will assist cash flow and perhaps tax delays or even VAT delays may be necessary to allow some of those companies to develop rather faster.

At one time, old-style apprenticeships were the best that we had, but that is no longer true. Some of the apprenticeships were superb, but others were weak, and that also applied to many of Britain's other training schemes. The Government have now developed a range of training that is wider than we have ever had, and it is available for people from the age of 16. That should greatly help manufacturers, because it brings together industry and education within the orbit of Government training. Such co-operation did not exist before, and that was why we had weak training systems in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s.

We have also encouraged the higher education available at polytechnics and universities where courses are geared more to the needs of individuals and industry than they were in the past. They are not purely academic courses. That is the kind of development that we want. Local polytechnics are now running courses which 10 years ago could not have been envisaged, but yet they are necessary because they provide engineering courses that

[Mr. Lewis Stevens]

are directly relevant to local companies. The picture is not gloomy. We can look forward to making all our industries competitive in Europe and in wider markets. If we adopt an attitude of, "Oh dear, we have problems, perhaps we had better stop", we will get nowhere. That often happened in the 1960s and when a company came up against a problem about introducing new technology or faced difficulty in finding workers projects were sometimes put off. I do not say that that was due to trade unions being awkward. It was a mixture of difficulties created by unions and management.

Today there is an acceptance by unions of flexibility within companies and an acceptance by management of the need to generate a movement that keeps going forward. The Opposition skipped over productivity, but it is one of the most fundamental aspects of competition. Productivity is not a static concept. One does not improve productivity, sit back and say, "We have done it. We are better now." It is an ongoing process, and manufacturing and all industries must recognise the need for continual productivity improvements as part of their businesses. That must be a major priority if business of all sorts is genuinely to compete in the markets.

We have a future in manufacturing. That is not to overlook the need for help and a drive on training and education. Much remains to be done, but a good start has been made under Conservative rule. The whole issue was ignored by the last Labour Government and the fact that a problem existed was not even realised by some Governments before that.

The Conservatives in recent years have appreciated the need for manufacturing to develop, and help has been provided in many ways and in various areas. By recognising the needs of manufacturers, we have already come a long way. There is still a long way to go before we are truly competitive, but the path which the Government have set will prove to be the path to a more successful and reliable manufacturing base.

8.41 pm

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): Despite some of the optimistic tones that predictably have been emanating from Conservative Members, I cannot but feel that an initial comment on those tones is to ask why, if things are so good, things are so bad, certainly in the part of the country from where I come.

I cannot claim to speak with knowledge of the part of the country represented by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Hicks), but it sounds as though the manna from the Government is falling weakly from heaven there. The extremely encouraging picture she painted of her constituency is not mirrored in many other constituencies, particularly the further north one goes in Britain. Apart from being extremely supportive of Government policy, her remarks represented an eloquent underlining of the extent to which Britain has become a deeply divided nation, socially and politically, under Conservative rule.

The nation and its industrial base has been hit twice by the Government. It was hit first between 1979 and 1981 when they pursued massive deflationary Budget strategies which resulted in the wholesale rundown and closure of large sections of manufacturing industry. That was bad enough. But as a result, any figures that are now cited in support of the apparent manufacturing recovery begin at such a low base, as a result of the 1979-81 collapse, that it is easier to make any recovery look better than it is.

The economy has been, and is being, hit for a second time—and all the harder from the point of view of our economic base—by the tax-cutting strategies of the last two Budgets and by the consumer boom sucking in consumer imports. The Government have always displayed a tendency to change the basis of calculation when the figures show an unhealthy story. That has happened with unemployment; there have been a series of changes in the method of calculating the totals. The Chancellor now wants mortgage interest costs to be removed from the inflation index because it puts up the index too high for his liking.

Casting one's mind back to the previous debate today and the willingness of the Government to indulge in propaganda at the taxpayers' expense, one wonders whether, if the balance of trade continues to decline, they will try to withdraw imports from the equation, so making our balance of trade position look not nearly so bad.

Mr. Crowther: The hon. Gentleman may be giving the Government ideas.

Mr. Kennedy: If I get a 10 per cent. return for feeding in that idea to the propaganda machine that Saatchi and Saatchi has developed in recent years, I shall be able to retire happy almost immediately.

What can we do to improve our industrial performance and manufacturing base? There are three key problems to which I wish to refer—low productivity, high unemployment and high inflation, which is linked to poor competitiveness.

In 1960 we were the equals of France and Germany in productivity. We have now slipped way behind. Our productivity has a real impact on our people's standard of living, so we have by far the lowest pensions, we spend less on health and we have the smallest proportion of young people in full-time education. Our closest competitors in Europe are leaving us standing in all those respects.

Four main factors cause low productivity: shortages of skills and basic education, poor industrial relations at times, inadequate research and development and inadequate competition. Given our skill shortages and low levels of basic education, we should be moving towards a right to numeracy in our education system. In other words, it should become increasingly unacceptable for the teaching of maths in schools and colleges without ultimately a certificate of competency.

There should be training incentives. Employers who train less than the average for their industry—the Government should start thinking in these terms—should pay a tax equivalent to the extent of the under-training. Employers who train more than the average should be reimbursed to the extent of that extra training. The amount of training should be measured in terms of expenditure as certified by a company's auditors.

The Companies Bill began its Committee stage this morning. The Government displayed their open-mindedness in the first two and half hours of the Committee's deliberations by removing an amendment on political donations which was inserted in another place. I hope that

the Government use some of the remaining time that the Bill has for its passage through Parliament by pursuing some of the ideas that I am putting forward.

Next, there should be a right to training. Anybody employing a person under 18 years of age should be encouraged to release that youngster for at least one day a week for education and training at the employer's expense. In the past, the Government have hesitated to introduce such a concept for fear of causing youth unemployment. Under the training incentive proposal that I have outlined, using the tax system based on a company's audited accounts, employers would no longer have an incentive to avoid employing young people with whom they had to enter into training commitments.

Those are some proposals by which the Government could begin to shake up the industrial base and contribute towards industrial, and particularly manufacturing, recovery. They should also look to civil research and development. Our education structures, compared with those of our main industrial competitors, are such that we are failing woefully to provide anything like the tertiary and skill education that, for example, Japan and north America manage to provide in competition with us.

It is attitudinal, and I agree with what hon. Members on both sides have said about education. About a year ago I spoke before a high school audience in Edinburgh, most of whom were going on to some form of tertiary education. One thinks of the proud and distinguished engineering traditions of Scotland. When I asked that audience how many would be going into law, medicine, the arts and so on, it was clear that the number going into engineering was a minute fraction of the total. In Japan, "engineer" is a social handle. It is a position in society in the way "doctor of medicine" is in this country. Our attitude must change.

High unemployment, high rates of inflation and poor competitiveness have dogged this country throughout the period of Conservative rule. We should be looking to full United Kingdom membership of the European monetary system.

There is a very interesting debate developing within the Conservative party, although I do not think that I can dignify it with the description "debate". There is a full stand-up, drag-'em-out fight going on in the Conservative party. There is no doubt that the SLD had the good sense to get our little skirmish behind us in the first half of this Parliament and we will spend the second half being constructive. The Government look as if they are going to spend the second half of this Parliament involved in their own internal punch-up and I welcome that because it will help the Opposition parties generally.

We should be working towards full EMS entry because that would help our industrial base, help our exporters and create far better conditions for them to operate. Conservatives advocating that approach will, I suspect, by the time of the next election or not long after it be proved to be on the correct side in that argument. That, on an international basis in terms of the ability of this country to compete better internationally, would be a major attainment. It is well within the grasp of the Government.

It now seems to be fashionable to assume that a move back towards something much closer to full employment is not attainable whatever economic system one adopts or whatever political goals one sets. But we should look at countries such as Sweden, where unemployment is close to being under 1·5 per cent., which is effectively zero unemployment given the flexibility of the labour market.

I hope that, despite all the fiddling and fixing of the figures and the misplaced economic optimism of the Government about the economy, they will not lose sight of their tremendous, overriding social obligations to the millions who have lost gainful productive employment during their decade in office and of how important a priority it must remain to bring down unemployment by the production and creation of real jobs in the future.

I have one constituency appeal to make to the Minister. The greatest single manufacturing setback in my constituency was the closure of the Invergordon aluminium smelter. I will not rehearse the history now, but it closed because of a world slump in the price of aluminium and the inability to achieve—*[Interruption.]* That plant went there with Conservative support in the 1960s. If the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) was not so woefully ignorant of recent political history he might know that.

It also failed because of the inadequacy, or ineffectiveness, of the power supply contract that had been negotiated. World aluminium prices have now substantially increased and British Alcan has commented publicly that electricity privatisation may create flexibility for a more favourable power contract to be negotiated. That being the case, I should be glad if the Minister would at least promise to keep his eye on that developing situation, because he will appreciate that any move towards reopening that plant in my constituency would be a major psychological and financial shot in the arm.

8.53 pm

Mr. Charles Wardle (Bexhill and Battle): It seems to have become inevitable that whenever the House debates the state of British manufacturing industry an internecine clash follows about the correct interpretation of what has happened to manufacturing in the recent past. Today has been no exception. Opposition Members have made some strident claims about what they describe as the disintegration of our industrial base, the dramatic fall-off in manufacturing employment and the trade deficit in manufactured goods. My right hon. and hon. Friends point with much justification to a freer labour market, vigorous growth in output, greater productivity, higher profits and increased capital investment.

On both sides of the House, to my way of thinking, a rather too euphoric gloss is sometimes placed on industry's short-term prospects in Europe without what I would regard as sufficient concern for the devastating speed with which changes in technology will shortly be consigning even some of our more enterprising companies to iron-age-style obsolescence, and without enough awareness of what it will take to acquire a greater market share in the single European market ahead.

The trouble with a debate about what has already taken place is that it distracts attention from the important issues for industry's future and particularly the opportunities and challenges over the next decade. Nevertheless, any realistic assessment of where manufacturing industry's best strategy lies in the 1990s has to spring from an analysis of the key factors in our past performance. I shall try to keep my comments about that analysis as brief as possible.

There can be no doubt on either side of the House that captive markets in post-war Europe and the Commonwealth left British manufacturers complacent

[Mr. Charles Wardle]

about order books in the 1950s and 1960s. That meant that they were later into new technology than our German and Japanese competitors. That had disastrous consequences for this country in the microchip revolution. But the real killer was inflation from 1972 or 1973 onwards because too many companies simply made for stock and watched paper profits accumulating on the shelf. Products remained unsold and simply rose in value, and that in turn encouraged poor cash-flow management, soft wage settlements and overmanning—a situation that was exploited with mindless shortsightedness and selfishness by many trade unions.

Ironically, one of the first people to signal the impending crisis was a trade union leader, Clive Jenkins of ASTMS—the Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs. In a book that he published in 1979, before the winter of discontent—I think its title was "The Collapse of Work"—he predicted unemployment of 5 million or 6 million in the 1980s because he recognised the problems of overmanning. So, when the world recession began in 1980, British companies with too much stock, tight liquidity and bloated payrolls fell like ninepins and only the better managed companies managed to come through and survive.

No matter what Opposition Members may claim, from that time on the future of many traditional, steel-based, smoke-stack industries suddenly lay in the far east and the Third world, because even with automated production plant and efficient materials handling Europe could no longer compete with the direct and indirect labour costs of the developing world. So manufacturing in the west midlands and elsewhere was reduced to a rump eight or nine years ago. But, since then, with trade union legislation that has liberated individual workers, deregulation, lower inflation and more individual incentives, growth has accelerated, particularly in the defence field and in the hitherto sluggish state-run companies now in private hands.

The Government have skilfully created a more positive business climate, with record output now being achieved from a much truncated manufacturing base. We have a leaner and fitter industry, better equipped and tightly controlled, but is it geared to win a greater market share in Europe, to ease the balance-of-payments gap and to make up the leeway on product innovation and manufacturing technology?

With continued realism and determination, it is certainly possible, but it will not happen if inflation is allowed to rise and recent hard-won progress is squandered. Nor shall we succeed unless industry and Government come to a clear understanding about several vital areas in which both have a part to play. I am talking not about collectivist nostrums or central planning but about the harsh realities of a highly competitive market place and the ability to create wealth.

First—with no disrespect to our excellent civil servants—Government have to take into account the importance of including in their official ranks people who understand markets, money-making and line management to add to Government's understanding of the realities of the task of running industry. Not that Government should run industry, but they need to understand how it is done and all too often there is a gap in that understanding.

Secondly, industry must grasp the significance of research and development if our future is to be anything but that of a neo-colonialist subcontractor and national assembly plant in the medium-term future. Companies are making profits and they have to put a large share of those profits into research and development if we are to have businesses in the future. It is the companies' responsibility.

Thirdly, Government have to shed their dirigiste inhibitions in at least one respect. They simply have to understand that the creation of new standards for the European single market must be achieved in a way that helps British competitiveness. That cannot be ignored.

Fourthly, excellent recent advances in training must be accelerated by employers, not by the Government. Employers must go to schools and colleges and participate in training programmes to woo the industrial workers of tomorrow. Fifthly, vast investment is required in our hopelessly inadequate transport infrastructure. We must emulate the efforts of our EC partners, and the swiftest and cheapest means of doing that is to give the job to the private sector and to private finance wherever it is practicable.

Finally, the City—and banks and institutional investors in particular—must grasp the fact that, while takeovers can be strategically important and worthwhile, the companies meriting the highest esteem are those which successfully invest in in-house product development and marketing strategies of their own. Too many companies in our highly sophisticated stock market look for next year's growth in earnings per share from the issue of additional equity for acquisitions, whereas the real glamour should attach to the businesses that ruthlessly seek internal growth and expansion. That is the way to create market winners and perhaps even to win back our European market share of consumer goods.

If those challenges—which are management challenges for private industry and Government alike—are met, we have a realistic chance of taking the lead in Europe by means of our own competitiveness before the turn of the century. If we do not do so, this country, which led the way to the first industrial revolution, will be relegated to the second division of manufacturing in the second industrial revolution in the next century. We have the opportunity to succeed. It is up to us.

9.1 pm

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Try as I might, I cannot find an economic miracle in manufacturing, but some extraordinary claims have been made tonight and, with a first name like mine, I am reluctant to talk about wonderland, white rabbits and mad hatters. However, listening to the contributions of some Conservative Members, I feel that I am in that kind of world.

I will not tolerate the Minister or anyone else saying that the fine industries that were lost to my constituency in the earlier years of the Government's reign were lost simply because they were overmanned or obsolete. We made the finest machine tools in the world and could be doing so still had there been a decent economic policy and a Government committed to industry. Nevertheless, tonight I will settle for a reassurance that the Government will at least take manufacturing's next period of crisis seriously. Sadly, I do not think that they will. Everyone else seems to be doing so. A report from the British Textile Confederation published this week states:

"It is staggering to realise just how much of trade in textiles is distorted, often by interventionist policies by governments world-wide rather than being carried out on the basis of normal commercial principles."

There is a message for the Government that has nothing to do with competitiveness but has everything to do with British business saying to the Government, "Will you help and stop unfair practices?

Mr. Peter Booth of the Transport and General Workers Union textile group reports that 15,000 jobs were lost in the textile industry last year and predicts that another 20,000 will be lost this year. In a very good debate on manufacturing in another place recently, Lord Ezra commented that:

"unless we have a very strong manufacturing industrial base we shall not be able to balance our trade and our payments with the rest of the world. In order to achieve that, we have to build up that base."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 26 April 1989; Vol. 506, c. 1313.]

Those who took part in that debate, almost without exception, expressed the same sentiments. Concern was also expressed about Britain's £15 billion trade deficit. I add my voice to their warnings. I am pleased that we are having this debate. I asked my party to arrange it.

In the travel-to-work area of the district council that covers both my constituency and Calder Valley, 1,000 jobs have been lost since Christmas across various manufacturing industries, including engineering, machine tools, a new brush company that opened with high hopes, bedding, furniture, and textiles.

One of the saddest cases is that of Crosrol, specialists in textile machinery, which lost hundreds of jobs in the early 1980s but fought back. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) might say, it became leaner, fitter and more competitive. Last year it won the Queen's award for industry, but is now again announcing job losses. All those firms attribute their situation to some of the Government's economic policies.

In 1987-88, we were already feeling the chill wind of the need to be more profitable in the run-up to 1992. In my constituency, there was a major closure with the loss of 1,000 jobs at KP Foods. Even though that company was profitable, it was not profitable enough to cope with the competition it anticipates that 1992 will bring. A further 500 jobs are still to go at that company. The Government know full well that their one-club economic policy of high interest rates seriously damages industry, particularly small companies.

A town such as Halifax relies on the success of small companies. A large carpet mill, Dean Clough, closed, but was reopened, housing a number of small businesses. However, the Government's policy of high interest rates and high energy and water charges is harming those small businesses, which are finding it very difficult to compete. Towns such as Halifax suffer because the Government have no regional policy. The Government view local unemployment statistics as reliable indicators of the local economy but conveniently ignore the army of invisible unemployed, whose identity in the labour market disappeared down a departmental black hole of statistics as the need to get people off the unemployment register became paramount.

The Government do not allow councils such as Halifax capital budgets sufficiently large to help industry through infrastructure. No money is available except to inner cities or urban development areas. We have pleaded with the Minister for objective 2 status as a town surrounded by others having assisted areas status, and we suffer greatly from that situation. The economy is overheating in the south-east, with companies looking to relocate, but the Government's response is yet another local government Bill that will curtail the power of local authorities even further. They will not be allowed to help with infrastructure or assist industry to relocate.

As to manufacturing, the market has failed people miserably—*[Interruption.]* I am glad that the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Hicks) has such a happy story to tell. Sadly, I have not. I am sorry that Conservative Members see fit to laugh. If they had seen 1,000 jobs lost in three months in their constituencies they would not find it very funny. Another 500 jobs are still to be lost, and the economic indicators are against further employment.

We face a skills shortage in the run-up to 1992 in many of the industries that are doing well, which must raise questions about the Government's much-publicised training schemes, especially YTS and ET. We have not invested in research and development. Two years ago, the Prime Minister boasted that £210 million would be spent on the Link scheme, but only £60 million has been spent. I suspect that it is because the Government are not really interested in research and development or training for the manufacturing industry. The Government have to face up to the seriousness of the situation. Perhaps the very short debate this evening will enable them to do that but quite frankly, given the attitude of some Conservative Members, I seriously doubt it.

9.9 pm

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): This evening we have had a good debate, sharpening up attitudes on both sides of the House, but with a good deal of moderation and acceptance of the basic ills in the manufacturing sector over the years.

As the House will know, my constituency is in a traditional manufacturing area, south-east Lancashire, the cotton workshop of the world, but no longer are Bury, Ramsbottom and Tottington exclusively manufacturing towns. We have not talked very much about the development of a more mixed pattern of employment in traditional manufacturing areas. In my constituency the index of manufacturing and service industries reveals that there are more than 1,000 firms in my constituency and the area immediately surrounding it. That represents a large number of companies of a wide variety of natures. The fact that manufacturing is becoming less important is balanced by developments in other sectors.

In a traditional manufacturing area there are bound to be mixed views about the changing nature of the towns. Tradition dies hard and industrial closures have hurt the area. When I first became a Member of Parliament unemployment in my constituency was something like 13 per cent. and rising. Now it is down to something like 6 per cent., but recently there has been one closure and some jobs have been lost in another firm. Unemployment hurts and is still hurting. In the past few years unemployment has fallen, but the Government must maintain their goal of reducing unemployment as much as possible.

There has been nothing sudden about the changing nature of my constituency. It has not happened post-1979. That is why I feel that the central thrust of the Opposition motion is misguided. The true damage to manufacturing

[Mr. Alistair Burt]

industry occurred in the years of decline this century when the golden age of British manufacturing came to an end, either through no fault—as the closed markets of empire were opened up to other nations or as developing nations improved their economies—or through fault—learning late the post-war lessons about proper management, and failing to get industrial relations right on both sides of the industry. If the Opposition are genuinely looking for a Government to make a scapegoat, they should look nearer home, at the Labour Government between 1974 and 1979. The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) was talking about competitiveness and productivity. How did the appalling trade union legislation of 1974-79 improve our productivity? How much did secondary picketing do to improve British competitiveness and what part did double-digit inflation play in industrial regeneration? All those factors did enormous damage to manufacturing industry but have been neatly passed over by Opposition Members.

Since then areas such as mine have changed and have moved away from manufacturing. We should remember that some 200 years ago manufacturing businesses and companies were new. When John Kay's flying shuttle was invented in Bury, Bury had something like 2,089 inhabitants. There have been many changes. We look back nostalgically to that great industry. But at that time it was new. Therefore, we should welcome the new industries and the new employment into our areas. It may not be as romantic to look back at the creation of an Asda superstore or the construction of a Warner Brothers' multi-cinema complex, but they represent jobs and investment and will exist for a long time to come.

There has been nothing short of a reconstruction of the manufacturing industry in the north-west in the past 10 years. Of course the bulk orders to easy markets have gone, but in the wake of the protection that existed in the past we now have new technology, innovation, and improved attitudes towards design and customer relations. There have been improvements in quality and an increase in the manufacture of value added products.

Some firms in my constituency illustrate that change. In the textile industry, Bury is no longer involved in bulk textile manufacture, but it produces high value-added goods and companies such as Elton-Cop, part of the Coates-Viyella group, have followed the practice of good long-term investments that are now paying dividends. In the paper industry, Bury no longer manufactures paper in bulk, but specialises. A company called Cromptons specialises in teabags and sausage skins. The sausage skins are exported to Germany. If my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister ever does anything as indelicate as eating a sausage with Chancellor Kohl in Germany, I would bet a pound to a penny that the sausage skin was made in my constituency. In the paper-making industry, companies such as Holder-Pamac have developed their own market over the past 10 years because the quality of design and innovation are better than many of their competitors. In the ventilation and ducting industry, Henry Hargreaves has a world wide reputation because it is the best in its field.

In areas such as my constituency and other parts of the north-west, the manufacturing industry has survived because it has learned the basic lessons of good management, good labour relations, and a better attitude to success from the shop floor to the boardroom and an understanding that they are all in it together. I do not believe that there are two sides of industry any longer. Those that believe in two sides believe in conflict and division which bring industry to a halt. But more often people feel that they are all in it together. Politicians may talk, but those in the industry do not want to see division and know how important it is to fight the world markets together. Lastly, companies in the north-west have learnt the value of good decent investment over a long period of time.

I should like to flag up some vital issues to make sure that the Government get it absolutely right in future. There is no doubt that the reconstruction of the north-west has been helped immeasurably by Government policies. But in the short term the Government must address some vital issues. First, there is no doubt that the high value of the pound causes difficulty to our exporters. Secondly, our manufacturers need stability in the exchange rates. Thirdly, interest rates should be lower, but we already know that. Fourthly, the Government should take a more aggressive attitude to unfair foreign competition. The textile industry has been through a miserable time recently, particularly with Turkey. It has taken time to order an EC investigation, which is now taking place. But the Government must be more tough when they are confronted with unfair opposition from abroad.

Finally, I should like to refer to something that has been mentioned by other hon. Members—education and training. Last year, the Bow Group commissioned a survey among 160 major industrialists. We asked a range of questions about a variety of issues, but we were surprised at the emphasis that employers placed on education. We are surprised that the emphasis given to the role of education outstripped the more obvious targets for attention. We felt that it showed

"an acute grasp of a depressingly old problem—how to stimulate and prepare the young for an interest in industry in a nation whose culture has too often been seen as anti-industry".

We were impressed that of all the policies discussed, education was considered most important for the future.

The lesson is very clear. We have to prepare our children better for the manufacturing industry of the future. It is a disgrace that the British manufacturing industry is held in such poor esteem. The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) referred to that. It is true that for some reason, in a world which has been built by industry and in a region such as the north-west which has been built on the back of manufacturing industry, engineers are still despised as men in blue cotton overalls with oily hands wiping away the cotton waste. That is not the reality, nor will it be the reality in future. We must all get our attitude right towards education and towards industry.

In that same summary by the Bow Group 160 industrialists who were questioned said that the Government's performance was

"highly rated and was considered to have been better in the second term of Government than in the first."

There is no doubt that the policies on which manufacturing industry is based are sound and will provide a good base for the future. If the Government take note of short-term concerns, manufacturing industry will have a strong and secure base, providing, solid employment in the future.

9.19 pm

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): Government Back-Bench Members have tried to support their Minister's speech by painting a rosy picture of what is happening in their constituencies. It is not difficult to pick out one or two firms where productivity, efficiency and profitability have improved and investment has increased. But one or two such firms do not mean that the whole of manufacturing industry is doing well.

The unfortunate and important fact that spoils the rosy picture is what is known as the bottom line—the manufacturing industry deficit of over £14 billion a year. That cannot be ignored by any hon. Member. I remember great play being made in the 1970s by the Tory party and the press of a monthly deficit of £35 million that was to bring the country to its knees. No doubt the publicity given to that fact cost us many votes. It was important then and it is much more important now when £14 billion worth of manufactured goods are coming into the country each year. If all those firms are expanding so well, why must people go abroad to buy the things that they want?

I am glad that the hon. Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) came at last in his speech to criticism of the Government. I had begun to think that he had forgotten that he represents an area where textiles are still important. Employment in textiles represents 9 per cent. of manufacturing employment. Hon. Members do not need to believe me when I tell them that things are bad in the textile industry; they have only to read the annual statement of the British Textile Confederation that was issued this week. The president, Mr. Spencer, put his finger fairly and squarely on two matters that are causing problems—high interest rates and the over-valued pound. Both those are the direct responsibility of the Government. If they want manufacturing industry, and in particular textiles, to expand and provide employment, they have to revise their economic policy. It is the policy of the Chancellor to maintain high interest rates and to threaten us with even higher interest rates unless inflation comes down.

Tory Back Benchers have attempted to demonstrate that the trade union movement was responsible for all the difficulties in the past. Let me draw attention to the record of the trade unions in textiles. I admit immediately that there has been a small labour problem in the textile industry recently. Very unusually, the textile industry had its first strike for decades. What did the workers achieve? What were they determined to obtain that would bring the industry to its knees? At the end of their struggle and all the trouble they caused, they had to accept an increase in minimum earnings from £85 to £95 for a 39-hour week. I want anyone who says that the industry is being bled by the workers employed in it to tell me what his salary is and whether he could live on £95 a week.

The hon. Member for Bury, North mentioned other matters that concern the textile industry. The hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), the employers in the industry and I are to see the Minister responsible for textiles at the end of the week to draw his attention to the inaction of the Government in protecting the industry against Turkish imports. In the opinion of Mr. Spencer and myself, Turkey's behaviour has been outrageous. The increased imports that we can expect in the EEC from China will kill the textile trade in this country and will end the manufacturing industry which employs 9 per cent. of our people. I hope that the Minister, in whom I still have some faith, will get some action. Now and again he shows a little independence and determination to stand up for the country. I look to him to do something when we come to see him on Thursday.

9.25 pm

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): It is my privilege to be the only Member from the north-east of England to speak in the debate. I suppose that that in itself is significant. The Labour party in the north-east has abandoned debates on this subject because it does not wish to cross swords. We have not had a debate but rather a series of well-read, or in some cases not so well-read, speeches. That disappoints me when we are supposed to be a debating Chamber, with the cut and thrust of debate. The tone of the debate was set by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) who opened for the Opposition. He did not wish to be interrupted because he did not want to have to answer any of the questions that would have been put to him by Government Back Benchers.

Last week there was a television programme on Tyne Tees produced by the Northern development corporation. It was a debate in the north-east about the north-east, dealing with why we are not projected nationally as well as we should be. It must have been an important debate because Brian Redhead was imported to compere the programme. The cat was let out of the bag during the debate when the regional organiser of the Transport and General Workers Union, Joe Mills, said:

> "Of course things are better in the north-east now. It hurts me to have to say so but begrudgingly I have to say that Margaret Thatcher has been responsible for this."—(Points of order, col. 958, 24 May 1989.)

Up to 1980, a total of 47,000 people worked in British Steel and ICI on Teesside. After 1980 the numbers went down. Now only 12,000 work in those two industries. I was interested to hear John Harvey-Jones' virtue being extolled by the Opposition. He did a magnificent job for ICI. He saved the company and made it into the great world leader that it is today, but he did it at the expense of putting 18,000 to 20,000 people on the dole in two years. If we consider the history of British Steel, we see that overmanning continued in that industry until we grasped the nettle in 1979 and 1980. The result is that the figures for British Steel today show that it is producing 110, 115 and 120 per cent. of what was being produced when the labour force was four times greater. That is a measure of the improvement in productivity that we have seen over the past 10 years.

I hear Opposition Members say, "They are speaking for their own little patch." I can speak for the entire area of Cleveland, and I am not quoting from the Conservative piece of literature. The headline reads: "Teesside economy still booming". It is booming, as hon. Members will see if they go up there and have a look. The trouble is that very few Opposition Members bother to go and see for themselves.

Only last week it was announced that a new American company, Millecom, was coming to Darlington and bringing with it 1,000 jobs. That is on top of all the other investment that has come into the north-east over the past six years. The area still has high unemployment—judged, perhaps, according to different yardsticks from one day to

[Mr. Richard Holt]

another—but, if I may speak parochially, unemployment in my constituency has fallen by 41·66 per cent. in the past five years, and that is quite a reduction.

Opposition Members may say that we are talking only about small areas. The pharmaceutical industry in the north-east now receives 50 per cent. of all the fixed investment in the region. More than 200 new electronics firms have been established, along with more than 300 companies associated with offshore technology. We have 60 companies working on advanced materials. Investment is coming in all the time: £300 million of investment and 4,000 jobs. Fujitsu is said to be the latest, but it has been superseded by Millecom, and I believe that British Telecom itself will be making a similar announcement in the not too distant future.

What is new and remarkable about what has happened in the north-east is that self-employment has become an option that people take up. Historically, people in the north-east have left school, gone to work, taken their apprenticeships and worked for one company all their lives until they retired. Those days, however, are no longer with us; that type of industry is gone. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): Opposition Members are not interested.

Mr. Holt: I know that. I was more interested in the fact that Mr. Speaker was looking at me, because I was told that I could speak until 9.35 pm. As I am now receiving different indications, I apologise. I accept your stricture, Mr. Speaker, and I will stop speaking if another hon. Member wishes to speak.

Let me say merely that the message from the north-east is not gloom and doom; it shows a future built on new industries. Our old, overmanned heavy industries have gone. The future is ours, and that is why the Conservative party will sweep the north-east of England from now on.

9.31 pm

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): I am interested in the rosy employment pictures painted by Conservative Members when they talk about their areas. I do not think that anyone would deny that Glaswegians are triers: they have tried immensely hard to improve their city, and have succeeded in many respects. But hon. Member should not kid themselves by painting such rosy pictures. Unemployment in my constituency is more than 24 per cent., which is a national disgrace.

My hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond) spoke of the decline of industry. I served my apprenticeship as a young sheet metal worker in my constituency. It was a small company employing 70 people, surrounded by others employing 300 or 400—foundries and heavy engineering firms. The only company left now is the one in which I served my apprenticeship. All the others have gone, partly because of the decline caused by the present Government.

An interesting fact of which I have been told by the secretary of the sheet metal workers branch of my union is that there is a shortage of skilled sheet metal workers in the Glasgow area. As my hon. Friend said, we have not invested in training, and as a result firms are desperate for skilled workers. When I arrived here 10 years ago as a new Member, I said that if the economy improved we would need skilled people, and that we should already be investing.

It is nonsense to say that the training schemes that we have are the best that the Government can offer. We cannot obtain good apprenticeships unless people are working with the materials and tools of the trade, and rubbing shoulders with skilled workers. This Chamber would not have been built if it had not been for the traditions passed on by craftsmen, and the same is true of industry. We would be failing in our duty if we did not think more carefully about adult apprenticeships. Australia, New Zealand, Canada and America are interested in adult apprenticeships, yet we have people who have been without a proper job for five or six years and who are not getting the opportunity to serve an apprenticeship, which would be the least we could do for them.

It is nonsense to say that industrial relations improved only when we had a Tory Government. The Government should tell that to the people who work in the shipyards, to the women and the contract cleaners who have been exploited. Tory legislation has done away with the rights of the low paid, who had few rights to start with. Let no one fool anyone that Tory legislation brought about good industrial relations. In my constituency, factories have closed despite excellent industrial relations and increases in productivity. The companies wanted to centralise and so closed down their Glasgow offices. It is nonsense that factories that were profitable and had increased productivity were closed.

I hope that the Minister will take on board the views that we have expressed in this debate.

9.36 pm

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): This has been a brief but important debate. I do not think that anyone could deny that there has been a decline in manufacturing industry. One fifth of it disappeared between 1980 and 1982 and the growth thereafter has not replaced that loss. We have had examples from my right hon. and hon. Friends of the continuing loss in manufacturing. My right Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) talked about engineering and car manufacturing, my hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther) spoke about the steel industry, my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) spoke about the textile and other industries, my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond) spoke about textiles and my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) spoke about engineering.

The decline in manufacturing industry derives from major structural changes in our industrial base for which the Government appear to have no remedy. In addition to adverse structural changes, we have wholly inadequate management and vocational training systems, which are required to support a modern manufacturing country. Clearly, that is the Government's responsibility. The immediate problem is the remarkable deterioration in the United Kingdom trade balance last year, which was caused primarily by a massive increase in the import of consumer goods such as cars, clothing, textiles and household electronic goods. The Government's claim that rising imports are largely capital goods to re-equip British industry simply is not true. Even if it were, it would simply

illustrate the collapse in our capital goods and equipment industries and our inability to supply. I have never understood why the Government feel that that is something to boast about.

This country now has to import machinery to equip our industries and we pay for those imports of equipment in oil exports. In other words, we import equipment and export commodities—a trade pattern far more common in an underdeveloped country than a modern manufacturing country. The late Austen Albu, who some may remember as a Labour Member of Parliament, said some years ago that we export bulk and import refinement. The problem he identified then is much worse today when we import equipment and export oil.

The three large sectors of manufacturing in which we are weakest are cars and parts, where the deficit was £5 billion last year, clothing and textiles, in which the deficit was nearly £2 billion, and consumer electronics, in which the deficit was £1·5 billion. Twenty years ago those were staple industries in Britain and a decade ago we still had a substantial international presence in all of them. We no longer have a major international volume car manufacturer. The French have two and produce twice as many cars, trucks and other vehicles as we do. The penetration of imported cars into the domestic market reached 56 per cent. last year and commercial vehicle imports reached 40 per cent. As a percentage of the domestic market, imports of buses and coaches rose in the past decade from 3 per cent. to 38 per cent. When I worked in the motor industry, we used to be the suppliers of trucks and buses to the world. The standard truck throughout the world was the Bedford truck, made by Vauxhall. Today we import most of our vehicles. It is remarkable that our vehicle manufacturing industry has declined so much that we now have only a minor share of our home market.

Domestic market penetration of imported textiles and of footwear has reached 50 per cent. Footwear used to be the basic manufacturing industry in my constituency but it is now reduced to one tenth of its former size. We are still losing jobs because of the exchange value of the pound and because of interest rates. That is what my local footwear manufacturers tell me.

All that could have been judged as a necessary or natural adjustment as we got out of industries for which we were no longer suited and moved into new industries. One could understand that, but our performance is no better in the new technically advanced industries. Let us take as an example information technology, in which we were pioneers. We now have an adverse balance of payments in information technology equipment and services of £2 billion per year. That is now the basic industry of a modern manufacturing country. That growing deficit occurs in a number of other high-tech R and D sectors, such as medical equipment in which, again, we used to be pioneers but where 60 per cent. of the home market is now accounted for by imports. Import penetration in chemicals, in which we have one of the world's leading companies, is now 41 per cent., up from 28 per cent. 10 years ago.

The Government make other claims about the health of our manufacturing industry. The recent increase in manufacturing investment, which appears now to have petered out, and about which we hear so much, has taken investment to barely the 1979 level. Manufacturing investment today is still well below its 1979 level as a percentage of GDP. The Government boast of the rapid growth in manufacturing productivity, but the fact is that at absolute levels our manufacturing productivity is still the lowest of any of the Group of Seven countries.

The Government clearly consider that our manufacturing trade balance, our manufacturing investment, our productivity, and our R and D should be left to the free play of market forces and that they have no duty to produce an industrial strategy, objectives or programmes of action. They may feel that they have no responsibility in those areas, but surely they have a responsibility in providing the education and training infrastructure for manufacturing. Indeed, from time to time, the Government appear to recognise their responsibilities for creating the skills that we need. I am deluged by press releases from the DTI and only the other day I noticed that the Government are giving their full backing to management training and to what is called the "management charter initiative". It is in that area that our weaknesses are most obvious.

The Confederation of British Industry recently carried out a comparative study of British and West German industrial performance. The reasons for our markedly inferior productivity compared with the Germans were not the traditional ones of older machinery, higher overheads, bad industrial relations, higher tax burden, less spending on R and D. The main reason was that West Germany's work force is better educated and better trained and is led by a management boasting a higher percentage of university-trained managers and using more advanced information technology. Germany has three times our percentage of workers with post-school qualifications, double our percentage of supervisors with post-school qualifications and double our percentage of managers with degrees. In Britain, only one in three managers has ever had any training and 70 per cent. of that was for less than five days a year.

A British Institute of Management survey in 1987 showed that half our managers started work at the age of 17 or younger and received no subsequent education. Professor Handy's report for the National Economic Development Office on management education said:

"much of executive education is the teaching of sixth form subjects to middle aged executives; it is remedial education instead of executive education."

At all levels British managers and workers have inferior education and training than our competitors. We no longer have the education and training to meet the needs of a manufacturing nation.

In autumn 1988, the *Oxford Review of Economic Policy* summed it up when it stated that Britain is

"trapped in a low-skills equilibrium in which the majority of enterprises, staffed by poorly trained managers and workers, produce low quality goods and services".

With 1992 on the horizon, those weaknesses will become more apparent. I am sure that hon. Members of all parties will have received complaints that West Germany's industrial interests are dominating the engineering product standard-setting processes. Apparently representatives of the French chambers of commerce and of the West German trade associations turn up to the committees that set standards where, more often than not, we are not represented. We shall find our engineering industry dominated by German product quality standards.

Another worry about 1992 is the susceptibility of British firms to takeover, because of the relatively strong reliance of British companies on equity finance. There is a strong possibility of takeovers of British companies in

[Mr. John Garrett]

areas of strong comparative advantage by predators from Europe, the United States and Japan, who want to establish themselves within the boundaries of the EEC in order to launch their attack on western Europe. That will be of no great advantages to our manufacturers, especially if the research and development and design is done back in the home countries of those predators.

Once the barriers are removed in 1992, price will become more important. The Government's cost burdens on industry—water, gas, the unified business rate and interest rates—will continue to be a massive handicap. Without any strategy for our manufacturing industry, and with a complete disregard of the need for industrial training and management education, the Government are leaving British manufacturing industry grossly under-prepared for 1992.

If we lurch along as we are at present, underinvested, under-researched and under-trained, British manufacturing industry's future is clear. We shall be an EEC bridgehead for the Japanese. We shall be assembling cars and electronics imported as kits from Japan. In addition, what is most valuable in British manufacturing industry will be under German or American control in joint ventures or in merged corporations in which Britain has a nominal share. Control—what the Germans call mind and management, of which they rarely let go—will be in foreign hands. It is our contention that the Government are presiding over the end of Britain as a manufacturing nation.

9.46 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Robert Atkins): We have had a fascinating debate, albeit that one would not have guessed from the number of Opposition Members present that there was a three-line Whip for Opposition Members. None the less, many interesting points have come out of the debate, not least those contained in the speeches of my hon. Friends the Members for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Hicks), for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens), for Bexhill and Battle (Mr. Wardle), for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) and for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt). They all spoke with a considerable knowledge of the real world as they see it and of the industrial achievements in their constituencies.

One point that I suspect would be agreed across the party divide is the need to get across to young people the importance and the attraction of manufacturing industry. Perhaps if we were to get them a little younger—for example, in the primary schools—to realise that manufacturing industry and things that are made by hand are important to the future of our country——

Mr. Dobson: The hon. Gentleman should teach the Chancellor of the Exchequer first.

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), who has just walked in, missed the part of the debate in which his hon. Friends also made that point. The hon. Gentleman would be wise to consider the position before making interventions from a sedentary position.

Unlike my hon. Friends, the Opposition have sought to paint a picture of unrelieved gloom. As one who is in daily contact with industry and who travels the country every week talking to those involved in manufacturing industry, that is a picture that I do not recognise.

I want to turn my attention to one or two touchstones of economic success which highlight the achievements of the Government and which perhaps have not had the attention that they deserve. Hon. Members may not be surprised to learn that my first example is that of the aerospace industry. The Opposition's motion suggests that there is something wrong with the aerospace industry. The British aerospace industry is by any standards among the world leaders. The picture here is anything but gloomy.

The output of our aerospace companies has been growing at about 10 per cent. a year since 1983. In the 1960s our share of world trade in aerospace products was about 10 per cent. It is now 17 per cent. More than 60 per cent. of the industry's output is exported. In 1987 the industry had a balance of trade surplus of £2 billion.

This year, as with last year, will see record orders for civil aircraft. British industry will receive a large share of that business. *[Interruption.]* Opposition Members should listen to the facts about some of the successes instead of muttering and ignoring what is in front of their faces. British Aerospace will share in the success of the A320, the A330 and the A340.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Atkins: I do not have time. At least I have provoked the hon. Gentleman into listening.

Rolls-Royce is now supplying engines to all three major airframe manufacturers and a wide range of equipment companies are consolidating——

Mr. Morgan: What about launch aid?

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. He should do his investigations.

The industry is also investing in the future—*[Interruption.]* Opposition Members should listen. It is no good ignoring the facts. I am telling them about a success story and they do not want to hear it.

Let us compare the aerospace industry in 1979 with 1988. In 1979 it had a turnover of £3·1 billion and exports of only £1·2 billion. Now it has a turnover of £10·3 billion and exports of £6 billion, the highest of all time. We did not hear much mention of that from Opposition Members. There has been no decline in the aerospace industry and the House—at least, Conservative Members—will want to join me in congratulating the aerospace industry on its excellent record and to spur it on to even greater efforts in the future.

The steel industry illustrates more clearly than almost any other the transformation of Britain's industrial climate and its prospects. There were no great days here in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Steel production has grown by almost 30 per cent. over the past two years. In 1980 British Steel achieved notoriety with an entry in "The Guinness Book of Records" for the largest ever company deficit—£1·8 billion over the year. No one could have seriously believed that that position could be reversed, but the company is now making a profit and 500,000 private investors have bought a stake in it. It has gone from being Europe's least successful company to being one which others envy—another success story to which Opposition Members do not want to listen.

There has been much mention of vehicles. The vehicles industry is another barometer of change for the better. Since 1980, productivity has risen by 70 per cent. and all the United Kingdom's industries in that sector have been in profit since 1986. The production of cars has been rising strongly in recent years and the performance of the commercial vehicles sector has been particularly encouraging. *[Interruption.]* I suggest that Opposition Members consider one company that I know well and which featured large in their considerations in years gone by. Leyland is the name of the company, with its headquarters in my constituency. Following the merger between Leyland Trucks and DAF in 1987 the output of trucks has increased from 8,000 in 1986 to 15,500 in 1988—an 83 per cent. increase in productivity. That is another success story that Opposition Members will not accept.

Not all our manufacturing successes have been stories of recovery. The chemical industry has been successful throughout, with an annual trade surplus of over £2 billion since 1985.

In 1979 production in the telecommunications industry was about £800 million, with exports of about £81 million. Last year production was £1·839 billion and exports £266 million—another success story. There is success story after success story, and the Opposition do not like it.

But the proof of the pudding is in inward investment. In 1979, inward investment in the United Kingdom was running at about 183 companies a year. It is now up to 330 companies a year. More than 2,500 companies from abroad have invested in the United Kingdom, and in so doing they have protected or created about 300,000 jobs.

I have recently returned from the United States where I conducted an inward investment tour on behalf of this country. Some of the companies that I saw— *[Interruption.]* Why is it that when Ministers tell the truth as they see it and give the success stories the Opposition do not want to listen? I would remind the House that this is an Opposition Supply day debate, on which they have a three-line Whip, but they cannot even be bothered to turn up and if they do they do not listen. I am telling the House about inward investment.

The companies that I saw in the United States wanted to provide about 10,000 or more jobs in the course of the year. I heard comments from the chairmen of the Ford Motor Company, Chrysler and General Motors. They told me that attitudes amongst the work force had been transformed in the past 10 years. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) referred to our concerns about industrial relations. In 1979, 29·4 million working days were lost in strikes. In 1988, the figure was only 3·7 million. That demonstrates what Americans think of this country.

The chairmen of those major companies also said that Britain was the best location in Europe for siting manufacturing plants in terms of cost and good labour. Ford has invested £1·1 billion in Bridgend. Nissan, Toyota, Bosch, Fujitsu and Millecom are just a few of the companies which, in recent months, have recognised that Britain is the place to come to because of what the Government have achieved in manufacturing industry over the past 10 years.

There has been a depressing familiarity about the Opposition's contributions to this debate. We might have hoped for some constructive comments about areas in which manufacturing industry still has scope for improvement, as it always must have. Instead, we have been treated to selective statistics and misinformation— *[Interruption.]* Oh, yes. We have been given misinformation about aspects of manufacturing industry which my hon. Friends have demonstrated to be facile and to have avoided the point.

Opposition Members' comments belittle the achievements of British industry rather than help it. They should recognise that they will not serve their country or industry well by continuing with that approach. My hon. Friends from the north, west, east and south of the country have all spoken with authority about what has been achieved by industry throughout the country.

The Opposition's interventions have spoken volumes about their ignorance of what is happening in manufacturing industry. They have not been prepared to listen to the facts that they know demonstrate all too clearly the sterility of their arguments. When it comes to industry, the Labour party is still living in the late sixties and seventies.

The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) represents a south-east constituency. Those of us who represent the north-west and Lancashire wear the red rose of Lancashire with the pride that it deserves. If the hon. Member for Dagenham and his hon. Friends have anything to say to the electorate, they should open their eyes and realise the transformation in performance and morale that has taken place in manufacturing in recent years and understand the reasons for it. Until they realise what has been achieved, and until they speak with the authority that is needed on the subject, they will not be taken seriously and will not, in any circumstances— *[Interruption.]* Opposition Members may intervene, but the fact is that they are ignoring what I have said and ignoring the success stories throughout the country of the past 10 years. The Opposition's motion is such that we can vote against it with every confidence that our story will demonstrate the success achieved by this Government over the past 10 years.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 201, Noes 274.

Division No. 202] **[9.59 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Allen, Graham	Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Canavan, Dennis
Armstrong, Hilary	Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack	Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Ashton, Joe	Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Clay, Bob
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*	Clelland, David
Barron, Kevin	Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Battle, John	Cohen, Harry
Beckett, Margaret	Coleman, Donald
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*	Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Bermingham, Gerald	Corbett, Robin
Bidwell, Sydney	Cousins, Jim
Blair, Tony	Cryer, Bob
Blunkett, David	Cummings, John
Boateng, Paul	Cunliffe, Lawrence
Boyes, Roland	Dalyell, Tam
Bradley, Keith	Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*	Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*	Dewar, Donald
Buckley, George J.	Dixon, Don
Caborn, Richard	Dobson, Frank
Callaghan, Jim	Doran, Frank
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	Douglas, Dick

Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen Adams.

NOES

Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'th's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*

Aitken, Jonathan
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Arbuthnot, James

Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown, and
Mr. David Maclean.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

Mr. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House welcomes the renewed strength of manufacturing industry, reflected in major increases in productivity, record levels of output, increased exports, greatly improved profitability and a sustained high level of investment; and notes that the flow of inward investment testifies to the substantial improvement which the policies of Her Majesty's Government have brought about in the climate for doing business in the United Kingdom.

Procurement Procedures

10.15 pm

The Paymaster General (Mr. Peter Brooke): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 8803/88 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by Her Majesty's Treasury on 10th May 1989, 8804/88 and 8805/88 relating to procurement procedures in the water, energy, transport and telecommunications sectors; and endorses the Government's view that the broad approach of the Commission should be supported but that changes are desirable in the proposed directives to prevent the imposition of unnecessary burdens and constraints.

Mr. Speaker: I must tell the House that I have not been able to select the amendment standing in the name of the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) and his hon. Friends. However, those points may be raised if the hon. Members are called during the course of the debate.

Mr. Brooke: We debated proposals for directives on public procurement only recently. Those before us tonight come in the same series, and like the earlier ones form part of the Commission's programme to complete the single market by 1992. The earlier proposals mainly affected Government Departments and local authorities. Those in the motion before the House strike out much more widely, and cover nationalised industries and a number of companies in the private sector. Important issues are at stake, and I am glad that the House is able to consider the proposals at this still relatively early stage in their progress through the Community institutions.

I begin by noting the reasons which have led the Commission to make these proposals, one of which relates to the water, energy and transport sectors and the other to telecommunications. The Commission believes that major savings can be achieved by removing the influence of Governments on procurement in these sectors. It quotes the results of studies which it has undertaken and which show the costs to be as much as £15 billion a year. This is a large amount, even allowing for a considerable margin of error. So because we want to create a single market which is strong and efficient, we should welcome the fact that the Commission has made proposals in these areas.

I note, too, the boldness of what is proposed. In 1971, when the works directive was adopted, it was agreed that the different ways in which the sectors were organised in the various member states made it best not to attempt at that stage to apply Community directives to them. In 1977, when the supplies directive was adopted, the same conclusion was reached. Now we have proposals which together cover purchasing worth several hundreds of billions of pounds a year, and which provide a framework of rules which it is hoped will ensure that undertakings buy competitively and that suppliers have confidence that they will do so.

Because of what is at stake—in terms not only of the savings but of the sheer amount of purchasing and the advanced technology which much of it involves—it is vital that the Community gets the directives right. I am sure that the Commission recognises this. In the last couple of years, it has put a lot of work into developing its proposals. It has spent a considerable amount of time talking to those who might be affected by them. If member states believe that there is further to go before we get it right, that is not to belittle the contribution which the Commission has made.

At the core of the Commission's proposals is what is said about the procedures that undertakings should adopt in their purchasing. A considerable effort has been made to ensure that undertakings which need to act commercially have a degree of flexibility. Except in particular circumstances, which are listed, there has to be what is described as a call for competition. But this need not involve an advertisement before each contract is awarded. It is permitted to select participants in a competition from among those who ask for information relating to particular contracts which are mentioned in a so-called periodic indicative notice.

Participants can also be selected from lists of qualified buyers provided that those lists are established following advertisements and on the basis of objective criteria. Unlike Government Departments and local authorities, the undertakings covered by the present proposals would be allowed to choose which of particular types of procedures to use for a particular contract. This means that, besides being able to accept tenders from anyone who responds to an advertisement or inviting firms to tender from those which apply to participate, an undertaking can negotiate the terms of a contract with one or more firms chosen on the basis of a call for competition.

There are problems, none the less, despite the Commission's efforts and I wish to say a few words about the difficulties which the Government see in the Commission's proposals. Then I want to describe ways in which I hope the proposals can be developed.

I will begin with what they cover. The Commission's intention is to cover those areas of activity where there are barriers to competition, and Governments may have a capacity to influence procurement. Since, in the Commission's view, it is impossible to measure these factors, it had to find criteria for determining which undertakings or classes of undertakings should be covered. It has chosen for private sector undertakings the possession of special or exclusive rights granted by the Government. It has chosen as relevant activities the management of a network or the exploitation of a given geographical area. The latter brings in exploration for natural resources and the exploitation of them. In the United Kingdom many of the undertakings that would be covered will be in the private sector and will be responsible to their shareholders for getting value for money in their procurement. In itself that will not let us justify their exclusion from proposals which will be adopted only if other member states believe they are getting broadly equivalent procurement covered in each country. But where there is strong competition the need for applying detailed rules is far from clear, particularly in the case of upstream oil and gas, and the United Kingdom has therefore opposed its coverage by the Commission's proposals.

Whichever sectors we may be thinking of, the present proposals contain elements of bureaucracy which the Community would do well to avoid. This is partly a matter of the timetables laid down for the various contract procedures. These are based on those in the new supplies directive which came into force this year. In the industries now involved they could easily lead to costly delays. Then there is the need for undertakings to notify the Commission of activities not covered by the proposals in

order to obtain exemption. This applies also to purchases intended for selling on to third parties. Purchasers baulk at the information systems they would need to set up and at the possible need to qualify large numbers of potential suppliers. Clearly there has to be a balance with the interests of suppliers, who need to have information in order to compete and time in which to do so. But there are parts of these proposals which cannot be justified on that basis.

The proposals require purchasers to base their specifications on European standards where they exist. These standards, once they have been adopted, have to be implemented by national standards bodies as national standards. The Government fully support the development of European standards, which we believe have an important part to play in the development of the single market. We have accepted the principle of making standards mandatory in the supplies and works directives for purchases by Governments and by local authorities, but we cannot so easily do so for purchasers which are commercial undertakings. Many of them have important responsibilities for the safety of their operations, which in the case of the energy industries are among the most hazardous in the world. They need to be able to give due weight to professional judgments.

It is possible that some of the difficulties in this area have arisen from a lack of understanding as to what the proposals mean. We do not know for certain how far defining by reference to a standard prevents a purchaser from going further to describe his own particular requirements. Instead of making standards mandatory, we should encourage the willing acceptance of European standards on a voluntary basis. It is significant that when the Council of Ministers adopted the new approach on standardisation in 1985 its guidelines said quite specifically that standards should retain their voluntary status; any exceptions should be quite specific and decided on the basis of proven need.

The proposals also include particular constraints with regard to offers originating in major part from countries outside the Community. Purchasers will be required, whenever offers are equivalent, to choose an offer which has at least half its value added within the Community. The proposal goes further and treats offers as equivalent even if the Community offer costs 3 per cent. more. These provisions will not apply to offers of third country origin where the Council so decides on the basis of an agreement between the Community and the Third country concerned. We understand and share the Commission's goal of achieving a wider understanding on procurement in the sectors covered by the proposal. We support the work being done in the GATT to broaden the existing agreement on Government procurement. We want to avoid unnecessary intervention in the operation of commercial undertakings.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Will my right hon. Friend say clearly whether the Government support the proposal in article 24 that empowers any purchasing agent throughout the Community to reject contracts from America, Japan, the Middle East or anywhere else, simply on the basis that half the information of goods to be provided comes from outside the Community? Does my right hon. Friend agree that that is simply another example of blind protectionism and of fortress Europe that I understood the Conservative party and the Conservative Government to be against? Will he endeavour to get rid of that wretched article and ensure real free trade?

Mr. Brooke: I hoped that my hon. Friend would infer from the tone of my remarks that the Government share his views in seeking to prevent Europe developing as a fortress Europe in the way he suggests. In that respect, we are at one with my hon. Friend.

Mr. Taylor: Will my right hon. Friend endeavour to remove article 24 or will he not? Does the Conservative party believe, or does it not, that article 24 is contrary to everything for which Conservatives stand, and that it should be removed? It is all very well talking about the Government's general intentions, but what are the views of my right hon. Friend and of the Government on article 24?

Mr. Brooke: In my earlier answer, I sought to convey to my hon. Friend that we are at one with him in seeking to prevent protectionism being developed in respect of the puchasing arrangements. Earlier, I alluded to the fact that the Government are opposed to such a proposition.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): As the right hon. Gentleman will not answer his hon. Friend's specific question, and as he is not just a Minister but Chairman of the Tory party, will he confirm that the Government's anti-Common Market tirades of the past few weeks are nothing short of electioneering until 15 June, that when that date is passed the right hon. Gentleman will not be at one with his hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor), and that the Government are just playing games for about a month?

Mr. Brooke: I am conscious that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is also the chairman of a political party. My understanding is that the hon. Gentleman's party also has difficulty in determining its position on Europe. I understand the hon. Gentleman's views, but I understand also that attack is the best form of defence. The fact remains that, as we all know, there are problems on the Opposition Benches——

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Not on this Bench.

Mr. Brooke: I am glad that the hon. Member for Bolsover has a powerful ally seated close to him.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield) *rose*——

Mr. Brooke: I always welcome the hon. Gentleman's contribution to European debates, but perhaps he will permit me to get my initial speech out of the way.

Mr. Haynes: On that point, if we force a Division and vote against the proposals, will the right hon. Gentleman join my right hon. and hon. Friends and me in the Noes Lobby? I want an answer.

Mr. Brooke: The answer is perfectly straightforward. The Government have put down a motion, and the Government will support it in the Lobby.

Mr. Haynes: Double standards again.

Mr. Brooke: Industry has shown considerable interest, which I believe is because the stakes are so high. The extent to which member states will open up public procurement will be a litmus test of commitment to the single European market. The stakes are high for purchasers, in that they

[Mr. Brooke]

face administrative costs that they do not believe to be necessary. Suppliers share that concern but insist that any measures introduced must be enforced effectively. They want a prominent role for the Commission and a complaints system that they can invoke without drawing attention to themselves. Purchasers want any measures that are adopted to sit well with good purchasing practice and not involve unnecessary constraints or introduce new uncertainties. Suppliers need confidence that it is worth their while to try to break into new markets. Both purchasers and suppliers point to the need to be able to build up relations with each other. This can be handled in ways which do not involve discrimination but which the Commission's proposals would obstruct.

Suggestions for improving the proposals have been many and various. We are grateful to all who have provided them. Many of those who have commented have wanted the values above which contracts would be covered to be raised. They have said that thresholds could be found which would make a significant reduction in the number of contracts which are covered—and hence the administrative burden—while still catching a high proportion of the value. On the other hand, some of those who have commented have wanted to keep the thresholds low so that small firms can benefit. Many have said that the system most likely to be effective is one which is in line with business methods. They want the system to call for changes in commercial practices only to the extent that is necessary to show that purchasing is conducted without discrimination.

The CBI, which has played an important role in bringing purchasers and suppliers together to discuss the opening up of procurement, has come out in favour of a system of audit. Others have reached similar conclusions. Such systems offer a means of achieving the Commission's goals by way of adapting firms' own procedures and not imposing new ones on them; of avoiding unnecessary regulation; and of providing assurance to suppliers that the objectives of equal opportunity and fair consideration are being achieved.

Other member states, as well as ourselves, have difficulties with the current proposals. We believe that the difficulties are such, and the importance of taking action so great, that it is necessary to develop the line of thinking I have just described to complement that in the proposals put forward by the Commission. The basis of that thinking is that methods can be found of ensuring non-discriminatory purchasing by laying down principles which can be followed instead of detailed rules. The principles would form the basis of independent tests of purchasing procedures which, if satisfactory, would be accepted as enabling an undertaking not to follow the detailed rules. The independence of the tests would be important.

The most basic requirement would be that suppliers throughout the Community should have the same opportunity to be considered for contracts. That means that they must have proper access to qualification procedures. There must be objective criteria for the selection of candidates to tender and for the award of the contract. Single tendering should be avoided wherever possible, and purchasers should try to ensure there are enough participants in a competition to make it genuine. Reasonable time limits must be set for potential suppliers or contractors to apply to participate in competitions and to submit actual tenders.

That should not be all. The principles should also cover such points as whether contracts are advertised in large blocks or whether newcomers are given a chance to compete for manageable portions. They should cover the extent to which information is provided to candidates whose applications to bid are not accepted or whose tenders are rejected. They should also include the handling of negotiations in such a way as not to distort competition.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Night after night, week after week, just after the 10 o'clock vote we have to discuss Common Market recommendations. Does my right hon. Friend agree that if we are to have sensible debates on these awful matters, it would be better if each week we set aside an entire day for discussing the various EC recommendations? Although the way in which my right hon. Friend read his speech did him great credit, he did not seem to agree with what he was saying any more than the rest of us did. If we are to discuss this rubbish week after week, would it not be a good thing if we had one day in which to discuss what is happening to the country, instead of these measures being shoved in surreptitiously late at night, when we all know that, like death by a thousands cuts, the country is being cut down by one measure after another?

Mr. Brooke: My hon. Friend's question should be addressed to the business managers rather than to me. But as I see the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) sitting opposite me, I should stress that a quite separate dialogue takes place between the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee and me to ensure that appropriate debates are conducted at an opportune moment in the process. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will agree that we are fulfilling that obligation on this occasion.

The principles could also include the extent to which information was made available for the benefit of subcontractors and small firms.

In short, we are talking about a professional code for purchasers. It is likely to need to be supported by guidelines. These would help both those engaged in purchasing and those whose task is to test their observance of the code. Purchasers would be saved from having to observe detailed rules which may or may not fit their particular circumstances. But they would have an interest in demonstrating that the way they conducted their business was in accordance with the kind of principles I have outlined. If they failed to do so, they would have to follow the detailed rules.

There are a number of questions which need to be resolved before the system that I have described could be set going. They include the way in which the principles are formulated and whether they are included in a directive or perhaps in a European standard to which a directive might refer. They concern the method and frequency of testing, and include the possibility that the Commission might institute special checks on the basis of complaints. They include the identity of those who conduct the tests, who in the last case I have mentioned might be engaged by the Commission. There must clearly be a rigorous form of accreditation so that high common standards are applied.

As well as all this, it will need to be decided how information should be provided to suppliers. One possibility would be for the Official Journal of the European Communities to give publicity to the issue of certificates attesting to satisfactory procedures. This could be done alongside notices informing suppliers of the types of purchases being made. Information could also be given through the Official Journal whenever a qualified audit report or the loss of a certificate triggered a requirement to follow the detailed rules.

We see work of this kind as benefiting all who have an interest in procurement. Purchasers should be able to avoid the disruption to their normal purchasing procedures which the current proposals may involve. Suppliers would gain, since they would know that purchasers needed to act responsibly in order to maintain their freedom from regulation. The less the degree of regulation, the greater the economic potential which the single market will release.

I have dealt at some length with these ideas because I believe that they point to how the Community can achieve the objective of open procurement. We are putting them to the Commission with the suggestion that it takes them forward as part of the next stage in developing the present proposals. Other work that must go forward includes that on the detailed provisions of the rules now before us, which we see as being available as an alternative to audit and as applying in cases where audit proves unsatisfactory. Then there is the question of ensuring that there is satisfactory compliance with the rules. The Commission is producing a further proposal on this, with suggestions which we understand will be different from those in the proposal relating to the supplies and works directives which we debated a fortnight ago.

The Internal Market Council has not so far had a detailed discussion of the proposals. Working group discussions took place in December, January and February. The real preparation for the common position has to await the European Parliament's opinion. If this is delivered at the plenary next week, it is expected that the Commission will submit modified proposals in June-July. This will enable the incoming French presidency to work for a common position in, say, November. If this target is achieved, it will be possible to get the directive adopted by June 1990. This was the objective set for works in the excluded sectors when the Internal Market Council agreed a common position on changes to the works directive last autumn. This timetable could be upset if the European Parliament decides next week to send the proposals back into Committee. This could happen as a result of the very large number of amendments understood to be tabled.

The proposals are subject to qualified majority voting, with unanimity required for the Council to amend the proposals against the wish of the Commission. In practice, the Commission may itself amend the proposals if it sees difficulty in getting a qualified majority for them.

We believe that, against this background, our contribution to the debate in the wider Community is timely. We are still at a relatively early stage in the legislative process in the Community so far as the present proposals are concerned. Nevertheless, much has to be done in a relatively short time to ensure that the directives which are adopted are those which produce the fullest benefits.

10.39 pm

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): As this is a short debate, I shall try not to delay the House too much.

The Opposition feel that—give or take a few points that I shall make later—the motion would have been improved by the addition of the amendment: it would then have commanded our support. The Paymaster General has explained admirably the details of the rules and regulations in the European Community documents and the supplementary explanatory memorandum submitted by Her Majesty's Treasury. I hope that he will forgive me if I do not take up his explanation and argue with him about whether individual details should or should not have been included, and how his Department should proceed in negotiations with the Commission later this year.

The motion asks the House to endorse

"the Government's view that the broad approach of the Commission should be supported".

That surprised me. Judging by what the papers have said over the past two or three days, I thought that nothing was less likely than a Government motion asking the House to support the broad thrust of the Commission's proposals.

An article in today's *Guardian* having caught my eye, I wondered where the motion could have come from. It certainly could not have come from the hon. Members for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) and for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken), both of whom are present. *The Guardian* describes them as "night watchmen", and indeed they are: every time I have attended a debate on European Community documents late at night, they have been in their places. Could the motion have been tabled by members of the No Turning Back group—identified by the article as the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold), the Minister of State, Department of Education and Science, and the Economic Secretary to the Treasury. Perhaps the Paymaster General can enlighten us.

I did not really think that Ministers would put down such a motion, but the article went on to mention yet another group in the Conservative party—the Bruges group—and I wondered whether members of that group could have persuaded the Government's business managers to put it down. But the only member mentioned was the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), and having thought about it I decided that that was not the answer.

Certainly members of the Tory Reform group would not have been allowed to table such a motion. Perhaps it was the Prime Minister, I thought; but, if history is to be believed, the Prime Minister does not look at such motions very carefully. There is usually a fuss at some stage when she realises that something has been done, says, "I must put a stop to this" and tries to make changes too late.

I suspect that the motion has been put down because no one in the Government has paid much attention to it, and it has been tabled by some civil servant who has been allowed to draft it because the matter does not fall neatly into any one Department. The Treasury led and still leads negotiations on amendments to the existing supplies and works directive, and this proposal is basically an extension of that directive, but it is also concerned very much with matters relating to the Department of Trade and Industry. It does not surprise me, therefore, that the Government do

[Dr. John Marek]

not seem particularly interested in what the motion contains. Certainly, if some of the Conservative Members who have been quoted in the newspapers had their way, I doubt very much if such a motion would have been tabled at all. Conservative Ministers, ex-Ministers and ex-Prime Ministers are more interested in squabbling among themselves about which way the Common Market is going than in looking after the nitty-gritty of ensuring that, as we are now in the Common Market, the Government look after our interests and ensure that we do not lose by default.

The Prime Minister has declared that battle has been joined over the pace of political and economic change in the European Community. But the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) has told her that she is talking absolute rubbish about the advance of a Socialist super-state. That allows other hon. Members to join in. They were in their places a little while ago, but as soon as the Paymaster General stood up, they left. The hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) said that the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup should be put out to grass. The hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) said that what the right hon. Gentleman had said was beneath contempt. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I hear Conservative Members saying "Hear, hear". Clearly, there is no moderation or sensible argument. I do not know whether my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is right in this matter, but I suspect that there are the seeds of real discontent in the Conservative party at present. I foresee that as soon as the European elections come near, the Government will put a stop to the squabbles in the newspapers. The country is no better for these disagreements, because the Government are squabbling among themselves about the way forward within the European Community.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): May a veteran night watchman, as *The Guardian* and the hon. Gentleman kindly called me, help with this long, rambling whodunnit? One would think that the hon. Gentleman came from a party that had never known internal argument or squabbling. I remind the hon. Gentleman of the words of Milton:

"who ever knew Truth put to the worse, in a free and open encounter?"

In our party, we are studying the phrases in this bran tub of a motion, which says:

"the broad approach of the Commission should be supported but . . . changes are desirable . . . to prevent the imposition of unnecessary burdens".

There is plenty to argue about, so everyone can eventually unite in supporting the motion.

Dr. Marek: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that there is plenty to argue about, but some of us are surprised by the personal nature of some of the comments. The Opposition are no strangers to such arguments, but even we have been surprised by the personal comments. That is the difference between us. I do not believe that the country is being well served as a result of the argument among Conservative Members. While the argument is going on in this country, important decisions are being made in Europe in which we should be involved. We should be negotiating for the benefit of this country. There is no moderation here.

Like the Prime Minister, when I stand on Westminster bridge, I see the skyline of Parliament. But when I turn round I see the empty shell of county hall, the building that housed the regional strategic local government authority, which was abolished by this Government. One sees the architecture of liberty from Westminster bridge, but with a turn of the head one sees the architecture of a Government who will brook no dissent, suffer no argument and listen to no different points of view. We have to remember that attitude when considering the proposals before us.

Can we really believe that the motion means

"that the broad approach of the Commission should be supported"?

I suspect the same will happen to these proposals as has happened to the proposal to introduce tougher health warnings on cigarette packets. The Government allowed the proposal through because one Department did not know what another Department was doing. Lo and behold, the Secretary of State for Health disrupts the efficient working of the Commission—and there is no harm in any bureaucracy or administration that we set up and for which we pay taxes working efficiently—*[Interruption.]* This is relevant to our debate on procurement. It is precisely the attitude of the Conservative party to issues in Europe that suggests what it may do on this issue in due course.

The Secretary of State for Health disrupted the efficient working of the Commission by an 11th hour change of mind, no doubt after an argument in some Cabinet committee. The same situation has arisen over the EEC scheme to encourage foreign language teaching in British schools. Proposals were almost ready and had almost been agreed to by the United Kingdom when a sudden turnaround undid a great deal of effort and threw everything into chaos. One should not think that it will end there and that that turmoil will not be repeated with the present proposals for a Communitywide pass for pensioners which would give them an automatic right to concessions that would be offered to retired people throughout the Community—*[Interruption.]* It has not gone through in the United Kingdom. The problem that we face is one of inattention and hostility by the Government to many of the attractive measures that are proposed by Brussels——

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that last week the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman), the Opposition spokesman on health, tried to pick things like currants out of a bun, some things that she liked and some that she did not like? Tonight the hon. Gentleman has said that the Opposition like some directives, such as that on smoking, but that they do not like others. Should not the Opposition make up their minds about whether they stand with us, who think that some things are for this Government to decide and are not to be interfered with by the Common Market in Brussels? You cannot have it both ways; you either stand alongside us in believing in Great Britain or you stand alongside those weary people in Brussels who stand only for Brussels. The Opposition must make up their minds about whether they stand with Britain or with Brussels. I am tired of these debates where too often you stand one day on one leg, one day on another, and on the other day you seem to be suspended in mid-air. Where the hell do you stand?

Mr. Haynes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If I had made such a contribution, you would have shot me down, but you let him carry on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I am not involved in these matters.

Dr. Marek: I suspect that every Opposition Member, except perhaps the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) from the Social and Liberal Democratic party, voted against entry into the Common Market 20 years ago, but we now have the good sense ——

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Is it good sense?

Dr. Marek: We have the good sense to see that, although we should keep our options open about what may happen in the future, while we are in the Common Market we should do the best that we can to get the best for this country out of the Common Market, which seems something that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) will not recognise.

The European proposal for language teaching throughout Europe——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The motion before the House relates to procurement procedures for the water, energy, transport and telecommunications sectors. I do not see how language teaching comes into it.

Dr. Marek: I accept your stricture, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Selly Oak asked me a question that perhaps I cannot answer about why the Opposition can accept some proposals but not others and he asked about where we stood. In view of your comments, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall not seek to go along that road but it is important to note that the Conservative Government have said that a number—I shall not mention them—of attractive proposals—attractive to most people in the country—will not be applied in the United Kingdom. That is where the Opposition part company with Conservative Members who inhabit the Government Benches late at night for such debates.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): I appreciate that the new-model Labour party is unwilling to take a stand on any issue for fear of irritating any group of voters, but perhaps the hon. Gentleman could tell us whether the official Labour party supports or opposes the motion. The hon. Gentleman still has not told us.

Dr. Marek: I should like to know whether the hon. Gentleman was in at the beginning of the debate. I think that he has just come in.

Mr. Leigh: I have been here all the time.

Dr. Marek: In that case I shall go back. I said at the beginning of my remarks—*[Interruption.]* I will not start again, but I shall just quote one sentence. The hon. Gentleman must have been asleep. I said that, with the amendment, the motion was a reasonable one and it would have been accepted by the Opposition.

I do not believe that there is any point in ritualistic denunciation of the Common Market, when proposals have been put forward, which may or may not become directives and which we have a chance of improving. However, the Government do not do their job. They leave the proposals alone, so that they end up being unsuitable for this country, and then they complain at the 11th hour that we have been robbed. Frankly, the people of this country are fed up with such an attitude. They wish that the Government would enter into negotiations and get something right for once for this country.

The problem that we face is one of inattention or hostility by our Government to many of the attractive measures proposed by Brussels. We also face the same inattention or hostility by our Government to many of the not-so-attractive measures. The problem is that this measure could be made attractive, but it needs detailed examination by the Government, which must be followed by persistent and careful negotiation to ensure that the finished product is right for us in the United Kingdom.

Why, for example, are the standards used in our offshore oil industry not the basis of the relevant part of the proposals? Why are the present discussions in the European Community dominated by the French and the Germans, with very little British input? That criticism can be levied in other areas, too, because it is a general one. Why is so little said about safety? The dangers are clear, but standards will be set that will put our industry at a disadvantage and will involve it in considerable expenditure in order to comply with any eventual directive. Safety standards may be allowed to fall in those of our industries that take a pride in their safety record.

We urge the Government to accept that we are members of the European Community and to take a vital and necessary part in framing the legislation, so that it is good for the European Community and good for the United Kingdom. It is no good creating chaos at the 11th hour. That gets us a bad name, it impedes the work of the Commission and it stops our people receiving benefits from the European Community that could be available.

The proposals clearly need to be adjusted to lessen the bureaucracy and paperwork. We must also be satisfied that covert subsidy by national undertakings and vertically integrated industries will be kept to a minimum. That is especially important where a company or undertaking has exclusive or monopoly rights and, therefore, considerable freedom to choose a tariff for the customer.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Give us an example.

Dr. Marek: I shall not give an example, because hon. Members must be able to think of examples themselves from the history of monopoly utilities within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Leigh: Let the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) intervene.

Dr. Marek: My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) will no doubt make his contribution in due course, and it would not be right for me to invite him to intervene.

Lower standards should not be accepted and more attention needs to be paid to safety. There is a need to get the balance right, because it is not just a question of insisting that the suppliers hold all the aces and not the nationalised undertakings and private companies supplying services to the consumers. The nationalised undertakings and some private companies have a duty to provide a service to the public. They should be able to do so after the proposals are enshrined in the form of a directive.

11.4 pm

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): We have just been treated to a model of the discursiveness and obfuscation in which the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) specialises. I rise to speak because the subject before the House is far too important for us to permit the essentials to be lost in a fog of muddle or theology.

Let me start by trying to situate the importance of the subject in terms of figures. I apologise for not having a copy of the Cecchini report which quotes the figures. The Table Office does not have a copy, so I must quote the figures from memory. They will be fairly exact, but the figures that I committed to memory were in dollars and I shall not risk turning them back into ecus.

Out of a total domestic product in the EC of around $4 trillion at the present time, public procurement of goods and services amounts to more than $600 billion—about 15 per cent. of the Community's total income. Rather more than half that sum—$350 billion or $400 billion—would be suitable for international procurement. At present, only about 5 per cent. of that figure—about $30 billion—is procured by public sector organisations in the European Community outside the frontiers of the nation state in which that public sector institution or purchaser is located.

One sees immediately from those broad figures, which I believe to be approximately correct, what enormous scope there is for increasing competition. We have a competitive vacuum in public procurement in the EC. That is undesirable, dangerous and expensive for us all.

The Cecchini report has attempted to estimate exactly what the savings would be if we introduced competition into this currently closed sector. It estimated that the consequences would be a saving of about a half of 1 per cent. of total domestic product in the Community, or approximately $20 billion, or £12 billion or £13 billion at the present rate of exchange—a substantial amount of money.

It might be useful briefly to touch on some of the key sectors, many of which are important for Britain and which have suffered from nationalistic public procurement up to the present time.

I shall take a few examples which will immediately illustrate their great importance for our industry. One is telecommunications. I think that I am right in saying that in neither Britain, nor France nor Germany has a public switching system yet been purchased from a supplier outside those countries. British Telecom has always bought from Plessey or GEC. The Bundespost has always bought from Siemens or SEL or another German supplier, the French from Alcatel, and so forth. They have never gone across their frontiers to procure public switching equipment from a non-national supplier.

There has not been a single case of substantial turbines or generators, or other major equipment for a power station, whether nuclear or conventional, being procured in Britain, France, Germany or Italy outside their own countries. No traction locomotive for a railway system in any of those countries has ever been procured from outside.

Although the nationalistic procurement may not be absolute in other sectors, it has been high. One has only to think of the procurement of hospital equipment or computers and other information technology within the public sector in the different EC countries. This all represents areas of industry which are crucial for employment and for the future of technological progress and which have not been exposed to the sort of competition to which they should have been.

As a result, three great costs to our economy have arisen. First, there is the financial cost of having to pay higher prices than we would if there were genuine competition in the procurement of this type of equipment or the associated services. [HON. MEMBERS: "How much?"] I am asked how much. I would refer the hon. Members who asked this pertinent question, for which I am grateful, to the estimates in the Cecchini report. They might find it enlightening and enlivening bed-time reading when they leave the House this evening.

Secondly, we incur costs through the loss of impetus to technological progress which result from the absence of competition. Conservative Members certainly recognise that one of the great spurs to technological progress is competition—the supplier's need continuously to seek to improve his product to gain a competitive edge.

Thirdly, we lose because of the absence of the supply side shock, from which industries would otherwise benefit. That is the simple need for both management and the work force to get up a little earlier in the morning, go to bed a little later at night, to take things a little less for granted, to cut their costs, and to improve their products and marketing skills. If we can open important British industries to this new blast of competition, we shall provide them with the sort of supply side shock which has been so effective in other sectors of the economy which have performed so well under the Government that we are pleased and proud to have.

Mr. Skinner: I am interested to hear what the hon. Gentleman has to say about the shock to the system and the therapy that he advises will be good for us. How much coal shall we sell when we have had this shock?

Mr. Davies: If we really believe in markets, the answer to the hon. Gentleman's question must be determined not by me or the House, but by the market. Human history shows that those who did not believe in markets ended up paying a high price in economic terms, and, ultimately, in political terms as well. I see that I carry my hon. Friends with me.

I emphasise once again the importance of the principle which is at stake. Therefore, I support both sides of the Government's motion. First, I warmly welcome the first serious moves to try to introduce real competition into these key areas of our economy. Secondly—it follows on naturally—we should be particularly careful, cautious and vigilant about the mechanisms that we put into place to secure such an important aim. The question of how we can achieve our objectives is complex.

I congratulate both the Government and the European Commission on all the work they have put into these documents, which obviously reflect many thousands of hours of competent human consideration. That consideration was not in vain because when we succeed in abolishing nationalistic public procurement in the European Community we shall——

Mr. Cryer *rose*——

Mr. Davies: I am about to conclude my remarks, but I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will catch your eye later, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if he wishes to do so.

That labour was not in vain because, when we have got rid of nationalistic public procurement in the European Community, we shall have completed an excellent day's work for employment, for prosperity and for the competitiveness of these important British industries in the future.

11.9 pm

Mr. Frank Doran (Aberdeen, South): This is the first time I have ventured into one of these European debates, and it is obvious that they have their own complexities and intricacies. I shall try to keep my remarks simple so as not to incur the opprobrium that other speakers seem to have provoked.

I have a particular interest in the offshore oil industry which is based and centred in my constituency. There is extreme concern in all parts of the industry, on the part of the operators, the oil producers and the contractors who provide services.

I stress the importance of the offshore industry to us. The Government have received £68 billion in tax and royalties from the North sea in the past 10 years. The oil industry spends about £3 billion a year on goods and services in Britain, so it is crucial that nothing be done to interfere with the smooth running of its operations or to undermine the valuable contribution that British industry has made to this area.

We are developing a technology and expertise in this country which is making us world leaders in the offshore industry. It is important to realise that that industry could be undermined by these proposals. That is certainly the view expressed to me by the people involved in the industry at all levels—the producers, the major companies from around the world which have operations in the North sea, and those who provide the technology.

The opposition that the Paymaster General expressed to the proposals was welcome, but the manner in which he expressed it, and the possibilities of defeating the proposals, did not satisfy me. It does not appear that the Government are doing much to fight the corner of my industry in Aberdeen——

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): As the hon. Gentleman is speaking on a subject and to a theme that I very much endorse, may I take this opportunity to say, on behalf of Highlands Fabricators Ltd. in my constituency, of which the corporate planning manager is John Wood—also the chairman of the United Kingdom Module Constructors Association—that the company supports the thrust of the hon. Gentleman's comments? I hope that the Minister will seriously consider them.

Mr. Doran: I thank the hon. Gentleman. I know that he shares my worries——

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The motion says that the Commission's broad approach should be supported, but the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) and my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran), who know about the offshore oil business, say that something is at stake here. Could the broad approach be modified in the way that the Paymaster General described, or does it imperil the prosperity of the industry?

Mr. Doran: The latter. I criticised the Paymaster General's remarks precisely because the industry feels it is being undermined——

Mr. Spearing: The Government are not defending it.

Mr. Doran: No more they are.

Most of the larger fields have now been developed, and we are embarking on a phase in which exploration and development costs will increase, possibly dramatically. The finds that the industry will make will be much smaller, and there will have to be intensive research and development into ways of increasing the recovery rates from the fields. High capital and operating costs will be involved in building, developing and operating safely on ever smaller and more marginal fields. All this may be undermined.

The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) mentioned what Mr. Ian Wood had said to him. He is a constituent of mine and he has presented me and the Department of Energy with a detailed report on how he views the position. He is the managing director of one of the largest contracting firms in the North sea—an Aberdeen-based, Aberdeen-developed and now international company operating here and in the United States, where it has made some significant acquisitions. It is a tremendous success story for a north-east of Scotland company.

He points out the effects of increased bureaucracy. There is a potential for a hugely increased bureaucracy. The offshore construction industry is entirely dependent for survival on the operating companies letting contracts for their projects. He has given me a step-by-step appraisal of the number of stages involved in contracts, and it is fairly considerable. Most of these contracts are well over £125,000, the limit referred to in the EEC order. As all these stages in the draft directive come into force, at every stage a delay would occur to allow for placing of advertisements and of intent to let a contract. There would be a lengthy tendering period, and after the award of the contract a period to allow for appeals. These are all bureaucratic steps which are unnecessary in what is already a highly competitive industry.

Mr. Wood then talks about the implication for standards. There are two standards in the offshore industry: the American standard and the United Kingdom standard. Over the past 15 to 20 years, through the constant effort of all those concerned in the United Kingdom offshore industry, a great deal of time has been spent in raising standards and quality assurance. This has resulted in a number of British standards being introduced which are considered to be of great value. Where these do not exist, American standards are enforced in the industry throughout the world.

This directive will undermine that process, which has been taking place over the last 15 to 20 years. We shall find that the British standards become less relevant, which would make it much more difficult for our own industry, which has developed its own standards to a very high level, where they are accepted internationally, to compete outside the EEC. That is obviously of considerable concern, particularly to my constituents, looking at when the oil finally runs out.

[Mr. Doran]

We want to encourage the development of a manufacturing and technological industry which can export its expertise to the rest of the world. We do not want to be confined to the European market.

Finally, I come to safety. There are real concerns within the industry that the present close attention to safety which has been forced upon the industry, mainly because of the Piper Alpha disaster, is likely to be undermined because of the possibility of lower standards being required because of the extra cost of these particular measures and the implications of taking them through the industry. This represents a serious threat to the wellbeing of one of our most important industries.

I said earlier that I would try to keep my remarks simple. It is a fairly simple issue. Will this industry, which is vital to the future of our country, be supported or not? It strikes me, having listened carefully to what the Paymaster General said, that it will certainly not be supported by this Government.

11.17 pm

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I should like to ask the Minister two questions. In agreeing 100 per cent. with the wise words of my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies), I should say that the one thing worrying everyone in the House is what indication we have that there is the slightest possibility of this freedom happening. Our experience of the EEC is that we have the most splendid pledges, the most wonderful promises, the greatest visions, but they do not actually happen.

For example, we had a lot of discussion not too long ago about spending controls. We gave money in exchange for them, and we saw a reference in the Court of Auditors' report, but we might as well not have had them, because, despite having an official limit of 3 per cent. on extra spending, the Commission spent 18 per cent. more. However, it did not matter because an accountancy device was found. We find the same on agricultural reform. We are constantly told that things will change. We were told there would be a price freeze which would mean everyone would get a green pound adjustment and surpluses would disappear. I am afraid we are always being told that next year things will get better, and they never do.

If we had genuine free international competition in public purchasing it would be good for us, good for Europe and good for all the countries of the world. What worries me about the EEC is that, instead of getting free trade, we will simply surround our purchasing agencies with a pile of extra bureaucracy.

The Minister is well aware that two institutes have already expressed fears about the many forms to be filled in and the information to be provided, and have said that genuine free trade simply will not happen. That is not simply a silly point. The Minister must be well aware from the sad occasions on which he has had to admit that his hopes have not been realised, that this is probably what will happen.

As I said to the Minister last week on a similar issue, is there any way in which he can adjust these proposals to allow any kind of easy arbitration so that if someone feels that he is being blocked out or is not getting a fair deal he can get redress? My hon. Friends who love the Common Market and hope that it will be a great thing must be well aware in their hearts that there will be no free trade but much bureaucracy, many more forms, and that Britain will give some contracts to companies in Europe but that the same will not happen in reverse.

The Minister may well think that that will happen, but if he has any doubts about it he should consider what happened today on the question of tobacco. We were told by the Common Market that we would have to put different advertisements on tobacco packets to discourage smoking. The same Common Market sent our Government an official letter saying that we had to cut the tax on cigarettes. The Treasury and the Department of Health had to say that that would mean more cigarette smoking. The Common Market spends £500 million every year to subsidise the tobacco industry and pay for research into how European tobacco can be made more palatable to smokers.

Mr. Aitken: Before my hon. Friend gets carried away by the theme that everything is the same, may I draw to his attention one important change? On 14 November the Government refused to accept an amendment suggesting that the basis on which we were asked to endorse the tobacco products labelling directive was contrary to the single market legal requirements, despite Mr. Speaker's Counsel's recommendation. Despite the refusal by the Under-Secretary of State for Health on that date, today the Secretary of State for Health was in Brussels vigorously opposing the very grounds that his hon. Friend had endorsed. There has been——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are not debating tobacco advertising.

Mr. Taylor: Most of us are happy that at last the Government appear to be waking up to the realities of the European situation. We do not know what change in policy might come, but at least we know that there is discussion. That is good, even though it is taking place at half-past 11.

Is there anything that the Minister can do to see that something happens apart from extra costs and extra form filling? We should be worried about this. I urge hon. Members to look at the White Paper on developments in the EEC that we are debating on Thursday to see what has happened to our trade. In 1970 our export-import ratio with Europe was 143——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are debating procurement procedures in the water, energy, transport and telecommunications sectors. The debate should be confined to those matters.

Mr. Taylor: I am simply trying to say that over that period of 20 years our export-import ratio has gone down from 143 to 72, and that is rather significant for Britain. I hope that we shall not make the same mistake again in these proposals on public purchasing. If we do, we will once again be caught out and will lose. We shall find that our costs will increase because of more form filling and that we will not have the free trade that we want.

What exactly does the Minister mean in relation to article 24? He must be well aware from his visits to America and from the views expressed by American businesses and those in other parts of the world that many people rightly or wrongly suspect that all the 1992 rules are concerned not with free trade and competition but with a

bit more protectionism. Article 24 is abundantly clear. It says that we can keep out competition if half of it is foreign. I am not quite sure what "foreign" means. Does it mean that we can include EFTA and eastern Europe, the United States and Japan? The Minister must be aware that this is purely a matter of blind protectionism. It is a matter of saying that we may be willing to consider free trade and competition——

Mr. Dykes: I thought that my hon. Friend was in favour of protectionism.

Mr. Taylor: I can assure my hon. Friends that as a Conservative I am totally opposed to blind protectionism. I am in favour of free trade, as I hope my hon. Friends are, although I have doubts about my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes), who seems to have some strange ideas which are becoming out of date in the party, with all the changes that are taking place. He may have been in the mainstream at one time. He is certainly not now.

May we be told what the Minister proposes to do about all this? With almost everything we do in the EEC we are damaging the Third world, damaging freedom of trade and undermining GATT. Does the Minister intend to propose to the Council that article 24 be deleted, or is he simply saying in his courteous and gentlemanly way that he agrees with my general sentiments? How do the Government intend to ensure that this provision works, and what will they do to prevent its being used as a means not of providing free competition but of discriminating against the rest of the world?

11.25 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) asked the Paymaster General in an intervention some procedural questions, to which the right hon. Gentleman appealed to the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, asking if it was not a discharge of the responsibilities laid on Government by the resolution of the House of 30 October 1980.

I am glad to say that the letter of that resolution is being carried out by this debate, and therefore—as the Chairman of that Committee—I can give the Paymaster General an affirmative answer to his question. There my function as Chairman of the Committee ceases and henceforward I speak as the hon. Member for Newham, South. While I agree that the letter of the law is being carried out, I am far from satisfied with the way in which the spirit of the law is being carried out.

This and similar debates are limited to an hour and a half, which is not sufficient, given the importance of the topic. Tomorrow night we shall be invited to debate mergers and unless there is a motion down to suspend the rule, we shall have to debate that important issue, about which the Select Committee took evidence from Lord Young for an hour and a half, in one and a half hours.

The Paymaster General will remember from years ago that the hour and a half rule was introduced only in 1951 for this country's secondary legislation, or statutory instruments. We are not tonight debating a piece of secondary legislation deriving from a Government statute. It is a piece of super-primary legislation contained in some 300 pages. This is equivalent, therefore, to a Second Reading debate of a Bill of that length. So we are having to compress a debate on important matters of principle into an extremely short time.

The hon. Member for Selly Oak wonders whether we can get rid of all this late-night business and have some daytime debates. That may be possible, but we would have to face up to the fact that we would be taking on double or treble the amount of legislation in a normal parliamentary year.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Better if we knew.

Mr. Spearing: If the hon. Gentleman thinks it would be better if we knew, would he like two or three days a week to be taken up with EEC business?

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Yes.

Mr. Spearing: Very well. That would be about the ratio of importance to time that EEC matters would have to be given, and I think I see the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) nodding in agreement.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: If it meant giving up two or three days a week to debate those issues, the country would be alerted to the fact that we were becoming a glorified parish council in relation to what is happening in Brussels. Better for us to do that than for us to do it by surreptitious means.

Mr. Spearing: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the investigation now taking place by the Select Committee on Procedure. If he thinks that that ratio and time scale is right, whatever the result, he—and other hon. Members who feel the same way—should give evidence to that Committee to that effect. He may be right in that it would have the secondary effect of alerting people to something of which they may not at present be aware.

The matter that we are debating is the subject of two explanatory memoranda from the Government. Earlier this year it came before the Scrutiny Committee and we said that we wanted more information. I have to thank the Paymaster General for producing his second explanatory memorandum, which was signed only on 10 May and sent to the Committee and on which we based a report which is in the Vote Office.

But I have to tell him that are getting into very deep water. Here we have the theory of an open market, flat-table theology, well expressed by the hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies), and in order to obtain something that we have had on a national basis throughout Europe before we have 300 pages of legislation, all of which has to be administered and checked and for which new machinery has to be installed. In other words, freedom of competition does not necessarily mean freedom from bureaucracy. That is something that free marketeers and enthusiasts for capital competition on the Government Benches ought to bear in mind, because it is not necessarily possible to have one without the other in every respect and there is a classic case of it in this measure.

Market magic when applied to this area may not produce the expected results because this set of regulations is clearly supplier-oriented. We have already heard from the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) how it will affect the offshore oil industry. How

[Mr. Spearing]

do we know that it will not affect many other industries similarly by hog-tying the rights and demands of the purchaser?

The Paymaster General mentioned the CBI evidence. He did not mention, although I think the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) did, the Institute of Purchasing and Supply. He may have received a memorandum from the institute, but he did not mention it in his speech. It is a very important body because, as I understand it, it represents the corporate interests of the purchasing organisations of public authorities, local government, national Government and publicly funded organisations, as well as private organisations. It represents a huge purchasing power in the nation, and it tells me that this whole organisation is not in favour of the consumer or the corporate interests of the consumer in terms of safety, standardisation and value for money. It should appeal to hon. Members, particularly Government Members, because it is weighted, as I have said, in favour of supplier opportunity and not the convenience of the consumer.

Indeed, if we listened very carefully to the Paymaster General's speech we detected that in the Whitehallese which he trotted out. I would not criticise him personally for that. Why should he, from the Treasury, have to go into the details of the vast range of industries affected by these proposals? Why it has come to the Treasury rather than the DTI I do not know. I would suggest that as a function it would perhaps go more suitably to the DTI because surely the DTI should be more aware of the difficulties that will occur for the purchasing organisation. So I detect from the speech of the Paymaster General that the Government do not really want this at all, for some very good reasons.

I come now to some quotations from the memorandum which the Paymaster General sent not just to the Committee but to the public. I think the newspapers have got it wrong when they say that Government memoranda are not available until the Scrutiny Committee reports; they are available in the Vote Office. Paragraph 4 says:

"Consultation is continuing and will be supplemented over the next few months by a series of briefing meetings with representatives of interested trade associations."

It goes on:

"Many of the principal concerns about the present proposals, however, are shared by both purchasers and suppliers."

So there does not seem to be much enthusiasm in that area.

Paragraph 8, "Main implications for purchasers"—the customers, with whom we are all directly or indirectly involved—says:

"They are concerned, however, that the proposals should be amended to reduce very significantly the constraints on good purchasing practice and to limit the administrative burdens that they believe would result".

That needs quite substantial amendment and, as we said in the report of the Scrutiny Committee—and I quote direct from paragraph 25 of the Minister's own memorandum on a matter which has not yet been raised but is of great current significance:

"A particular concern of UK suppliers and contractors has been the provision allowing concessionnaires in this sector to award contracts to associates and affiliates without going to competition. This is believed to give special treatment to a large part of the French water supply industry."

Does that mean that it would affect those parts of this country's water supply industry owned by French interests? It is clear that it might.

We must conclude on any objective criteria that the proposals will not be much good for this country or for the collective interests of purchasers, and that they will probably be a burden on suppliers. In short, it is something we could well do without. But unfortunately, as the memorandum states, the measure is subject to qualified majority voting in the Council of Ministers. I hope that a sufficient number of other nations share our doubts.

I am informed that other nations are not so well developed in their public purchasing arrangements. If the interests of purchasers in other countries are not so well organised as they are here, their Governments will not have the same doubts that we have.

Although the right hon. Gentleman did not say as much, he pointed to the possibility of the proposals going the way of tobacco—of which we had a dramatic example this very day. In other words, despite the right hon. Gentleman's words, it is possible that we could be outvoted. We return to the merits of the whole matter, on which my views are well known. I will detain the House no longer, except to say that those right hon. and hon. Members who participated in certain debates 10 years ago are entitled to say to the Government, "We told you then. You haven't seen anything yet. Wait until the next lot. It will get worse and worse."

11.37 pm

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): The Government's motion states that

"changes are desirable in the proposed directives to prevent the imposition of unnecessary burdens and constraints."

I am happy that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has asked all Ministers to be more alert to such proposals. I am worried, as are all right hon. and hon. Members, and not because we are anti-Common Market. It is not true to say that, because one does not speak up for something to do with the Community, one is somehow violently anti-Europe. I recognise that we must play our part in a Europe of which our country is a part. Nevertheless, more and more right hon. and hon. Members genuinely feel that the bureaucrats in Brussels or in Strasbourg, or wherever they hang out from time to time, are concerned with dragging more and more power into the vacuum of their lives—and with sucking out the life of this country, this Parliament, and our people.

All we ask of the Government and of Ministers is that we should not be presented with anodyne motions. We make that request whether the Minister concerned is my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General or—a latter-day convert—my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health, who went to Europe and fought for this country at long last, even though he lost 11 to one, because my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister told him, "For God's sake, go and do something for Britain" If we vote against such motions, as in this case, and such directives are still adopted, it will serve to alert the public that the powers of this Parliament are ebbing away.

We are ultimately elected by British people to represent British interests. There is nothing shameful about standing up for one's country. But if the House is presented with such motions day after day—or should I say, night after late night—we shall in the end become what my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup,

shamefully, wishes us to be, and have no more power than the governor of a united European state similar to Arkansas or Iowa. I did not come here to be a governor of Arkansas; I came here to speak for Britain, and what is shameful about that?

11.39 pm

Mr. Brooke: With the leave of the House, I shall respond briefly to the debate.

I welcome the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) to these debates in apparent succession to the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland). There were occasions when I had doubts as to whether he had arrived at the right ground, in the context of his speech tonight. I am sure that he was playing himself in, but I am sorry that his innings did not last long enough for him to score any runs. He and others raised the question about the Government's support for the motion. The Government's support for the motion rests firmly on the connection between the motion and the single European market, and the Government's determination to achieve the single European market. That is completely separate from some of the other ideas from Brussels which are questioned by the United Kingdom Government.

The hon. Gentleman said that we should try to get something right for once. If he re-heads my speech, he will find that the Government's intentions are directed at that purpose. The hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran) mentioned the safety record. He will note that my speech contained specific references to that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) concluded by warmly welcoming competition, but said that we should be careful about the mechanisms. I hope that the Government are seeking to do that. The Government have taken the view that the Commission's proposal on upstream oil and gas is not appropriate because of the degree of competition in that industry which the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South mentioned.

Mr. Kennedy: That is fine so far as it goes. What chance is there that the Government will succeed on that exclusion?

Mr. Brooke: It would be mistaken to assume that the Government have not made their position absolutely clear on upstream oil and gas. The argument has been put in Brussels and in discussion with individual member states. I would not want to claim that the Government can take sole credit, but it is significant that the main committee which is involved in the European Parliament has already voted to exclude upstream oil and gas from the directives.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) asked me whether it would work and said that it was surrounded by bureaucracy. He said that I was constantly having to eat words that I had uttered in previous debates. I know that he will be generous enough in future, when some of the Government's predictions come to pass, to acknowledge them.

The amendment to which he spoke, although it was not possible to select it for debate, implied that it was within the Government's power not to approve a proposed directive, but with qualified majority voting the most that we could do would be to vote against the adoption of a common position. The amendment also urges the Government to seek clarification on the enforcement of compliance. We would certainly seek more than clarification in that regard.

My hon. Friend intervened in my speech and returned to the subject of article 24. The Government policy is to ensure that purchasers are not required to give preference to Community offers. In other words, the situation should remain permissive, but it is necessary to recognise that that means taking on strong forces within the Community which seek to make the Commission's proposal more protectionist. We have taken the view that it is right to allow purchasers to reject offers of third country origin, if they wish. Our objective is to obtain a wider agreement in the GATT that will ensure that suppliers from the Community get a fair chance in the third countries concerned.

The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) referred to the Institute of Purchasing and Supply. I hope that the institute will acknowledge that the purpose which the Government seek to achieve by our proposals for making the directives more effective is in line with its objectives.

I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) was speaking to the general spirit of European debates rather than to the motion. He would almost certainly be supportive of the Government's view that a single European market should be achieved.

I know the difficulties of conducting debates of this sort in one and a half hours after 10 o'clock at night. I express appreciation to the House for the amount of ground that we have been able to cover in a relatively short time.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 97, Noes 17.

Division No. 203] **[11.45 pm**

AYES

Arbuthnot, James	Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*	Hague, William
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter	Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Burns, Simon	Harris, David
Burt, Alistair	Haselhurst, Alan
Butcher, John	Hawkins, Christopher
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	Heathcoat-Amory, David
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*	Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Carrington, Matthew	Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Cash, William	Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Chapman, Sydney	Howells, Geraint
Chope, Christopher	Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*	Irvine, Michael
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*	Jack, Michael
Cope, Rt Hon John	Johnston, Sir Russell
Couchman, James	Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Cran, James	Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Currie, Mrs Edwina	Kennedy, Charles
Curry, David	King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*	Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*	Knowles, Michael
Day, Stephen	Lawrence, Ivan
Dorrell, Stephen	Lightbown, David
Dover, Den	Lilley, Peter
Durant, Tony	Lord, Michael
Dykes, Hugh	Mans, Keith
Eggar, Tim	Maude, Hon Francis
Fallon, Michael	Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Fishburn, John Dudley	Meyer, Sir Anthony
Forth, Eric	Miller, Sir Hal
Freeman, Roger	Mills, Iain
Garel-Jones, Tristan	Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Gill, Christopher	Nicholls, Patrick
Gregory, Conal	Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*	Norris, Steve

Paice, James
Porter, David (Waveney)
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Michael (Scarb')
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan (Eastwood)
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M (Solihull)
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Tredinnick, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alan Howarth and
Mr. David Maclean.

NOES

Barnes, Harry (Derbyshire NE)
Bermingham, Gerald
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dixon, Don
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Haynes, Frank
Hughes, John (Coventry NE)
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony (Stretford)
Loyden, Eddie
McAvoy, Thomas
McKay, Allen (Barnsley West)
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Meale, Alan
Parry, Robert
Spearing, Nigel
Wilson, Brian

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Dennis Skinner.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 8803/88 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by Her Majesty's Treasury on 10th May 1989, 8804/88 and 8805/88 relating to procurement procedures in the water, energy, transport and telecommunications sectors; and endorses the Government's view that the broad approach of the Commission should be supported but that changes are desirable in the proposed directives to prevent the imposition of unnecessary burdens and constraints.

Lebanon

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

11.56 pm

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): I am delighted to have this opportunity to draw the attention of the House to British policy towards the Lebanon. Shocked by the plight of the people of the Lebanon, I asked my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, who will kindly reply to this brief debate, what more the Government could do to assist them. It is foolish and remiss of the House that we do not have more debates on international issues. It is our job to turn the spotlight of public attention on the world's trouble spots and to seek solutions.

Britain is involved directly and indirectly in the Lebanese tragedy, in many and various ways. As I discovered in my visits to that country, the last being in 1982 when I was a British parliamentary observer at the presidential elections, the British are highly regarded—curiously, more so than the French, in some ways. Many Lebanese look to this country in their long drawn-out hour of need.

We should be clear at the outset that the problems of the Lebanon will never be tackled successfully until the Palestinian-Israeli dispute has been settled. The many parties to that grave and historic dispute are using the Lebanon to help to achieve their long-term aims. It is essential, too, that the Lebanese people learn that loyalty to their country must be paramount. Too many people for too many years have given their loyalty either to internal factions at the expense of their country or to other countries. While the international community can and must deal vigorously with the international dimension, the Lebanese must set aside their present and deep divisions —be they religious, political or a combination of both—and unite. If they cannot, they and their children will be condemned to years of further bitterness, despair and degradation.

The political scene in the Levant is like a tangled web. I have time to highlight six major aspects and to put some questions to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary. First, what further action will our Government take, in concert with other European Community Governments, and through the United Nations, to end the destruction of the once beautiful and highly civilised city of Beirut? The capital was once the Geneva of the middle east. There has been wholesale slaughter of its citizens. Our Government are right to support the initiative of the ministerial committee of the League of Arab States led by Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs and to arrange a ceasefire and a negotiated solution. It is the best bet in the current circumstances, but it is realistic to doubt whether it can succeed when it is weakened by the Iraqi-Syrian dispute.

Are we taking advantage of our transformed relations with the Soviet Union? Did the Prime Minister discuss the Levant with the Soviet Prime Minister when they met in Luxembourg a few weeks ago? United Nations resolution 520 called for

"strict respect for Lebanon's sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence".

Why do our Government not press for this matter to be raised as a matter of urgency in the Security Council? Is it true that no European Community country, save France,

is willing to take this crisis to the United Nations? If so, why such prudence when a United Nations resolution is being ignored and hundreds of people are dying each week? Is an international conference a possibility?

Lord Glenarthur has described the crisis as being an "internal dispute", but clearly it is more than that. Ask the Syrians. I trust that we shall set our faces like flint against partition. That would be no solution; it could never be stable.

As *Middle East International* put it recently in an excellent editorial:

"A tiny Christian enclave in the north, a Syrian protectorate in the centre and an Israeli protectorate in the south would be a prescription for permanent conflict."

Secondly, what more can be done to bring humanitarian aid to the victims of the conflict? Britain has contributed more than £1 million to UNICEF and the International Committee of the Red Cross for projects on health care, water supply, education and other relief operations. Britain also supports UNRWA which does wonderful work in assisting Palestinian refugees in the Lebanon.

There is an urgent need to get medical aid and food supplies into Beirut following a new peak of savagery and destruction. Mr. Perez de Cuellar has spoken of some $87 million being needed to provide assistance to 800,000 people in chronic need of general relief and urgent rehabilitation. There is also an immediate need for $5 million to ensure electrical supplies in Beirut on which the provision of water and hospital services depends. I should like to see the Royal Navy landing supplies by helicopter and other means to both sides as soon as the shelling stops.

Thirdly, turning to southern Lebanon, when did we last draw the attention of the Security Council to Israel's continuing and illegal occupation of a substantial part of the Lebanon following its second and highly destructive invasion? Its activities in that part of the country are outrageous and provocative and UNIFIL must be allowed to operate right up to the internationally recognised border in accordance with Security Council resolution 425. It is not sufficiently known that Britain does a first-class job in supporting UNIFIL from our sovereign bases in Cyprus.

I should like to see UNIFIL's mandate strengthened. I have been appalled by the role being played by the south Lebanese army, Israel's surrogate force. The UN soldiers, more than 170 of whom have been killed since 1978, have been trying to protect the hapless, mainly Shia inhabitants of the border area from brutal attacks by the SLA. In recent months the Israeli army, and the mainly Maronite SLA, have expanded their operations in the south, outside the so-called security zone. In March, Israel's northern front commander stated that he was considering enlarging the security zone to include five villages in the central Bekaa valley. There have also been well-reported recent Israeli incursions close to Beirut.

Who gave Israel a dispensation to invade and maraud in the land of its neighbours? That behaviour must be brought to a halt. That is a matter that the Bush Administration could address, even if it wishes to duck the wider issues. Such violence offers no solution. If the Israelis cannot be moved out, there is no chance that the Syrians will leave.

Fourthly, I am mindful of the breakdown in relations between Britain and Iran over the Salman Rushdie affair, which was made worse by the deplorable and completely irresponsible comments by the Speaker of the Iranian Parliament, Hashemi Rafsanjani, and its impact in the Lebanon. Britain has been forced to close consular and visa offices following a security alert that warned that Iranian-backed fundamentalists in Beirut might be preparing attacks.

I hope that my hon. Friend will tell the House what is the latest position and what more can be done to protect our admirable and courageous ambassador, Alan Ramsay, who is a personal friend, and his dedicated staff. There is also the presence of armed Iranian units to consider.

Fifthly, in all our minds is the continuing plight of the British hostages, who are thought to be held in or near Beirut by the pro-Iranian Hezbollah. We appreciate that there may be little that the Minister can say and that there is always the danger that ministerial comments may lead to dangerous speculation, but has the Minister any news of Mr. Jackie Mann, a former fighter pilot, who was reported missing at the weekend? The sympathy of the whole House goes out to his wife, family and friends.

Finally, and touching all those issues, is the extraordinary role of Syria. Alack, we have foolishly failed to restore diplomatic relations—which in my view had been broken off correctly—so we have minimal influence or ability even to communicate. Its forces were initially invited in and at first were welcomed by the hard-pressed inhabitants of Beirut, who hoped that they might at least keep the armed fanatics off the streets. However, now the Syrian army is the main element on one side of an increasingly bloody and futile war, which is mainly conducted through the random shelling of civilian targets —a completely abhorrent form of military conduct that must be universally condemned. What is the Government's official position on Syria's presence and activities in the Lebanon?

The canvas is a vast one, but I hope that I have made clear the deep concern that I suspect all right hon. and hon. Members have for the people of the Lebanon and also the extent of Britain's responsibility, especially as a permanent member of the UN Security Council. The multinational force, in which the United Kingdom participated, was a failure, and I do not envisage another. However, there may be an enlarged role for UN peace keepers and, indeed, the UN in its many forms.

This is not a quarrel in a far away country between people of whom we know nothing. Television brings its sorrow and savagery nightly before us, and this evening's news of a successful and outrageous brutal bomb attack was no exception. Without a shadow of a doubt, the vast majority of the Lebanese seek peace and the reunification of their country after 14 years of conflict.

Difficult though the problems are, they must not be regarded by us as insoluble. The objective is an independent, sovereign and united Lebanon, at peace with itself and its neighbours. It would be wonderful if the United Kingdom could be seen to have played a leading part in helping the international community to achieve that objective.

I wish my hon. Friend and his fellow Ministers well in that endeavour.

12.10 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Timothy Eggar): As my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) has said, Lebanon's plight is tragic. The fighting there, which has been going on over recent weeks and months, has caused many casualties and deaths and the physical destruction of much of the once beautiful city of Beirut and its surrounding countryside.

The Government's aim, in common with other countries who wish Lebanon well, is to restore peace and stability to that tragically divided country. I am most grateful, yet again, to my hon. Friend for his initiative in calling this Adjournment debate.

I am also grateful for the presence of my hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone). I know that he will join with me and the House in paying tribute to the tremendous work done by the late Lord Chelwood on behalf of the Lebanon and its people. If he were with us, he would share our anguish at the latest developments there.

For reasons of which the House and my hon. Friends are well aware, the situation in the Lebanon is complex. Our powers to help resolve the present crisis are severely limited. The conflicts between the people of Lebanon are deeply rooted. Unhappily, too, their country has also become a battleground for foreign forces.

In the last analysis, it must be our aim to enable the Lebanese people themselves to find ways of restoring peace to their country without foreign interference.

As a sign of support for those working towards a settlement in Lebanon, we have kept our embassy in Beirut open under difficult and extremely dangerous conditions. I know that the House will wish to join me and my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath in paying tribute to the courage and tenacity of our ambassador, Mr. Alan Ramsay, and his small team in Beirut. They are doing an excellent job of work.

The embassy has for a long time had to operate in particularly trying and hazardous conditions. In recent weeks its working conditions have deteriorated even further. The Rabieh district of east Beirut, in which the embassy is located, has experienced its share of the recent heavy shelling. The movement of embassy staff is necessarily extremely restricted and it has become increasingly difficult for the ambassador and his staff to perform all the functions normally expected of it.

The staff are constantly working against a background of specific threats against British targets, and the risk of being taken hostage remains high. The recent death of the Spanish ambassador in Beirut was an all too tragic reminder of the personal risks run by all foreign diplomats working in the uniquely difficult circumstances of present day Lebanon.

A major reason for our embassy remaining is the plight of British hostages in Beirut. The House is already well aware that Alec Collett, John McCarthy, Terry Waite and Brian Keenan have all been the unfortunate victims of kidnapping in Lebanon. We now await with considerable concern news of another British national, Mr. Jack Mann, who disappeared in west Beirut last Friday and whose subsequent whereabouts remain unknown. As my hon. Friend has said, we understand the anguish of his family and sympathise with them.

We are aware of the anxieties of all the families and friends of those who have been detained and kidnapped against their will. However, we remain firmly convinced that our policy of not making substantive concessions to terrorists is the right one. Within that policy, we have consistently done the maximum possible to ensure the hostages release.

In an environment where basic human rights and civilised standards of behaviour are flagrantly disregarded, our embassy has done, and will continue to do, everything possible to get firm information about the plight and position of the British hostages in the Lebanon. We raised the position of the hostages regularly with the Iranians before the breach in relations with them. It is high on the agenda for all our contacts in the region and elsewhere. We shall continue with those efforts, although we must also acknowledge that recent events have moved against us.

The intensified fighting in Lebanon has, as I have already said, made the task of our embassy even more difficult and dangerous, and the situation within Iran makes it very difficult for us to deal with that Government. This situation is not of our choosing. Nevertheless, we have done, and will do, the maximum possible in the circumstances, and will continue to strive to secure the release of British hostages.

The recent disappearance of Mr. Mann further underlines the vital importance of consular advice that we have given to British subjects in Lebanon. For years, we have strongly urged all those who have no pressing reason to remain in Lebanon to leave while commercial means are available. We have also regularly issued warnings advising British subjects not to travel to Lebanon unless it is absolutely necessary.

Let me return to the political situation in Lebanon which provides the background to the plight of the hostages. The bitter nature of the fighting has been shown in a further tragic twist today, with the news of the murder of Shaikh Hassan Khalid, the Grand Mufti of Lebanon and a Sunni leader of stature and distinction. We deplore this new act of violence, and the loss of a man who has been consistently a force for moderation.

Since 23 September 1988, Lebanon has had two rival administrations, and deepening partition in Government institutions. Since 14 March, this division has led to an outbreak of hostilities unmatched during 14 turbulent years of fighting between rival factions. Our policy, in common with that of most other countries, is to use our good offices with all the parties in order to help bring an end to the carnage without, however, taking sides between the two administrations. We recognise states, not Governments. But to end the 14 years of war and suffering, it is vital that a political solution should be found.

The first thing that is needed is a durable, negotiated ceasefire. Along with our European partners, we repeated our call in a statement on 17 April for all parties, including Syria, to stop fighting and agree to an immediate ceasefire. We were naturally associated with the statement issued by the President of the United Nations Security Council on 31 March, and his further statement on 24 April.

We have fully supported the ministerial committee of the Arab League, chaired by Sheikh Sabah, in its efforts to obtain a ceasefire. The Arab League has come very close to success. It gained an agreement to a ceasefire to begin on 28 April and offered to deploy an Arab League force to police it. Although we were greatly disappointed that the ceasefire broke down after three days, the Arab League

negotiators helped to nurse a new one into being on 11 May. There has been some sporadic firing, but the ceasefire generally has been holding and we hope and pray that it will prove more durable than the last.

We believe that, for as long as the Arab League is pursuing its initiatives, it should be allowed a free hand before the international community considers alternative approaches. This is in keeping with article 52 of the United Nations charter, which says that every effort should be made to achieve pacific settlement of local disputes through regional organisations before referring them to the Security Council. In any case, it is clear we should have to think very carefully before involving the Security Council actively in what is essentially an internal Lebanese issue.

Once a ceasefire has been established, Lebanon can work towards a period of national reconciliation. We hope that, as a first step, all parties will facilitate an election, in complete freedom and without external pressure, of a president capable of starting this vital national work. We look forward to seeing an independent, united and sovereign Lebanon, able to pursue its destiny without the presence of foreign forces on its soil.

We regret very much the involvement of other forces in the conflict in the Lebanon. All those involved, including the Syrians, should move rapidly towards an immediate ceasefire. One objective of political progress and reconciliation should be the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon. The Israelis should also withdraw fully from Lebanon and allow UNIFIL to deploy to the international border in accordance with Security Council resolution 425.

The presence of UNIFIL demonstrates that the international community still regards Lebanon as a sovereign state. We remain fully committed to UNIFIL and contribute more than £4 million to maintain the force. A withdrawal by UNIFIL would increase the risk of outright confrontation in the area between Israeli, Syrian, Lebanese and Palestinian forces. We do not think anything is to be gained at present by seeking to amend or strengthen UNIFIL's mandate. The important thing is for UNIFIL to be allowed to fulfil its existing mandate, which will be possible only when Israeli troops complete their withdrawal from Lebanon in compliance with Security Council resolution 425.

My hon. Friend has asked what more the British Government can do in a practical way to relieve the terrible suffering of the Lebanese people. We give, as my hon. Friend knows, essential aid through multilateral channels. We continue to support United Nations and European Community organisations in their efforts. We give nearly £1 million a year through United Nations organisations and the International Committee of the Red Cross. We have also, this year, given more than £750,000 in emergency aid through the European Community budget.

Circumstances on the ground make provision of direct aid difficult. This is why we call on all parties first to agree to a negotiated ceasefire. Then, once this happens, we will know exactly what work needs to be done, how it can be done, and then work out a practical way with our partners to relieve suffering that undoubtedly exists.

I know that the House has welcomed this opportunity to debate the tragic situation in Lebanon. I have taken careful note of the points which have been raised, and I should like to assure my hon. Friends that the Government will take careful account of their views in assessing the contribution we can make towards the resolution of this particularly bitter and fruitless conflict.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-three minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 17 May 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

INTERNATIONAL WESTMINSTER BANK BILL
Read the Third time, and passed.

Oral Answers to Questions

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Civil Aerospace Projects

1. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will place in the Library a report on the extent to which British civil aerospace projects are assisted out of defence budgets, and the equivalent figures for the United States of America.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Robert Atkins): Precise figures are not available but, given the vastly greater size of the United States defence budget, the civil aerospace industry in the United States will have benefited over the years to a much greater extent that has been the case in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Stern: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reply, but is it not deplorable that the United States Administration should criticise European aircraft manufacturers such as Airbus for having an element of subsidy when in the United States there is a vastly greater subsidy through the defence budget for which figures are not even published? Does my hon. Friend agree that the announced failure of the Boeing 747-400 to achieve a certificate of airworthiness may be connected with the same problem in that these days slightly higher standards of safety are often demanded for civil aircraft than for what are basically military aircraft?

Mr. Atkins: As ever, my hon. Friend represents his constituents in British Aerospace, which makes part of the Airbus as well as many military components. His points are entirely fair. I caution him a little about his comments on the Boeing 747-400, because I remind the House that there is a substantial input of British manufacturers' equipment, for example, from Rolls-Royce. None the less, the point is well taken that Airbus will play an important part in the future of European aerospace in competition with the United States.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: Does my hon. Friend agree that the success of Airbus is even more remarkable considering the fact that it was not borne on the back of a military project? Does my hon. Friend not agree that the fact that orders have been received this year alone worth £2,000 million to British Aerospace is a tribute not only to the European dimension but to the skill and technology available in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend, like me, has flown in the A320. He will perhaps appreciate it better than me because he has a pilot's licence whereas I do not and am, therefore, guided by experts in this sector. My hon. Friend's points about the success of the Airbus are extremely good. It is one of the greatest success stories of European aerospace in which, of course, British Aerospace plays a large part, and all are to be congratulated on the achievements, especially when in competition with the American aerospace industry.

Competitiveness

2. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the change in competitiveness of British industry in the last 10 years.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Trade and Industry (Mr. Anthony Newton): Competitiveness involves numerous factors including quality, reliability, assurance of delivery and after-sales service. In relation to price competitiveness alone, unit labour costs in United Kingdom manufacturing compared with those in other industrial countries, allowing for the effects of exchange rate movements, are thought to have been on average the same in 1988 as in 1979.

Mr. Graham: Does the Minister agree that in 1979 we had a manufacturing trade surplus of £5 billion but in 1988 we had a deficit of more than £14 billion? When will the Government do something to reassure Britain that we can recover our position at least to that of 1979?

Mr. Newton: That is a rather odd question from someone who would presumably have supported the last Labour Government under whom—by comparison with the stability of our competitiveness on the index that I have mentioned—competitiveness dropped by 25 per cent. between 1974 and 1979.

Mr. Charles Wardle: As well as efficiencies in output and product costs, is not competitiveness about getting the product that the customer wants tomorrow into the market before our rivals? If that is so, should not British companies be investing a large proportion of their profits today in research and development?

Mr. Newton: Yes. We do all that we can to encourage increased R and D, not only in this country but through the important collaborative mechanisms of the European Community. The important point is that United Kingdom companies, not least those involved in manufacturing, now have the profitability enabling them to do just that.

Mr. Gould: May I attempt to help the Chancellor of the Duchy with his apparent difficulty in handling some of the statistics? Will he bear in mind that there was an immediate and substantial loss of competitiveness in 1979 upon the Conservative Government taking office due to their insane exchange rate policy? The true comparison is therefore not with 1979 as a whole, but with the first quarter of 1979, and it is that comparison which shows such a huge loss of competitiveness. The figures—if the Chancellor would really like to hear them—show that on

actual labour costs the index figure for 1979 was 99, but for the first quarter it was only 90. *[Interruption.]* I know that the Conservative Members do not want to hear this. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ask a question."] I am about to ask a question, but first we must get the facts clear. That comparison shows not only a huge loss of competitiveness on actual labour costs but an even greater loss on normalised unit labour costs.

Will the Chancellor therefore—*[Interruption.]* I will not be deterred by shouting. I want to put my question. In those circumstances, will the Chancellor refrain from making claims about competitiveness which are disputed and denied by his own statistics and by our experience in the market place?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that this is Question Time, not a debate.

Mr. Newton: If there is any difficulty about statistics I venture to say that it is experienced in Dagenham and not in Braintree. The biggest single effect on Britain's competitiveness in 1979 is not be measured by the statistics mentioned—it was the winter of discontent and the shambles of industrial relations.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. Friend agree that any fool can create the conditions in which products can be given away at enormous loss? The sales figures may be good, but such a policy eventually leads to bankruptcy. Such were the conditions that we inherited in 1979 and which prevailed throughout 1979 until the Government were able to bring in the changes that have produced eight years of continuous growth and continuous profits.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend has put, with commendable succinctness, the point that I sought to make rather more aggressively a moment ago.

Manufacturing Productivity

3. **Mr. Eadie:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which of the seven major industrial countries have a higher manufacturing productivity level than the United Kingdom, and which have a lower level.

Mr. Atkins: No reliable comparisons exist for absolute levels of manufacturing productivity between different countries, but available figures show that in the 1980s the United Kingdom has had the fastest rate of growth in manufacturing productivity of the seven major industrial countries.

Mr. Eadie: Given the information that the Minister has offered to the House, he must agree that we start from a low base due to the slaughter of manufacturing capacity in industry in the early 1980s. The Minister must be concerned that our training performance is much lower than comparable EEC countries. The import of industrial machinery is helping to increase our manufacturing capacity, but does the Minister not find it worrying that as a result of the policies of the 1980s we no longer have the indigenous capacity to make that machinery?

Mr Atkins: I prefer to take the hon. Gentleman back to the 1960s and the 1970s rather than just the 1980s. Between 1960 and 1970 the United Kingdom's average growth rate was only 3 per cent., and it was only 1½ per cent. between 1970 and 1980. Since 1980 our rate of growth has averaged 5 per cent. Of course, productivity can always be improved and we recognise, as much as the Opposition do, that productivity must be improved if we are to maintain our competitive edge in world markets. We are making up for the difficulties that we had in the 1960s and the 1970s. I am sure that I do not need to remind the hon. Gentleman of them as his party was as much in power then as mine.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: I welcome the huge improvement in manufacturing productivity over the past 10 years, but is not the gap in absolute terms between ourselves and the Germans and Americans still too wide? In this context, does my hon. Friend share the concern of many Conservative Members about the offer recently made by the Engineering Employers Federation of a 6 per cent. wage increase and a reduction of one and a half hours in the working week? Of even more concern is the rejection by the trade unions of that substantial offer, which plays into the hands of our competitors just as we are catching them up.

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the possibility of uncompetitiveness resulting from high wage increases which are not related to productivity. His point is well taken. I was interested to learn recently that a survey by the German chamber of industry showed that the rate of manufacturing productivity of German companies in the United Kingdom is greater than in Germany.

Mr. John Garrett: Does the Minister agree that the rate of increase in our manufacturing productivity is now falling, and that its absolute level is still way below that of our main competitors? Will he explain how that can be radically improved, given our inadequate investment in machinery and plant, and in management, supervisory and craft training?

Mr. Atkins: As the hon. Gentleman well knows, training matters are for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, and I should be the first to welcome the training initiative being taken in that Department. Clearly, there is always room for better management. The enterprise initiative, which forms part of what the Department of Trade and Industry is doing, has proved to be one of the most popular schemes that the Department has produced. It includes "Managing into the 90s" which is encouraging middle managers in small and medium-sized companies to recognise that productivity is one of the most important factors influencing their increased competitiveness as we move towards the 1990s and the turn of the century.

Girobank

4. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a further statement on the future of Girobank.

Mr. Newton: As I stated in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) on 20 April, the Post Office board accepted a conditional offer by the Alliance and Leicester building society for Girobank, and I endorsed its decision. Detailed negotiations between the two parties are continuing with a view to completion as soon as possible in the coming weeks.

The regulatory authorities will need to be satisfied and my consent will be needed before a sale can take place.

Mr. Lloyd: Does the Chancellor appreciate the very real fears of those who work in Girobank that the regional offices, particularly the headquarters of Girobank in Bootle which has more than 3,500 employees, could be jeopardised by the takeover? What discussions has he had with the building society to ascertain its plans for the future and what can he say today to assuage the fears about job losses?

Mr. Newton: Yes, I appreciate that uncertainty necessarily gives rise to some anxiety and I am anxious that the matter should be resolved as soon as possible. I have not had direct discussions with the building society. The Post Office is selling Girobank, subject to my consent. As I have told a number of Opposition Members, including the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) on a number of occasions, it seems unlikely, to put it mildly, that anyone would wish to buy Girobank without being interested in preserving and developing one of its major assets—the centre of Bootle.

Mr. Barry Field: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Alliance and Leicester is a good organisation to bid for Girobank because it has a history of innovation, particularly in setting up a successful financial company? Does he also agree that it is far better for free enterprise to run the Girobank, rather than the pot pourri of Parliament, the Civil Service and the Post Office?

Mr. Newton: In a word, yes.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Has the Alliance and Leicester building society given any indication whether it has the £50 million required for investment in Girobank's future? Will that money be forthcoming? Will there still be a need for a second centre, probably in the north-west of England, as currently proposed by the Girobank? What talks are taking place between the Alliance and Leicester and the Girobank work force prior to the sale? Will the Minister give an undertaking that if he gives his ministerial consent he will make that announcement in a statement to the House and not in a written answer?

Mr. Newton: On the last point, I cannot add to what has been said to the hon. Member by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House in a letter. I have repeated the information in a letter that I am writing to the hon. Gentleman today. With regard to the contingency centre that is proposed for Wigan, I have made it clear that I cannot commit a prospective purchaser of the Girobank to any particular proposal at this stage. Talks with the unions, particularly on the issue of timing, are a matter for the Alliance and Leicester in the light of its other discussions. As for the hon. Gentleman's first question, I would not like to put any particular figure on what we would expect the Alliance and Leicester to invest—that, too, would be a matter for its own judgment.

Mr. Henderson: I wish to raise a more serious matter relating to the sale of Girobank, and one which is wholly contrary to Government policy and the public interest. Is it true that the Co-operative Bank made an offer for Girobank substantially and significantly above the conditionally accepted offer of £130 million made by the Alliance and Leicester, and if so, what explanation can the Minister give for the sale of Girobank at a knockdown price?

Mr. Newton: I know of absolutely no basis for the hon. Gentleman's suggestion. It is certainly the case that a number of expressions of interest were received, in some instances amounting to actual bids. Those, of course, were commercial in confidence and have been treated as such.

Consumer Affairs

5. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next expects to meet his European Community counterparts to discuss consumer affairs.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Eric Forth): I hope to meet my European Community counterparts and Mr. Van Miert, Commissioner with responsibility for consumer issues, at the Council of Consumer Ministers which the Spanish presidency has planned for 1 June.

Mr. Turner: Is the Minister aware of the concern expressed by consumer organisations in the United Kingdom that unless we make progress and take much more care of the consumer interest in this country—and take it much more seriously—consumers will lose out in 1992?

Mr. Forth: I am aware of the concern to which the hon. Gentleman has referred, but I admit that I share none of it, for two important reasons. First, the consumer will benefit enormously from the development and fulfilment of the single European market, having always stood to be the main beneficiary. Secondly, consumers in this country are better served than those in almost any other country in the Community by our legislation, and by the extent to which they are represented and the Government listen to their representatives. I am confident that the concern that has been expressed is entirely unfounded.

Mr. Gow: What useful purpose will be served by this meeting?

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend asks an interesting question. He may like to know that in the 10 months for which I have had the honour to occupy my present position there has not yet been a meeting of Community Consumer Ministers, and he may take some reassurance from the possibility that when I complete my year in office they will have met only once.

Mr. Ted Garrett: Would the Minister care to relate the statement that he has just made to my question No. 13? If so, I should like to ask him a question.

Mr. Forth: I expect to give the hon. Gentleman a very full reply when we reach his question No. 13.

Mr. McCrindle: The purchase of a house is the largest single financial transaction in which most of us engage in our lifetime, and it also happens to be the only investment not included in the ambit of the Financial Services Act 1986. As rather stronger consumer protection applies in this regard in other EEC countries, and as the implication is that my hon. Friend will not be meeting his fellow Ministers too often, will he explore that point on 1 June to see whether we are a little behind some of our competitors?

Mr. Forth: I have some good news and some bad news for my hon. Friend. The bad news is that that item is not on the agenda for the meeting on 1 June; the good news is that, having been involved—as my hon. Friend will know

—in an extensive review of house buying and selling over the past few months, I shall shortly reveal the outcome to an astonished world. I am sure that my hon. Friend will be delighted with that outcome.

Ms. Quin: Has the Minister seen the consumer manifesto for the European elections published by the London-based "Consumers in the European Community Group"? Has he also seen the manifesto published by the Consumers Association entitled "1992 and the Consumer"? Will he urge Tory Euro candidates to support the proposals in those manifestos, some of which will no doubt be considered at the June meeting? Following the example of other Ministers, will he veto the proposals because they include health and safety matters and oppose them no matter how beneficial they are for consumers?

Mr. Forth: The answers are no, no, no, no and no.

Inward Investment (Manufacturing Industry)

6. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much inward investment there has been in manufacturing industry in the past year; what was the figure five, 10 and 15 years ago; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The latest available data relate to 1987 when net direct inward investment in United Kingdom manufacturing was £2,582 million. The corresponding figure for 1984 was £1,056 million, for 1979 £1,049 million and for 1974 £468 million. These figures, together with recent announcements such as those by Fujitsu, Bosch and Toyota, clearly indicate the enhanced attraction of the United Kingdom as a base for manufacturing industry.

Mr. Greenway: Does my hon. Friend agree that those figures are an excellent indication of the competitiveness of this country and will be good for jobs here? Will he try to encourage investment in the television technology industry with a view to producing television equipment which could show the Chamber as it is—if our proceedings are to be televised—rather than in the truncated form proposed in the Select Committee report published today? We should have the Chamber televised as it is or not at all.

Mr. Newton: There are clearly a number of views on how wise it would be to televise the Chamber as it is. I shall leave hon. Members to make their own judgment about that. In reply to my hon. Friend's broader questions, I can tell him that we shall continue to do all that we can to encourage mobile international investment in Britain to contribute to the further strengthening of our manufacturing industry.

Dr. Reid: The figures that the Minister has given for inward investment are very impressive. Is he aware that the equally impressive figures issued by the Scottish Office and "Locate in Scotland" are under investigation by the Public Accounts Committee and the National Audit Office, which found that the figures had overestimated the amount of inward investment by 50 per cent.? Why should we believe that the Minister's figures are any different from those given by the Scottish Office?

Mr. Newton: I am aware of the argument to which the hon. Gentleman refers, but obviously when it comes to figures about the exact number of jobs created there is scope for a certain amount of argument. [HON. MEMBERS: "Fifty per cent.?"] There is clearly no room for argument about the contribution that is being made by new direct investment to the creation of new jobs on a large scale or about the contribution that that is making to the strengthening of the British economy.

Mr. Baldry: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that there was about £5 billion of overseas investment in Britain last year—a 20 per cent. increase on 1987? As is demonstrated by Fujitsu in County Durham, Bosch in Cardiff and Sony in Basingstoke, the Government have created a climate favourable to overseas investors, who wish to invest in Britain because they know that we now have a successful business climate.

Mr. Newton: Yes, I emphasise what my hon. Friend has said. The figures that I gave related only to direct investment in manufacturing. The total amount is significantly larger.

Information Technology Products

7. **Mr. Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the United Kingdom trade deficit in information technology products in 1988.

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Alan Clark): The United Kingdom trade deficit in the products of the electronic and information technology sector was £2·3 billion in the 12 months to September 1988.

Mr. Brown: The Conservative party enthusiastically closed down the traditional industrial base of the north-east of England on the promise that new sunrise industries would be set up. Why then is there a balance of trade deficit in the sunrise industries and why are no British sunrise employers going to the provincial centres of England?

Mr. Clark: The overall value of the business is £16 billion. The high tech sector of international trade is an extremely complex subject. The hon. Gentleman and the House will be interested to know that the United Kingdom is in surplus with the European community to the tune of some £600 million. France, Italy and Germany are all in deficit in sum vastly greater than ours. Even the United States is in deficit in information technology. It is a western problem and the solution is elusive.

Sir Ian Lloyd: In view of their immense importance to the performance of British science and technology, can my hon. Friend say what proportion of the deficit is accounted for by supercomputers since that is a proportion of the deficit about which no one should have any complaint?

Mr. Clark: No. supercomputers are sourced only in the United States. They are essential. My hon. Friend is right. As he will know, in the United Kingdom the system of a harmonised array of secondary computers is much cheaper and in some cases gives the same results.

Mr. Kennedy: When the DTI is attempting to find an answer to Britain leading the way and pioneering much of information technology, why does it end up with such a woeful deficit in terms of trade, not with Europe but with other parts of the globe? What has the DTI done to try to find the answer that the Minister thinks is so elusive?

Mr. Clark: The hon. Gentleman is completely mistaken. Our exports are worth £11 billion. The deficit accounts for less than 5 per cent. of the total.

Mr. Oppenheim: Surely the elusive answer to the trying problem should not include the type of protectionist measures being erected by the European Community, including quotas, voluntary restraint agreements and spurious anti-dumping duties. Such moves not only put off the evil day when the European industry has to sort out its own act but substantially raise prices to European consumers of the products. Should not our Government, of all Governments, should be fighting harder in the European Community to stop such nonsense?

Mr. Clark: However they may be drafted, the protectionist measures cannot be effective as the Community has an overall deficit of £7 billion.

Manufacturing Sales (Imports)

8. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the share of imports in United Kingdom manufacturing sales three years ago; and what it is now.

Mr. Alan Clark: The share of imports in United Kingdom manufacturing sales was 34·3 per cent. in 1985 and 35·8 per cent. in the 12-month period ending in the first quarter of 1988. In other words, it was very little changed, although I recognise that that may not have been the answer for which the hon. Gentleman was hoping.

Mr. Clelland: Is the Minister aware that the difference between imports and exports has increased by 33 per cent. since 1979? Can he name any Government in this century who have had a worse record in trade deficits? If he can, will he give the statistics to verify his statement?

Mr. Clark: I admire the hon. Gentleman's footwork in rapidly changing the substance of his question. The answer to the first one was precisely what he did not want. In fact, our manufactured exports by volume increased by 5 per cent. in the last quarter. That is an annualised rate of over 20 per cent. Certainly, imports continue to grow, but that is a function of consumer choice spread across many sectors. It is a function of capital goods and a function of the demand for semi-finished products.

Mr. Roger King: Is my hon. Friend aware that one way of fighting import penetration is by import substitution, with British manufacturers producing the goods that we want? Is he aware, for instance, that the arrival of Toyota is extremely welcome in the British motor car industry, as indeed is the total amount of investment announced by manufacturing and component industries of around £7,000 million? Is not the way forward to produce all the products that we want for the home market and for export?

Mr. Clark: Certainly it is one way forward, among many. One of the most beneficial effects of inward investment is the disciplines imposed on components suppliers as a result of the local sourcing proportions that are required and the increased quality that is spread right across that sector.

Mr. Worthington: Does it remain the Government's attitude that, progressively, the share of the work force in manufacturing industry will fall and that in service industries rise? If so, is not that attitude fundamentally misplaced, in that most service industries require a very large number of manufactured goods, which ought to be produced in this country, and that they will themselves eventually be replaced by machinery?

Mr. Clark: Shifts in balance between various sectors of the work force have nothing to do with Government policy. The greatest increases in productivity usually arise in factories that are the most highly automated.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: While I appreciate my hon. Friend's unique role in standing up for British manufacturing industry, does he agree that if manufacturing industry has a broader base it will be able to supply more of the machinery and materials required in the manufacture of export goods—which would be to the advantage not only of employment but our balance of trade?

Mr. Clark: At the risk of further incurring the mockery of our erstwhile colleague Mr. Parris, I entirely agree with my hon. Friend's absolutely valid point. The level of inward investment is such that as it seeps through the economy, and as its disciplines on component sourcing are imposed—there is no doubt that their requirements must be maintained—it will have a progressive effect that will contribute to overcoming the problem that my hon. Friend identifies.

Single Market

9. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what further steps his Department proposes to take to ensure that United Kingdom manufacturing industries are fully prepared for 1992.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. Francis Maude): My Department is providing a comprehensive service to help business prepare for the single market that is constantly updated and expanded to take account of progress on single market-related measures. It is for firms themselves, whether they are in the manufacturing sector or in others, to take whatever steps are necessary to compete.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister acknowledge that all the surveys show that while manufacturing output is expected to increase in the Community as a whole after 1992, it is expected to fall in the United Kingdom? That development is expected to be accompanied by falling employment in manufacturing regions such as the north-west, Scotland and midlands. What action will the Government take to ensure that the projected loss of 200,000 jobs is not allowed to occur and that workers in manufacturing industry are not again sold down the river?

Mr. Maude: What happens to jobs and to businesses will depend on the ability of businesses to produce goods that customers want to buy—at a price, time and quality that they demand. Nothing that any Government can do will override that. All the surveys that I have seen indicate that the successful completion of a single European market that is not overburdened with regulations, and which is a genuine free market, will lead to increased employment, output and wealth.

Mr. Page: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the best ways to give British manufacturing industry opportunities in 1992 is to ensure not only a strong internal demand for its products but exceeding support to the "Better Made in Britain" campaign? Will my hon. Friend say whether any examination has been made of the correlation between manufacturing investment and production volumes, and what levels of manufacturing investment are in his opinion necessary to create the desired balance of trade?

Mr. Maude: It is clear that businesses must make their own decisions. They must estimate demand for their products and how to meet it in the most effective way. It is not for me to express the Government's views about the way that businesses should run themselves. It is for businesses to decide these things for themselves. They are doing that rather successfully, and I do not propose to try to second-guess them.

Mr. Hoyle: Does the Minister agree that the Government can help from the point of view of the economic climate? Does he further agree that interest rates can be a deterrent to business expansion and new investment? Can he estimate the loss of manufacturing jobs if some aid is not given to industry? Why are the Government not providing the infrastructure to enable industry to flourish in the regions so that it can meet the competition that will arise in the 1990s?

Mr. Maude: Investment in the infrastructure is as high as investment in manufacturing industry—*[Interruption.]*—and both are at extremely high levels. The hon. Gentleman is right only to the extent that the economic climate for business is extremely important. That is why business in Britain is continuing to do well. He will be reassured to know that, despite the levels of interest rates being as high as they are, the investment intentions of business remain high.

Miss Emma Nicholson: Does my hon. Friend agree that in the run-up to 1992, one of the most important areas is information technology manufacturing and that one of the best ways to encourage a stronger IT manufacturing base for Britain would be to encourage the greater use of European rules of Government procurement and to encourage major users, including the public sector, to buy either from the United Kingdom or on a reciprocal basis from our European partners? That would have the crucial and necessary effect of opening up the so far closed French and German markets, given that the Italian and Dutch markets are already open. Is he aware that at present our weakness is in hardware and software manufacturing and not in custom-built software?

Mr. Maude: I have no doubt that when the public procurement markets of Europe are properly open to free competition, businesses in this country will be able to supply that demand effectively and competitively.

Mr. Cohen: The Minister will agree that the preparations for 1992 have been assisted by the European regional development fund. Is he aware that the Commissioner, Bruce Millan, is on record as saying that any commitments that have been entered into with the regional development fund and the IDOX scheme will be honoured? Will the hon. Gentleman now give a commitment on behalf of Her Majesty's Government that they will stick by the commitments and agreements that they signed? Or are we about to see a further turnabout, with the stabbing in the back of the regions and a reduction in the regional development fund yet again?

Mr. Maude: I understand that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs has written to the hon. Gentleman, and I am sure that he will find much food for thought in that letter.

Mr. Leigh: Can my hon. Friend confirm that British manufacturing industry has nothing to fear from a market-oriented single market free from exchange controls and nothing to gain from a politician-dominated Europe tied down by a central currency and a central bank? I hope I shall not be struck dead for saying that from this corner seat of the Front Bench below the Gangway.

Mr. Maude: My hon. Friend makes a good point. The single market of Europe must be a market for consumers, not one dominated by producers and, above all, not one dominated by Governments.

Monopolies and Mergers Commission

10. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are his present criteria for referring a bid to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Maude: The Government's policy remains as set out on 3 March 1988. The review, the results of which we announced at that time, concluded that the effect of a merger on competition in the United Kingdom should continue to be the main criterion in deciding whether a merger should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Darling: In the light of the Scottish and Newcastle referral, is it not clear that competition is by no means the main criterion applied by the Department? Does he recognise that there is considerable uncertainty in British industry as to what exactly the British Government's policy is? Is he aware that this is resulting in companies keeping up share prices to ward off hostile bids, instead of investing? In view of the present state of British industry, would it not be better to revise once again his competition policy so that we can see what it is, and stop cutting to pieces the British industrial base?

Mr. Maude: As the level of investment in business in this country is at extremely high levels, the basis of the hon. Gentleman's question is tendentious. My noble Friend and I were advised by the Director-General of Fair Trading that the Scottish and Newcastle matter should be referred to the MMC on the basis of the competition issues outlined, and the MMC concluded, on the basis of the competition issues, that it would be against the public interest. It was on the basis of those two bodies' conclusions that we decided to take the steps that we took.

Mr. Tredinnick: Can my hon. Friend confirm that the role of the MMC is to ensure that companies do not engage in price fixing, and to stop monopolies coming about? Will he also confirm that it is not the job of the MMC to tell industries how to run themselves? Is there not a danger that the MMC is going down this road, as evidenced by a number of recent and pending reports?

Mr. Maude: The role of the MMC when matters are referred to it is to decide whether, in the case of a monopoly reference, a monopoly is in existence and if it decides that it is, it makes recommendations to which the Government have to respond.

Mr. Morgan: Is not one of our endemic problems that industry is run for the benefit of takeover bidders rather than on the basis of creation of real assets? Is not one of the tragedies of the last week the announcement by Plessey, under the pressure of a take-over bid, that it will close down its gallium arsenide microcircuit business at Towcester in Northamptonshire, which will also have tragic implications for the attempts in this country, led by university college, Cardiff and the Welsh Development Agency, to build up expertise in gallium arsenide, one of the principal materials for succeeding silicon chips as a way of processing microcircuits that are faster than those produced by silicon? On silicon, we have lost out to the Japanese and now we are losing our main chance to get in with the next generation.

Mr. Maude: The purpose of business is to provide goods and services for customers, and not to build up real assets, nor to run companies for the benefit of takeovers. If companies cannot provide the goods and services that customers want, they will go out of business. It is for businesses to take commercial decisions and rely on their judgment. It is not for Government to try to second-guess them.

Post Office

11. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he is taking to make the Post Office more competitive from 1992.

Mr. Newton: The financial and other targets that we set or agree for the Post Office are designed to encourage improved competitiveness, efficiency and quality of service both before and after 1992.

Mr. Bowis: In the light of the perceptive assessment by my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade of the abysmal delivery record of letters by the Post Office, is it not high time that the Post Office letter service had a little competition from the private sector? In particular, will my right hon. Friend make a clear declaration that he will resist any attempt by the Post Office to stitch up a European monopoly with its counterparts abroad, the purpose of which would be to keep out private enterprise competitors, to the detriment of the public of this country and the European nations?

Mr. Newton: I would neither add nor detract from what my hon. Friend described as the perceptive comments of my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade in the Adjournment debate on Friday. As to the latter part of my hon. Friend's question, I imagine that he is referring to the paper prepared by a group of European postal administrations as an input to various Commission discussions. Those do not represent a commitment by the Commission, the Government or the Council of Ministers. There is a great deal to discuss in the approach to 1992.

Mr. Harry Ewing: Why does not the Minister just deliver his hon. Friend a punch, and flatten him? The Government regard the Post Office as being so successful that they use it to deliver, albeit inaccurate, leaflets about the poll tax. Why does not the Minister just tell the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) that the Post Office in Britain is the most efficient in the world, and that that is why the Government use it so much?

Mr. Newton: I do not wish to behave towards my hon. Friend in a fashion different from that in which I would behave towards the hon. Gentleman. I will try to curb any instinct of aggression. As to the Post Office and the leaflets, it is commendable that, within a couple of hours of having been asked to do so by the Department of the Environment, the Post Office had issued instructions all round its network.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: My right hon. Friend will be aware of the unfortunate and spreading practice of the Post Office sealing boxes secondary to industrial action. Can my right hon. Friend imagine any private company getting away with offering such an appalling service to its customers?

Mr. Newton: I hope that my hon. Friend will allow me to observe that I am reluctant to let him get away with asking that question, the subject matter of which relates to a question that appears later on the Order Paper.

Baby Products (Fire Regulations)

12. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress he has made in his considerations regarding the application of the Furniture and Furnishing (Fire) (Safety) Regulation 1988 to baby products.

Mr. Forth: I have decided that the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations should be amended to exempt the cover fabric of nursery equipment from the match test requirement. Draft amending regulations will be issued as soon as possible for consultation with industry, consumer and fire prevention interests.

Mr. Bennett: I thank the Minister for that helpful reply. Does the Minister agree that it is important that parents concerned about small babies ensure that the foam that they use is not toxic when it burns, that it is easy for a child whose face is in contact with the fabric to be able to breathe through it, whether or not it is wet, and that the fabric is covered with a non-toxic material that is unlikely to cause problems to a baby? Will he emphasise the concern that there is still much toxic foam in households, some of which may be used on products that have been altered for the household? Parents should be concerned about using such foam near a small child.

Mr. Forth: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. I hope that he will accept that in the changes that I have made I have struck the best balance available between trying to ensure fire safety and a degree of permeability. Those factors are all-important for the welfare of babies, but I believe that in this rather difficult area we have achieved the right balance as a result of the changes that have been made.

I hope that the changes that we have made to the safety of furniture will be and have been, of increasing benefit to the community. One of the by-products of the changes is much wider awareness of the potential toxicity of materials

when they burn. That is more widely understood, but we shall continue to watch carefully to ensure that we have the balance right.

Mr. Dykes: I thank my hon. Friend for deciding to amend the regulations. He will agree that retaining the match test would have made outer surfaces extremely uncomfortable for babies and toddlers. When does he therefore intend to convey this good news to the industry, if he has not already done so?

Mr. Forth: I thank my hon. Friend for his comments. I hope soon—within days rather than weeks—to issue the draft regulations for consultation. I shall then be able to consider the responses of industry, consumers and fire prevention interests. I have every reason to believe that our amendments will receive widespread support.

EC Commissioner for Consumer Affairs

13. **Mr. Ted Garrett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next plans to meet the European Community Commissioner for Consumer Affairs; and what he expects to discuss.

Mr. Forth: I hope to meet my European Community counterparts and Mr. Van Miert, who is Commissioner with responsibility for consumer issues, at the Council of Consumer Ministers, which the Spanish presidency has planned for 1 June. The provisional agenda is as follows.

Proposal for a Council directive amending directive 87/102/EEC for the approximation of laws, regulations and administrative provisions of member states concerning consumer credit; draft resolution for the relaunch of EC consumer policy; Commission report on the European home and leisure accident surveillance system; exchange of views on the Commission report on consumer education; Commission presentation of the general product safety directive; and any other business.

Mr. Garrett: I am sure that the House was fascinated by that agenda, the sheer complexity of which amazed me. A consumer issue was considered yesterday in Brussels. Irrespective of whether the House is composed of smokers or non-smokers, an issue of national sovereignty arose. Is it not time that hon. Members forgot party lines when considering national sovereignty? My hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) and I have been long-standing members of an organisation and have warned it about the loss of national sovereignty. The question of national sovereignty and consumer affairs should be placed high on the agenda. One of the countries that voted against us was France, which has a nationalised tobacco industry. Its "dangerous to health" warnings on cigarette packets are so small that one cannot see them with the naked eye. It is guilty and dishonest, and that should be pointed out to it.

Mr. Forth: The hon. Gentleman's question should more correctly be addressed to his Front Bench. It strikes me that, when we catch sight of the Labour party's policy on the European Community, the hon. Gentleman will have considerable cause to be concerned. I hope that he will take this matter up with the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould).

I thank the hon. Gentleman for his support for the stance taken yesterday in Brussels by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and for the support which he is giving to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on the concern that she expressed yesterday from the Dispatch Box.

Mr. Yeo: Will my hon. Friend make it clear to the Commissioner that this country will give all the support possible to any Commission proposals that are genuinely designed to produce a free market in goods and services but will strenuously resist any bureaucratic meddling in matters that should be determined by this Parliament?

Mr. Forth: Yes. My hon. Friend has summarised effectively and well the policy of Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Cryer: When dealing with consumer choice, will the Minister raise under any other business the issue of burden-sharing arrangements for textiles? This is a Government matter and the Government must take action to ensure that in 1992 all imports of textiles to the Common Market are not directed towards the market with the best access—the United Kingdom—where half a dozen distributors cover every major city and town in the country, unlike any other member state. This kind of arrangement is important for the retention of jobs and for the textile industry in Bradford, west Yorkshire and elsewhere.

Mr. Forth: If I were able to persuade the presidency to put that matter on the agenda, it would probably be more in the context of the fact that consumers generally will benefit from the most open market arrangement that we can have. One must be extremely careful in making any market arrangements. The consumer's interest is virtually always better served by the most open and competitive arrangement that can be arrived at.

Tropical Hardwoods

14. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the latest tonnage figures for the importation of tropical hardwoods; and what were the figures for five, 10, 20 and 30 years ago.

Mr. Alan Clark: In 1988, 498,904 tonnes of tropical hardwoods were imported. The equivalent figures for 1984 and 1979 were 462,000 and 570,000.

Mr. Holt: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reply. Does it not show that we are still ripping out hardwood forests at too great a rate? Would not this subject usefully be dealt with by the Commissioners in Europe, resulting in a European initiative to solve this vexed problem which seems to affect not only the hardwoods but the climate in North America? The furniture industry would welcome such an initiative wholeheartedly, but not, as with fire regulations, if we did it on our own.

Mr. Clark: My hon. Friend is right. There is growing feeling in the European Community and, indeed, in most western, sophisticated economies that steps must be taken to assist in the conservation of these materials. A variety of options is at our disposal. I am often approached by people who want to ban the import of these materials. One does not exclude that idea, but this cannot be done in isolation. Steps of this kind and other less extreme conservation measures are best addressed within a Community context.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Government look sympathetically at the idea of helping countries such as Papua New Guinea which have a law that they are trying to implement to replant their hardwoods in areas where cutting down has taken place?

Mr. Clark: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the International Tropical Timber Organisation is active in this regard. Less than two months ago I had a meeting with its executive director, Dr. Freezailah, and discussed where the organisation's efforts would be best directed. The organisation's headquarters are in Tokyo and the emphasis of its activities appears to be directed towards the Pacific basin.

Nigeria and Ghana

15. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he is taking to improve trade and industry links with Nigeria and Ghana; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The usual export services of the Department of Trade and Industry are available for exporters dealing with Nigeria and Ghana. The President of Nigeria has recently concluded a state visit to the United Kingdom and a number of useful discussions on trade-related subjects took place.

Mr. Speller: Will my hon. Friend consider reinstating export credit guarantees, which are no longer offered to Nigeria, both in view of the successful visit of President Babangida and also, in the case of Ghana, because the economy is showing signs of great success following hard work?

Mr. Clark: My hon. Friend is right about Ghana, and subject to the access criteria of the Export Credits Guarantee Department, normal underwriting judgment is being satisfied and cover is, in principle, available for exports to Ghana on both cash and longer terms of payment. For Nigeria, although cover for cash business continues to be available, there are no plans at present for any general resumption of medium-term cover.

Privilege

3.30 pm

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have a short statement to make on a matter of privilege. I have received a complaint from the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) on behalf of an officer of Birmingham city council, who alleges that he has received adverse treatment in his employment as a consequence of acting as an agent for a petition against the Birmingham City Council (No. 2) Bill. I am satisfied that the complaint raises issues that justify me in granting precedence to a motion relating to it. If the hon. Lady tables a motion today, it will appear as the first item of business tomorrow.

Social Security Operations

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. John Moore): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I shall make a statement about major changes to the management of social security operations.

Social security is a massive business. It accounts for over £48 billion of benefit expenditure and £2 billion on administration—that is fully 10 per cent. of gross domestic product. Some £33 billion is collected through national insurance contributions. It is one of this country's largest employers with over 80,000 staff. One way or another, social security affects the lives of practically every family in the country.

The Government are totally committed to making that business work well—for everyone. We want the offices of my Department to provide a better standard of service for the public, to know more precisely what performance is expected of them and to use their resources more efficiently. That is why, last July, I launched a study into whether a better social security service could be delivered through more autonomous operations, under my overall direction. That is the approach envisaged in the "Next Steps" report which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced to the House in February last year. We have concluded that it offers the best future for the social security service.

I am today placing the report of that study in the Libraries of both Houses. It focuses on the core social security functions of collecting and recording national insurance contributions and of assessing and paying benefits. The report highlights powerful potential benefits from agency status including far greater clarity about roles, responsibilities and objectives, more personal responsibility and accountability for the quality of service for the public, a more dynamic and flexible approach to improving efficiency and performance and scope for staff to do a better and more satisfying job. The report concludes that virtually all the operational tasks of my Department could be run more effectively on the agency model.

We shall pursue these opportunities vigorously. However, we do not intend to await the creation of the agencies before making further improvements in services. I am also, therefore, laying in the House Libraries today a clear definition of our plans for the services we aim to achieve—a definition of service. I will also be sending a copy of this to all Members of Parliament. I will expect it to be the guide to the actions of the entire social security organisation. We are backing up that commitment with concrete targets for what we intend to achieve in specific areas over a number of years.

When the agencies are established, the Secretary of State will remain accountable to Parliament and the public for all aspects of social security administration and policy. Within the framework of ministerial policy there will be maximum delegation of responsibility for operational matters. The computer and communications operations of the DSS are enormous, employing about 3,000 staff, with an investment programme of £1·2 billion. They have already been reorganised into a single unit. I will go further and give it agency status by April 1990. National insurance contributions are a large source of revenue. I will organise the staff collecting and recording them in a single

management unit with a target date of April 1990. This unit will either become an agency in its own right or fall within a benefit agency.

Over 20 million people get benefits. Putting their delivery on an agency basis will be the biggest single initiative under the "Next Steps" programme. I propose to establish an agency for benefit operations by April 1991. These changes will put into agencies about 80,000 people —one sixth of all non-industrial civil servants—and will leave the headquarters with a relatively small central core. The detailed arrangements, including those in respect of finance, pay and personnel, will be the subject of further work. As the Government have made clear already, staff in the agencies have the assurance that they remain in the Civil Service. There will be no immediate changes, and any proposals affecting staff will be discussed with staff and their representatives.

We intend that, when the agencies are established, chief executives will be selected by open competition and will be appointed on limited term contracts specifying clearly defined objectives and budgets.

The initiatives that I am announcing today, together with plans already in hand, amount to a coherent strategy to transform the quality of service that social security offers. Last year's benefit reforms put the benefit system itself on the right footing. Computerisation will give us the modern tools to do the job. The definition of service that I announced today, with the clear targets underpinning it, firmly establishes the objectives that we need to pursue. The creation of agencies will provide the management framework best able to realise them. It is a programme from which the public and our staff alike stand much to gain. I hope that it will receive the support of the whole House.

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): I begin by seeking to find common ground with the Secretary of State and welcome that, at least today, he has not announced the privatisation of the Department. For the removal of doubt, I therefore invite him to assure the House that agency status will not be a staging post to the private sector. May we have his assurance that the agencies will remain non-profit making public agencies and that the staff will retain the Civil Service status that he has promised them? Does he accept that the payment of pensions and benefits must always remain a public service and not become a commercialised business?

The Secretary of State will be aware that there is great sensitivity about the idea of making the counter operations of benefit offices responsible to an agency. The calculation and timely payment of benefit to our constituents is of legitimate political concern. The Secretary of State has informed the House that Ministers will remain accountable to Parliament. For the avoidance of doubt, will he assure us that, when hon. Members refer to individual constituents, Ministers will not retire behind the formula, "It is a matter of day-to-day administration of an agency", and thereby escape their obligation to ensure prompt and reliable payment of the benefits approved by Parliament?

The Secretary of State must appreciate that there will be great disappointment in the country that, in his statement, there is not a single commitment to a better quality of service to the claimant—*[Interruption.]* There is not a single reference to quality in the statement. Does the Secretary of State recall that, last year, the Moodie report found that the average waiting time in social security offices was 70 minutes, and sometimes half a day, that six out of seven claimants complained that they were overheard when being interviewed, and that many local offices remained "forbidding and sleazy"? What obligations will be on the agency to improve the privacy of interview, raise the standards of facilities and access, and widen the availability of minority language? Is the sole serious obligation in the contract to be to stay within a fixed budget that will further squeeze the quality of service?

Can the Secretary of State deny the story on the tapes this afternoon that what he has announced today will provide for a further reduction in the cost of administering the benefits, which cannot improve the quality of service to the claimant? Is the Secretary of State really satisfied that, having reduced himself to a Gideon's army of a few hundred civil servants, he will have access to enough evidence of how in practice the system works? Is the Secretary of State not aware that his speech last week on poverty has already raised enough doubts as to whether he is in touch with reality, without putting himself further out of touch with the people in the front office of his Department, who talk daily to people in real poverty?

Does the Secretary of State not realise that his statement misses the simplest way to provide for more efficient management of welfare benefits, which is to reduce dependence on means-tested benefits? When will he and his colleagues recognise that the way forward in welfare—to an easier system to administer and to a system that would provide better dignity for the claimant—is not by constantly patching up the safety net of a means test, but by serious increases in pensions, unemployment benefit and child benefit?

Mr. Moore: I am conscious that the hon. Gentleman wanted to avoid welcoming what clearly is a statement that will offer not only to the staff, but to the public as claimants of benefit, a greatly improved service. He, therefore, sought to divert the debate to matters entirely different from those contained in the statement. I do not complain in any way about that, but I hope that he would, for example, accept, as I believe most hon. Members would, that a cost-effective service, however it is offered, is obviously in the interests of the taxpayer as well as of the claimant. Decent men and women should not expect to see their money wasted when it comes to the delivery of a decent service.

I made it clear in my statement, and I repeat, that the staff working in agencies will continue to be civil servants. That is obviously important, and is why I put it in my statement. Their existing and acquired rights and conditions of service would be respected.

The hon. Gentleman asked specifically about the privatisation of the core aspects of the benefit delivery system. As with other Members, he will not have had time yet to read the full report that will be placed in the Library, but that is covered in chapter 3. I shall paraphrase the reasons why the Government decided to go the way that they went. As the report said, we thought that the complete privatisation of contracting out was regarded as impracticable. It is difficult to conceive of the day-to-day business of quasi-judicial decisions on customers' entitlements being handled by the private sector. I, therefore, recognise his point on that matter.

[Mr. Moore]

I remind the hon. Gentleman that a good deal of work, especially in the computing area, is already contracted out. Obviously we would expect that to continue, and to continue with market testing in those areas.

As I see the statement, it will enhance the accountability of the social security operations to Parliament and to the public. It will in no way diminish the absolute responsibility of Ministers to the House and of Ministers to Members of Parliament for policy and for methods of administration. Obviously, most Members of Parliament, in their attempts to help their constituents, deal initially with the benefit offices. However, after the statement, as before, Members of Parliament have the absolute constitutional right not to follow that procedure. There will be far greater clarity of the process of decision-making and of responsibility. Another source of accountability will be through the chief executives of the agencies, who will have a direct responsibility and who will be able to report to the Public Accounts Committee. The statement will enhance accountability to Parliament.

I wonder when the hon. Gentleman will welcome a reaction that flows from the Moodie report, which I established because I was dissatisfied with the level of service that my benefit offices were giving. Consequential upon that, I asked for a study and I acted on the basis of that study. I asked in July—and I announced to Parliament last year—for an examination of the possibility of enhancing the service through agencies. The report, as published, is being carried out in its entirety by the Government, because they believe passionately—as the note that I shall be sending to all my staff and to Members of Parliament shows—in an improved service to customers. That is the intent behind the statement.

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): I am sure that my right hon. and hon. Friends are grateful to my right hon. Friend for his announcement today and for his attempts to try to improve the administration of social security. Why have my right hon. Friend and his colleagues in the Treasury not gone the distance on improving the administration of social security and followed the recommendations of the all-party Select Committee, which reported to the House in 1973-74 on tax credit? Bringing together social security payments with tax benefits in a single system would offer numerous advantages, not least a simpler administration, which seems to be the purpose behind my right hon. Friend's statement.

Mr. Moore: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and I know of his diligent and long service to the Select Committee. I believe that there is a great distinction to be drawn and at some stage I would be only too happy to debate, privately or publicly, with him the 1973 report's recommendations. This statement represents an attempt to follow through the outstanding efforts of my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Civil Service to see how we can enhance, in other ways, different Government Departments' services to the public. Above all others, my Department is in daily contact with millions of our fellow citizens. I have been dissatisfied, despite the valiant efforts of our staff, about how we have served our fellow citizens. My statement represents a clear and coherent attempt to make sure that, in the long term, we correct that deficiency.

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): Can the Minister confirm that £22 million was wasted the last time he employed 235 consultants for his last exercise? Will he also confirm that staffing levels—I emphasise levels—will be maintained in the offices that are created? Will he also confirm that the information that is stored will not be used for commercial reasons?

Mr. Moore: The hon. Gentleman has made three different points, but I do not begin to recognise his first point. The introduction of computer technology—the largest development in the western world—that is currently being undertaken in my Department, with the help of outside consultants, has been and is an outstanding success. I cannot make a specific commitment about the way in which different offices in different parts of the system will be staffed. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that, for example, in the past 18 months my Department's number of staff has gone from 94,000 to 85,000 while we have seen a major reduction in work consequential on the reduction in unemployment. We have also witnessed the first stages of the introduction of a much improved computer technology system. Obviously, that system carries with it further reductions in staff. Therefore, I cannot make any assumptions about staff levels, but they will be those that seek to address the problems identified in the statement—how to give a better level of service to our customers.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Can my right hon. Friend say more about how the Public Accounts Committee will be able to examine the performance of the new agencies against the targets set so that hon. Members on both sides of the House can clearly see the undoubted improvements that will flow from the changes?

Mr. Moore: In the past one of the criticisms of my Department by the PAC was that it was unable to interrogate, debate and discuss matters with the executives who run many parts of the benefit system. The agencies' chief executives will be accountable to the PAC and I am sure that the Committee and the House will welcome that. That does not, however, in any way diminish the Secretary of State's ultimate responsibility for the agencies. Beyond that, the targets that I will lay in the Library in the near future will illustrate—in the backing of the service—the overall strategic goals that I have set for the operation.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): What are the implications of the statement, which we have not yet read, for the nature of his Department? Does it not mean that the nature of his Department will be greatly altered and that it may have a profound effect on, for example, Cabinet status or something of that kind?

Mr. Moore: I know the right hon. Gentleman of old and I know that he has not said that in any way other than in a supportive tone. The future functions of my Department, post the agencies' establishment, will relate not dissimilarly to the functions of other headquarter Departments, that is, to programmes, development, policy advice, central resource allocation, performance monitoring and strategic planning. I expect that my central headquarters Department, excluding the appeals side, will, at some stage, have a staff of roughly less than 2,000. Obviously I am considering still further relocations of parts of that reduced headquarters structure from London

and I know that that will be of interest to the right hon. Gentleman and to other hon. Members representing other parts of the country.

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on introducing some much needed new thinking into the important and massive task of distributing our social security system. Will my right hon. Friend assure the House that, in implementing these interesting proposals, he will engage in full consultations with the staff as he proceeds?

Mr. Moore: Absolutely. I thought that I had made that quite clear in my opening statement. Clearly, we shall need to consult the staff. I stressed in answer to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), that the staff will retain their position and, therefore, their existing and acquired rights will be respected. Obviously, I shall want to consult fully with the staff.

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): Instead of glorifying in staff cuts, why will not the Minister recognise that the problems faced by benefit offices are that there are insufficient staff, who are not properly paid and have to spend much of their working time telling those in need that their needs will not be met? Why will he not address these central problems?

Mr. Moore: I wonder whether the hon. Lady, who tries to exercise her mind on these matters, could take a slightly less myopic view. For example, she might look at two areas that reflect the great improvement which our excellent staff have achieved in the past two years. The processing of supplementary benefit claims was taking on average seven days; income support now takes on average, five days. My aim is to reduce that period to three days. We have already reduced supplementary benefit error rates by a quarter with the introduction of income support and I am aiming to halve that again. The pattern of progress during the past two years illustrates the real achievements of our staff in their handling and managing of the benefit system, as opposed to the appalling description of the system given by the hon. Lady.

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): While I welcome the proposals, may I ask how they will improve the service quality for the claimant and will they include, in view of the state of some offices, a major programme of property renewal and refurbishment?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend might have noticed that, over the past year or more, there has been a substantial improvement in many of the offices in our country. We have spent a considerable amount of money and, obviously, I shall be looking to improve the overall facilities. Unless staff work, and claimants attend offices, in decent conditions, they cannot expect to receive the respect which they merit.

With regard to better services to customers and the general public, the delegation to the lowest possible level of decision-making powers on financial and personnel matters will give quicker and more sensitive responsiveness to local needs. Clear objectives for quality, which will be in the targets, and timeliness of service will be expressed as measurable performance targets. Such improvements will enhance and clarify the sort of service that claimants should expect.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Will the Secretary of State accept that, when he talks about clear targets and objectives from the point of view of administration, it would be helpful if he would consider those against the background of a definition of poverty, at least in his terms, and a strategy for the eradication of poverty in this country? What consultation has he had with the Scottish Office and what implications will this statement have for the administration of social security north of the border?

Mr. Moore: As I am sure the hon. Lady will know, I am responsible for Great Britain in this matter. Having said that, there has been detailed discussion with the Scottish Office throughout because this is to be extended throughout Great Britain. On the hon. Lady's first point, I am sure that in her rational, as opposed to her political mind, she would not begin to suggest that a third of the nation are in poverty.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Oh, yes, I do.

Mr. Moore: She would not begin to suggest that because the absurdity of that suggestion would detract from the serious efforts made by those of us to care effectively. We have been able to add to those efforts because of our economic success. It ill behoves Opposition Members, who in the poverty of their economic failure are unable to help people in real need, to pander to such nonesense.

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): My right hon. Friend is to be congratulated on the courage of his innovative suggestions. Can he assure me, however, that under the new arrangements the great body of knowledge about the effectiveness of the system, and whether each benefit meets the objectives that it was set to achieve, will not be lost? Will staff be involved in feeding back information about how well the benefits are doing their job in the community?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend has detailed personal knowledge of these matters, particularly from his constituency experience. He has drawn my attention many times to the obvious reality that staff in our benefit offices and headquarter operations—whether in north Fylde, Newcastle or elsewhere—have knowledge that is very important to the judgment of policy. I shall continue to ensure that we use that knowledge in policy decision-making.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Now that the Secretary of State has abolished poverty by operational decree, has he any plans to abolish misery and disease in like fashion, and will these agencies help?

Mr. Moore: The hon. Gentleman's remarks are less amusing when we come down to the reality of what I am trying to do, to which he does not seem to have addressed himself at all. He seems utterly uninterested in the 80,000-odd staff involved in this significant and important change, and in the 20 million-odd beneficiaries who are obviously more than interested in such a clear indication of improved services. That contemptible lack of interest is reflected in the Labour party's failure ever to be regarded as more than an irritant, rather than a party with a serious opportunity of taking office.

Mr. Lewis Stevens (Nuneaton): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his proposals. It is particularly pleasing

[Mr. Lewis Stevens]

that there is to be a genuine delegation of his operational function to those who know best how to use it, the people on the ground. May I ask him to ensure, however, that one of the objectives of the agencies will be to give clear guidance and information to claimants?

Mr. Moore: I shall certainly take notice of that point. My hon. Friend is very much involved in these matters, and, when we develop the framework documents that will be the underlying documents for agencies, what he has said will be a significant consideration. My hon. Friend knows that when I have been dissatisfied with take-up I have not been afraid to spend taxpayers' money to try to encourage additional take-up, but information and help for claimants are an important feature of the overall benefit system.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): Will the Secretary of State confirm that what he is suggesting is merely an administrative matter, and that no claimant who is at present refused a grant from the social fund will be given such a grant by the new chief executives to whom he has referred? If that is so, does the right hon. Gentleman not understand that when we talk of delivering a service we must also talk about the product that we are delivering? The biggest problem for DHSS office staffs over the past few years has been the longer time that it takes to interview desperately worried people who have been badly affected by the changes in the family support system that the Government have introduced, and I know that the Secretary of State will address his mind to that.

May I also ask whether members of staff allocated to work for agencies will continue to be subject to central pay negotiations, and that no attempt will be made to break up the negotiations that now affect the Civil Service?

Mr. Moore: There are two different points. I would put the hon. Gentleman's first question in an entirely different way: the people—nearly 1 million—who already benefit in the first year from the social fund will continue to benefit under the same arrangements that now exist. As for his second question, I think that he will recognise that new consultative arrangements will need to be negotiated for agencies. We intend industrial relations matters to be resolved as far as possible within the agencies themselves.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Coming on top of the simplification of the system last year and the introduction of new technology, my right hon. Friend's reforms are particularly welcome. When does he expect to be in a position to introduce such facilities as cash dispensers, so that claimants are able to obtain money that is rightly theirs as quickly as possible?

Mr. Moore: I think that there is a distinction between the structural changes that I have been discussing and the method of receipt of payment. We have been looking at and have already done some work on alternative methods of paying benefits and that work suggests that in the longer term smart cards might have potential. My Department and the Post Office have jointly been carrying out an assessment of the financial implications of using smart cards, but at this early stage it is not clear whether they would represent better value than automatic credit transfer. About a third of all new pensioners and a third of new child benefit recipients are going for automatic credit transfer. I am interested in pursuing and looking at different methods of payment receipt as long as they are cost-effective and helpful to claimants. That is what our service is all about.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Is the Secretary of State aware that the experience of many claimants is that ministerial statements about cost-effectiveness tend in many cases to point to centralisation and remoteness? Is he aware that in my largely rural constituency there is no office of his Department and that some of my constituents have to travel as much as 25 miles to the so-called local office of the Department? May we have an assurance that the measures he has announced will not lead to further remoteness and more centralisation? Will he say whether there will be any decentralisation of jobs to Scotland? As his Department has abdicated its responsibility to give advice to people such as my constituents, and as that work is now being done by citizens advice bureaux, will the Department provide some extra funding to CABs?

Mr. Moore: I was trying to say earlier that being cost-effective does not necessarily mean giving a better but rather a more efficient service. The whole ethos of the statement is to seek to produce better services for customers and the general public, more satisfying jobs for staff and more discretion for local managers. Within that structure I would not want to be specific about what happens in any particular part of Great Britain. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that one of the decisions that I made recently about the relocaton of jobs from parts of the London office area into new service centres was to locate a major new centre in Scotland, Obviously, before making the decisions that I shall have to take about moving more headquarters staff out of the London area, out of the south-east, I shall look carefully at Scotland and other parts of the country. The service given by our staff in our Scottish office is excellent.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): I welcome my right hon. Friend's announcement and hope that it will result in an improvement in the service to claimants at DSS benefit offices. His statement about the relocation of some of these agencies out of London will be greatly welcomed by many hon. Members who represent constituencies in which unemployment is higher than necessary. I hope that he will seriously consider some relocation in the north-west where, as he well knows, some of his offices already enjoy good relations.

Mr. Moore: I can say to my hon. Friend what I said to the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson). I have already made a decision to move one area centre to the Wigan area. It is not quite in my hon. Friend's constituency, but it is certainly in a part of the country with high-quality staff and it welcomes that relocation.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Is the Secretary of State aware that nothing he has said today will wipe away the suspicions of millions of people who are living in poverty that he and his ministerial colleagues are completely out of touch with the plight of those people and the conditions in which they live? I would have been very pleased if he had announced that at least one day a week would be set aside for the Secretary of State and his ministerial colleagues to come to places such as Bradford to talk to claimants who are tired, desperate and very

angry about the difficulties that they face in getting what they are entitled to. I should like Ministers to talk to the harassed and tired advice workers who are desperately trying to get help for those people. Why does the Secretary of State not get away from this Palace of Westminster in which he lives and meet the people who are trying to get the help which he says he is so anxious to give them?

Mr. Moore: I greet that contribution with sadness and I shall not react to the cumulative venom, irritation and bitterness of the hon. Gentleman who does not seem in any way to address the statement that I made, the intent that I seek to serve or the issues that concern us.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): Does my right hon. Friend recognise that following his most positive speech last week, about which I participated in a highly constructive discussion on the Kilroy programme this morning, the object of his Department must be to deliver a more effectively targeted system and, in particular, to bring to those who are entitled to it the excellent benefit of family credit? Does he also recognise that it is most important to maintain or raise where necessary the morale of DSS staff? I have in mind the staff in my constituency DSS office in Taunton, who provide an excellent service for claimants.

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend is right. I welcome his contribution on the Kilroy programme which, unfortunately, I was unable to see. My hon. Friend is right to distinguish between the important way in which the increased wealth of the country has been directed to helping those in genuine need and some of the nonsense that we sometimes hear in public debates. Today I am concentrating, as I know my hon. Friend would wish me to, given his knowledge of his Taunton office, on how we more efficiently, effectively and fairly deliver a better level of service to those whom we seek to help through our benefit system.

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): Does the Minister accept that during the last few difficult years one of the most important centres of operation of his Department has been on Tyneside, which has borne the brunt of the administration of many of the changes? Is he prepared to come to the north-east to discuss his proposals and reassure people there? In that area, management, employment and training opportunities centrally depend upon the employment that his Department provides and accommodation there costs a great deal less than the £50 a sq. ft. that it costs in the Strand.

Mr. Moore: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman knows this, but since I have been in this job I have been to the north-east many times, specifically to visit my excellent centre of operation in the Newcastle area, and most of the units in that area. The hon. Gentleman knows that we have more than 10,000 staff there and that we are probably the largest employer in that part of the world. We have excellent staff working in first-class conditions and doing a good job for the citizens of our country. That is one of the reasons why for the last two years I have been determined to ensure that such parts of the country benefit from the kind of relocation in which I have been engaged. I know that the hon. Gentleman will welcome the training opportunities and the improvements for staff consequential upon this decision.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): By his disappointing response to my right hon. Friend's statement, has not the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) demonstrated the intense conservatism, not to say the reactionary nature of his outlook——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Questions must always be related to the Minister's responsibility.

Mr. Hamilton: I shall come to the relevant part of my question in a shorter time than that taken by the hon. Member for Livingston. In opposing the perestroika within the Department of Social Security which my right hon. Friend has proposed, the hon. Gentleman seems to prefer the preservation of bureaucratic empire to the efficient delivery of service to the claimant. My right hon. Friend should be consoled by the fact that after a time lag of 10 years the Labour party adopts the whole of Conservative party policy. By the year 2000 the hon. Member for Livingston will understand what we are trying to do.

Mr. Moore: Far be it from me to comment on the innate structural conservatism of the Opposition. My hon. Friend makes a fair point. We are attempting to think through in the latter part of the 20th century what we should be doing in the structures that we have to help staff and claimants. I had hoped for slightly less reactive response from the Opposition. They should have thought more carefully about what we are seeking to do.

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): Does the Secretary of State accept that the main objective of the social security system must be to serve claimants? Many of them will be fearful that once again this change will result in massive savings to the Government while many claimants will be worse off. The Minister should address himself to the priority of ensuring that there are sufficient officers in the local offices to deal with the public and to the fact that changes in the rules and regulations are preventing many people from getting the assistance to which they are entitled and which they need.

Mr. Moore: I wonder how on earth the hon. Gentleman relates the first part of that rather prejudiced question to the reality that over the last decade a bigger proportion of a more successful economy, a bigger GDP, has been devoted to helping people by way of the social security system. Obviously, I do not expect him to say that in public, but I hope that in private he will consider that point. The statement is not concerned with increasing or decreasing that amount. It is concerned with how we effectively use structures and systems to deliver benefits and ensure that claimants are well served.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): My right hon. Friend's statement will be welcome if for no other reason than that it may help to eliminate the problem that I had last weekend when a constituent brought to me a round robin letter from the DSS printed "Dear", with "Mr. Chapman" written in, saying that it regretted to advise him that, after five years of miscalculation, he owed the DSS £200-odd but that it would let him off for four years and that he would have to pay for only one year. If we can eliminate such nonsense by having agencies, it will be very welcome.

Will my right hon. Friend take the opportunity to rebut the civil servants in his Department who wrote a report

[Mr. Richard Holt]

saying that if senior civil servants went to live in the north-east of England they would find it an alien culture? If they are to have better industrial relations with the 10,000 people in that part of the world senior civil servants ought to relocate there.

Mr. Moore: On the last point, I obviously do not know of the document to which my hon. Friend has referred. If he will let me have it, I may be able to comment. It does not fit with the fact that the largest single centre of operations of my Department is in the north-east, as I said earlier. I have said time and time again, as have my officials, that we are delighted with the surroundings and with the staff. We have excellent support and contributions from them. I trust that my hon. Friend will welcome the enhanced responsibility and the greater delegation of responsibility that will enable us to get better results for his constituents from our excellent staff.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Has the Secretary of State checked the position with the Common Market? Is he aware that if the Government do not check things out with the Common Market bureaucrats, they may end up as his right hon. Friend did yesterday being out-voted 11:1? Does he recall that the Common Market overturned the position on the invalid care allowance? Does not he understand that the Common Market has a stranglehold over the Government and that he should check that everything is all right so that we do not have to consider orders late at night? Which agency will be in charge of the provision of cardboard boxes on the Embankment?

Mr. Moore: I must draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the utter and complete support that the hon. Gentleman clearly wishes to give her. No stronger endorsement of her actions on the Community could have come from the House. I will not check with the NUM executive before I make further decisions.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): I welcome my right hon. Friend's thoroughly sensible reforms. Will he confirm two things? First, will he confirm that, for the first time, we shall have in this country a clear arm's length relationship between those responsible for delivering the service and those responsible for monitoring its quality? Secondly, will he confirm that in considering the quality of service being delivered it will be possible to introduce competitive comparison so that we can see which parts of the country are better than others? In such a comparison I am certain that the DSS office in Canterbury, with which I have had many dealings, will come out well.

Mr. Moore: As I have said two or three times, clarity of responsibility and the way in which it is delegated will improve the service that can be given. Clearly, local managers will want to look at the nature of their targets and the degree to which they can achieve the national targets that will be set. We shall have to consider carefully whether these should be published. Obviously there will be special circumstances in some areas with particular difficulties, and it may be invidious for some parts of the country to have those published. I shall consider the point because the way in which targets are adhered to is the way in which service is improved. Therefore, it is an important feature of the proposals at local as well as national level.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): How much are the chief executives to be paid? Will the proposal not be damaging to the morale of excellent managers? Most hon. Members have first-class managers in their areas, as I do in Bathgate. They are extremely helpful and skilful and have given their lives to their jobs. Will not their morale be dented, to say the least, if chief executives are drawn from outwith the service?

Mr. Moore: I did not say that they would be drawn from outside the service. I said that there would be open competition, which is entirely different. I, like the hon. Gentleman, have the highest regard for many of the senior civil servants with whom I have had the privilege to work over 10 years. I trust that they will have no difficulty facing the competition that we are talking about. The framework documents will deal with the way in which we develop performance-related pay within the Civil Service. We shall consider all that with our friends in the Treasury over the next few months. I do not believe that the devolved responsibility that we are talking about will do other than encourage the performance that the hon. Gentleman and I expect to see from the Civil Service.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): My right hon. Friend's plans to streamline the service and to make the lives of those who work in it more rewarding are most welcome. The service that I and my constituents get in Stockport is second to none. One great headache is the take-up of family credit. My hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) mentioned the tax credit scheme. Will my right hon. Friend consider again the possibility of family credit being paid through the wage packet or at least giving the recipient the option of having it paid in that way?

Mr. Moore: I am not sure, Mr. Speaker, that you would allow me to develop a debate on family credit other than to say that the new campaign for take-up is going incredibly well and that large numbers of people are applying. I am conscious of my hon. Friend's recognition of the work of the Stockport office. I have visited it and I agree with what he said. I hope that he will help to see that more is done, for example, on family credit in North Fylde where excellent work is done by the staff in that headquarters.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Can the Minister tell us the total cost of the plans and the consultants who will be employed? One of my constituents who had to grovel for a few pounds from the social fund loan scheme will be interested to know how many millions of pounds will be poured into this. Would it not be a better solution to ensure that more money is spent on refurbishing premises, that more staff are employed at decent rates of pay, and that there is a halt to the Government's attack on the poorest by cuts because of expenditure by his Department on fortifications at every DSS counter? Would not such priorities lead to a better scheme than the lopsided arrangement that he has proposed?

Mr. Moore. I have to stress that there have been no cuts but a continuing pattern of increased expenditure. Obviously the hon. Gentleman did not listen to the beginning of my statement when I said precisely that my Department is involved in massive expenditure of £48 billion on benefit. I stressed that £2 billion would be spent on administration—not an insignificant amount. Within

the overall expenditure pattern the efficient way in which that is spent will be part and parcel of the development of the whole agency structure.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): My right hon. Friend will recall that I wrote to him to congratulate Mr. Griffiths and his excellent team on the way in which they conduct the Department's affairs on the Isle of Wight. Can my right hon. Friend say what comfort there will be in the statement for the taxpayer when the Department of Employment offices are co-located with social security offices, giving rise to the anomaly whereby a claimant has to go to one office to sign on before going to the other—a tremendous duplication of effort and of employees? Does he agree that it is clear from the statement from the Opposition Front Bench that Opposition Members have not visited refurbished offices which, within days of opening, are reduced to the standard of a four-ale, spit and sawdust pub, where claimants use the floor as an ashtray, damage the new furniture and often spend a lot of time insulting the excellent staff?

Mr. Moore: I acknowledge that my hon. Friend has written to me complimenting his local office I also recognise that the taxpayer will benefit, as will staff and claimants. The taxpayer will see a more cost-effective, more efficient and businesslike management of social security operations. That is bound to benefit the taxpayer in the long run. Equally, my hon. Friend was right to remind the House that there has been an extensive programme throughout Great Britain of expenditure on refurbishing social security offices. That has been going on for a considerable period. In many parts of the country that is acknowledged.

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): While the Minister's statement has been proceeding, we have been able to obtain the report that he placed in the Library. I invite him to comment on paragraph 5.5, which states that the agency

"should enable Ministers to adopt a more explicitly arm's length approach to the day-to-day details of how operations are run. In answering on particular cases, for instance, they could distinguish more clearly between issues which were the delegated responsibility of the Agency and those which were not."

If those two sentences do not mean reduced accountability to Parliament and to constituency Members, what do they mean?

Mr. Moore: I fully appreciate that the hon. Gentleman has not had time to consider the point he just made, in referring to a quotation from the agency study report. The hon. Gentleman might have listened to my remark that concerned policy decision-making of the Government consequential upon their own decisions as opposed to the recommendations of the report. Today, I have been talking about the report's recommendations on agency structures. I answered specifically in regard to the Government's accountability and that of Ministers.

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): That is what you said before.

Mr. Moore: It might be easier for me to complete the sentence more quickly if the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), can contain her sedentary interruptions.

The present situation, whereby the majority of right hon. and hon. Members write to local offices will continue post the establishment of the agencies. But they do not have to do so, and will retain post the change the absolute constitutional right to write to Ministers. That may be a less effective way of helping their constituents and in most cases will , as the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) says, delay matters. The rights of right hon. and hon. Members will not change in any way, insofar as there will now be agenices having effective executive heads accountable to the PAC.

Right hon. and hon. Members may find it preferable to refer specific administrative problems and queries to the agency in the first instance, if they are seeking effective change. If right hon. and hon. Members have challenges to make on policy or administration methods, they will continue to be matters for Ministers, as they always have been. Right hon. and hon. Members will be in no way constrained from exercising their constitutional rights.

National Engineering Laboratory, East Kilbride

4.21 pm

Mr. Adam Ingram (East Kilbride): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the future of the national engineering laboratory at East Kilbride."

The Government announced today in a written answer that they propose to restructure and privatise one of the world's foremost research establishments. That will mean more than 200 jobs being lost in a key area of innovative industrial and engineering research. Employees remaining in the restructured organisation will be compulsorily transferred out of the Civil Service, with a loss of pension rights and certain conditions of service.

The national engineering laboratory is a world leader in future developments such as alternative energy, biotechnology and robotics—and every area of industry has gained from its work. Vehicles, ships, construction, manufacturing, new materials, oil rigs, pumps, fans and even sports equipment have all been improved by the laboratory's innovative and speculative research, which will all be put at risk by the Government's decision.

Instead of having dynamic, self-motivating research teams working at the forefront of technological change, research will be undertaken only on the basis of what profit there is in it. The overall good done to British industry by the laboratory's work will no longer be an overriding feature.

The national engineering laboratory is an important public resource established to benefit all of British industry. That resource is destroyed by the Government's announcement, which was sneaked through on the back of a written answer—showing contempt for the NEL's work force and complete disregard for the future of this country's manufacturing industry.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the future of the national engineering laboratory at East Kilbride."

I listened with care to what the hon. Gentleman said, but, as he knows, my sole duty in considering an application under Standing Order No. 20 is to decide whether it should be given priority over the business set down for this evening or for tomorrow. I regret that I do not consider that the matter that he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20 and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House. I hope that he will find other means of bringing the matter before the House.

Points of Order

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I refer to the manner in which the announcement concerning the future of the national engineering laboratory at East Kilbride has been dealt with by the Minister concerned. I ask for your views, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the practice whereby Government Ministers arrange for one of their right hon. or hon. Friends who has no connection with the constituency involved to put down a question on a topic dramatically affecting the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram). You must agree, Mr. Speaker, that that practice is deplorable. What is wrong with the Government telling my hon. Friend of their decision and then allowing him to put down a question, so that he would receive a reply rather than an English Conservative Member? Would that not be more considerate in the difficult circumstances confronting the constituency Member concerned? It is a final insult when an hon. Member representing a constituency 600 or 700 miles away, and who has never been in East Kilbride in his life, puts down a question and receives a ministerial reply affecting the livelihods of 400 or 500 people in the constituency of one of my hon. Friends.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps it would be unwise of me to express a view on the hon. Gentleman's remarks, but I take note of them and have some sympathy with his point of view.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker, can your remark about it being unwise to comment be interpreted as meaning that in your public and private capacity you deplore what has been done as being incredibly bad manners towards the House of Commons? Is it not a fact that even going back as far as Jack Maclay, the Viscount Muirshiel, whenever Secretaries of State for Scotland had difficult information to impart to Labour Members, they were invited to the Scottish Office and the Minister responsible had the good manners to explain beforehand what was about to happen? Is not one of the Government's problems that they lack good manners?

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps I should reinforce my observation that it is unwise for Mr. Speaker to say too much about his own views.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 9 JUNE

Members successful in the Ballot were:

Mr. Chris Butler
Mr. Gavin Strang
Mr. George J. Buckley

Defamation

4.27 pm

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to facilitate the bringing of proceedings for defamation.

Some people are rich and some people are famous, and some people are both. If one is famous, more people are likely to sit up and take notice if one is unfairly maligned. But if one wishes to do something about retrieving one's good name, it is more important to be rich because libel and slander actions tend to be long drawn out and costly. One should not even think about starting such an action unless one can lay hands on £50,000 as a bare minimum.

Many people imagine that defamation cases invariably involve the media but my interest in the matter was originally aroused by that of my constituent John Munro who, in his time, has probably written to nearly every right hon. and hon. Member of the House. Mr. Munro claims that he was libelled in letters when he worked for Pendle council a dozen years ago. He subsequently took counsel's opinion and was advised that he had a better than even chance of convincing a jury that he was the victim of defamation. Our former colleague, Sir Leon Brittan QC, was also consulted and concluded that, in his opinion

"a jury would be likely to find, on the balance of probabilities"

that Mr. Munro's accuser was "guilty of malice".

But despite having a case, my constituent was never able to bring it because, as a result of the alleged libel, he was dismissed and has been permanently unemployed ever since. The fact that his unemployment has cost the taxpayer at least £150,000 in the intervening period suggests that making it easier for people without substantial means to come to court may not necessarily always result in an extra burden on the Exchequer.

My Defamation Bill is intended to ensure that the legal process is open to all as a means of righting a wrong when it affects a person's reputation and perhaps his ability to earn a living. Not being a lawyer, I tread on this ground, littered with pitfalls, with some trepidation. I have come to the conclusion that there is no single solution to the problem, so my measure incorporates several options which could be open to people in different circumstances.

Defamation is the only civil action for which legal aid is unavailable. While accepting that this can be unfair, successive Governments have argued that in these cases there are unique difficulties in establishing before a trial whether a plaintiff has a reasonable case and should therefore be granted financial assistance. The extra cost to the taxpayer resulting from a proliferation of expensive cases would be, it is said, insupportable.

I agree that it is more difficult to make an assessment than in, say, cases of personal injury. Nevertheless, it is not impossible. This Bill therefore makes legal aid available for defamation, limited in the first instance to seeking counsel's opinion. Only if that is favourable would further legal aid be granted. That was a recommendation, supported by the Bar Council and the Law Society, of the Faulks committee on defamation which reported in 1975 but which was never implemented.

Legal aid is not the solution for all potential litigants. For example, those above the legal aid limits would be excluded, even though their incomes were totally insufficient to support proceedings for defamation. One of the Government's Green Papers on the reform of the legal profession raises the possibility of introducing contingency fees which exist in the United States. The prospect of no win, no fee, arrangements has not received an enthusiastic reception here, but the system could be particularly appropriate in some defamation cases, in that it could enable some cases to proceed without the bulk of the cost falling on the taxpayer. As the Green Paper suggests, contingency fee arrangements could be particularly helpful to

"small litigants who can be expected rarely to resort to the courts for the resolution of their disputes".

I recognise that there are difficulties to be considered, but it seems to be an option for defamation cases which should be included in the Bill.

I also commend to the House, and incorporate in my Bill, the proposal of Mr. Justice Hoffman which would enable plaintiffs who are willing to confine their claim to an order for correction and damages of less than £5,000 to apply to have a decision reached by a judge on the basis of affidavit evidence without a jury. For many victims of the media, a correction published within a reasonable period and modest damages would be greatly preferable to the prospect of years of stress and uncertainty, with issues raised again long after the event.

I opposed the Right of Reply Bill as unworkable, too wide-ranging and as an unreasonable rein on press freedom. This proposal, on the other hand, provides a sensible solution to numerous cases of injustice. It also has obvious benefits for defendants who, under the present system, as Mr. Justice Hoffman points out,

"complain that however unmeritorious or trivial the claim, the costs of defending force them to make an offer to settle. This pressure,"

he states

"feeds upon itself and has been increased by recent large jury awards".

Many people have been amazed not only by the scale of recent awards of libel damages, but by their apparent inconsistency. Uncertainty of this kind is not a good thing for plaintiffs, for defendants or for the interests of justice generally. So I propose to include in my Bill a provision, which does not currently exist, for judges to be able to direct juries on the appropriate price bracket they should consider. This suggestion has been endorsed by the distinguished libel lawyer Mr. Peter Carter-Ruck. Interestingly, a statement by Mr. Carter-Ruck was quoted in the Faulkes report, and it was valid in 1975. He said —this is indicative of the way in which things have changed—

"A number of newspapers of national importance to the community are fighting to maintain their slender margins of profit and for whom to fight a heavy libel action could be a crippling blow".

Today the wheel has turned full circle. When considering whether to thrust their knives into a potential victim, some of the now profitable tabloids which care little for high standards of journalism make an assessment of his or her financial standing, which determines an ability to fight back. They may calculate that damages arising out of a likely libel action are outweighed by the extra circulation that they can hope to achieve. It used to be, "Print and be damned." It is now, "Print an extra million copies." That cannot be right and something should and must be done.

In response to concern about the right of reply and the protection of privacy, my hon. Friend the Minister of

[Mr. Gary Waller]

State, Home Office, announced an imminent review of the press. If my Bill fails to proceed, the Government should adapt their objectives in the context of that review.

The interaction between the proposals that I have put forward must be discussed. As a package I believe that they overcome the problem of high additional costs falling on the taxpayer, and all its provisions would weed out petty cases of little merit. This measure is timely because of concern about media abuses and the debate about the future of the legal profession.

The present system is a lottery, but it has a high entry charge, which most people cannot afford to pay. Good luck to Elton John, Koo Stark, Jeffrey Archer and George Michael, who are among those who have won well-publicised defamation cases or achieved large settlements. We need, however, a new system to replace the outdated Defamation Act 1952—one which recognises that a poor man's good name is just as worthy of protection as that of his wealthier neighbour. That is what my Bill is about.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Gary Waller, Mr. Peter Archer, Mrs. Rosie Barnes, Mr. David Blunkett, Mr. Chris Butler, Mr. Alex Carlile, Mr. Neil Hamilton, Mr. Kenneth Hind, Mr. Charles Kennedy, Mr. Merlyn Rees, Mrs. Ann Taylor and Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones.

DEFAMATION BILL

Mr. Gary Waller accordingly presented a Bill to facilitate the bringing of proceedings for defamation: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 7 July and to be printed. [Bill 143.]

Orders of the Day

Employment Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New Clause 6

DISCRIMINATION AS RESPECTS VOCATIONAL TRAINING

'(1) The following section shall be substituted for section 14 of the 1975 Act—

"Persons concerned with provision of vocational training

14.—(1) It is unlawful, in the case of a woman seeking or undergoing training which would help fit her for any employment, for any person who provides, or makes arrangements for the provision of, facilities for such training to discriminate against her—

(a) in the terms on which that person affords her access to any training course or other facilities concerned with such training, or

(b) by refusing or deliberately omitting to afford her such access, or

(c) by terminating her training,or

(d) by subjecting her to any detriment during the course of her training.

(2) Subsection (1) does not apply to—

(a) discrimination which is rendered unlawful by section 6(1) or (2) of section 22 or 23, or

(b) discrimination which would be rendered unlawful by any of those provisions but for the operation of any other provision of this Act."

(2) The following section shall be substituted for section 13 of the Race Relations Act 1976—

"Persons concerned with provision of vocational training

13.—(1) It is unlawful, in the case of an individual seeking or undergoing training which would help fit him for any employment, for any person who provides, or makes arrangements for the provision of, facilities for such training to discriminate against him—

(a) in the terms on which that person affords him access to any training course or other facilities concerned with such training; or

(b) by refusing or deliberately omitting to afford him such access; or

(c) by terminating his training; or

(d) by subjecting him to any detriment during the course of his training.

(2) Subsection (1) does not apply to—

(a) discrimination which is rendered unlawful by section 4(1) or (2) or section 17 or 18; or

(b) discrimination which would be rendered unlawful by any of those provisions but for the operation of any other provision of this Act."

(3) In section 37 of the Race Relations Act 1976 (discriminatory training by certain bodies)—

(a) in subsection (1), for "a training body" and "it appears to the training body" there shall be substituted "any person" and "it reasonably appears to that person" respectively;

(b) in subsection (2), for "it appears to a training body" and "the training body" there shall be substituted "it reasonably appears to any person" and "that person" respectively; and

(c) the following subsection shall be substituted for subsection (3)—

"(3) The preceding provisions of this section shall not apply to any discrimination which is rendered unlawful by section 4(1) or (2).".'.—*[Mr. Nicholls.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

4.36 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Patrick Nicholls): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With the new clause it will be convenient to discuss at the same time Government amendments Nos. 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16 and 17.

Mr. Nicholls: The Opposition moved two new clauses in Committee which sought to amend the Race Relations Act 1976. We looked at those new clauses on their merits and we accept that many aspects of the changes that Opposition Members proposed are desirable and would improve the operation of the Race Relations Act by removing bureaucracy. However, we could not agree to the Opposition new clauses as they stood because of difficulties with their drafting. We therefore agreed, subject to the Opposition withdrawing the new clauses, to introduce a Government new clause which would achieve the amendments that the Opposition were seeking and which would also amend where necessary the Sex Discrimination Act 1975.

Subsections (1) and (2) of the new clause 6 would amend section 14 of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and section 13 of the Race Relations Act 1976 respectively. The two sections are identical in all relevant respects. Their main purpose is to bring within the jurisdiction of industrial tribunals sex and race discrimination by certain bodies which provide employment-related training, while not depriving employers who already train of the defences that they could at present enjoy under section 4 of the 1976 Act.

Amendments Nos. 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15 and 16 are consequential amendments which deal with when the new clause will come into effect and amend references to the current section 14 of the 1975 Act and sections 13 and 37 of the 1976 Act in the Employment Bill, the 1975 Act, the 1976 Act and the 1988 Employment Act to take account of the provisions of the new clause. Amendment No. 17 inserts a reference to training in the long title of the Bill.

Therefore, new clause 6 and the amendments being taken with it fulfil exactly the aims that Opposition Members had in moving their original clause. I commend the new clause and the consequential amendments to the House.

Ms. Jo Richardson (Barking): The Minister is right to say that the new clause and consequential amendments flow from amendments which the Opposition moved in Committee and withdrew on the undertaking that the Government would look into the matter.

As we pointed out in Committee, the clause that we moved at that stage had been drafted by the Commission for Racial Equality. I am a bit surprised to find that it did not get it right. As I also said in Committee, one day we shall have to have a seminar on drafting because the Government always seem to have the edge on drafting.

The purpose of our new clause was to extend the protection of the legislation against racial discrimination to the treatment of trainees on work experience and work placements. The Government have given effect to that. The wording of their new clause is substantially the same as that of ours, which was drafted by the CRE. It extends protection in the same way. It also extends to women trainees the protections provided in the two equality statutes—the Race Relations Act and the Sex Discrimination Act. I am glad that the Government have done what they said that they would do. They have kept their word on this occasion.

Mr. Nicholls: As always.

Ms. Richardson: We shall see about that.

The new clause will do nothing but good.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 7

POWER TO EXEMPT DISCRIMINATION IN FAVOUR OF LONE PARENTS IN CONNECTION WITH TRAINING FOR EMPLOYMENT

'(1) If the Secretary of State by order so provides in relation to any description of training for employment specified in the order, this section shall apply to such special treatment afforded to lone parents in connection with any such training (whether by the payment of allowances or the fixing of special conditions for access to facilities for training or otherwise) as is specified or referred to in the order.

(2) Where this section applies to any treatment afforded to lone parents, neither the treatment so afforded nor any act done in the implementation of any such treatment shall be regarded for the purposes of the 1975 Act as giving rise to any discrimination falling within section 3 of that Act (discrimination against married persons for purposes of Part II of that Act).

(3) In this section—

(a) "employment" and "training" have the same meaning as in the Employment and Training Act 1973; and

(b) "lone parent" has the same meaning as it has for the purposes of any regulations made in pursuance of section 20(1)(a) of the Social Security Act 1986 (income support).'—*[Mr. Cope.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. John Cope): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 4.

Mr. Cope: This clause stems from the provision in employment training of special help for lone parents. When ET was designed by the Manpower Services Commission in January 1988, it included special help for lone parents with child care problems. As the House will recall, we accepted all the MSC's proposals on ET, including this one. As a result, lone parents of either sex can receive child care costs of up to £50 a week per child if they need to pay for child care when they undertake training on ET.

These advantages are available to lone parents, and lone guardians, regardless of their sex or marital status. We accepted these special provisions for lone parents being proposed by the MSC because they are a disadvantaged group who find it difficult to return to the labour market. These measures help them to do so and were widely welcomed when they were first proposed by the MSC and when they were introduced into ET. Many lone parents who would not otherwise have been able to enter ET and return to the labour market are being helped by these provisions. Over 3,500 lone parents in ET are

[Mr. Cope]

receiving help with child care costs. About 2,000 lone parents are now in training, having entered through the special eligibility route, which we also introduced.

However, as things stand, we may have to cancel this help because of an interpretation placed on marital discrimination under section 3 of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 by an industrial tribunal in relation to our payment of child care costs for lone parents in ET. This has placed our special arrangements in jeopardy. Without a clause like this, we would have to pay the same amount to every parent in ET. That would magnify the cost and nullify the advantage that lone parents receive.

I do not believe that that was the intention of section 3 of the 1975 Act. When they introduced the Act, the Labour Government of the day said that the intention was to attack restrictive practices by employers against the employment of married women—the so-called marriage bar. This is a far cry from the sort of special help for lone parents that we are providing under ET. We want to continue to give this special help to lone parents, and that is what the clause is designed to do. It will remove from the scope of marital discrimination under section 3 of the Sex Discrimination Act special treatment afforded to lone parents in named training programmes. It is an enabling clause. It will permit the Secretary of State to make orders specifying special arrangements for access to training, or special payments for lone parents. The Secretary of State would have to specify the particular programme or programmes to which the arrangements would apply. The order would be subject to the negative resolution procedure.

4.45 pm

We shall introduce such an order with regard to employment training to continue the arrangements that I have outlined. We want to continue the status quo in ET and to safeguard the important existing provisions for lone parents. Therefore, if the clause is passed and the Bill becomes law, I propose to come back to the House with a specific order for that purpose in due course. Meanwhile, I commend the new clause and the associated amendment to the House.

Ms. Richardson: The Opposition would have preferred it if the Government had drafted a new clause that would have opened up training provision and child care allowances for women in general. The Minister acknowledged that there was a difficulty—in other words, a single group, in this case lone parents, is being catered for specially. We understand the reasons for that. We shall not oppose what the Government are doing because half a loaf is better than none, and lone parents are in a special position. Some 90 per cent. of the 1 million lone parents are women, and many of them are desperate for jobs and training, and need considerable help.

Although we shall not oppose the new clause, we are committed to opening up training provision and child care provision in general, and regard this simply as a first step. It would have been nice if the Government, with their recent but much vaunted support for child care in the 1990s with the demographic changes that are coming about, had been able to be generous and, as well as giving this special provision to one-parent families on ET, extended it right across the board to all women. However, we shall not get any more out of the Government and at least this new clause will be of benefit for one-parent families. Therefore, I welcome it.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 1

QUALIFYING HOURS FOR EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS

'The 1978 Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act shall be amended as follows:

(a) in paragraph 3 of Schedule 13 (computation of period of employment), the words "for sixteen hours or more" shall be left out.

(b) paragraphs 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 of Schedule 13 shall cease to have effect.'.—*[Ms. Richardson.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Ms. Richardson: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we may discuss new clause 18—*Amendment to computation of the period of employment*—

'In schedule 13 to the 1987 Act (Computation of the perod of employment—

(a) for the references to "sixteen hours" in paragraphs 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 there shall be substituted references to "ten hours".

(b) for the references to "eight hours" in paragraphs 5, 6, 7 and 8 there shall be substituted references to "five hours.".'.

Ms. Richardson: New clause 1, if passed, would mean that all employees would qualify for major employment rights from their first day of employment. By major employment rights I mean such rights as the right to seek redress before an industrial tribunal, the right to redundancy pay, the right to time off to look for another job when the employee has been made redundant, the right for the job back after maternity leave and to a higher rate of maternity pay. Currently, employees qualify for those rights after two years' continuous service if they work more than 16 hours a week or after five years' service if they work between eight and 16 hours a week.

New clause 1 would put all employees on the same footing. From day one of their employment, regardless of how few or how many hours they work each week, all employees would qualify for full employment rights and, much as they do now, would be protected against discrimination on the grounds of sex, race or trade union membership. All women would qualify for the higher rate of maternity pay—90 per cent. of salary. In this day and age, it is scandalous that women must work for two years to achieve that right. If they do not do so, they receive only £35·25 a week. The Government surely realise that the financial needs of a pregnant woman are not affected by their having worked for six months or one year. The plain fact of the matter is that if a woman is pregnant, she is pregnant, and all the other considerations do not affect her condition. The qualifying criteria disproportionately hit women. Nine out of 10 part-time workers are women. Nine out of 10 people who must work five years or more part time to obtain rights, or who fall completely outside employment rights, are women—the disadvantaged majority of the population.

Three-fifths of part-time workers are women with dependent children. Labour Members do not devalue

part-time work. We recognise its value to employers and its practicality for employees, which is why we feel strongly that part-timers should have full and proper rights.

Part-time work has become a major feature of the British economy since the last war. In 1951, only one in 25 employees worked part-time, but today it is as many as one in four. Many of the new employment opportunities about which the Government are wont to boast are part-time. All projections show that the trend will continue into the 1990s. Surely it is time that the Government recognised the changing labour market and adjusted our employment laws accordingly. Apart from Ireland, we are the only country in the European Community to discriminate between part-time and full-time workers. Is that not a scandal? The Select Committee on European Legislation described the legislation as "arbitrary".

Labour Members object to employers employing more and more part-timers precisely because part-timers have few or no employment rights. Companies use part-timers because they allow them what the Government call a "flexible labour market". Labour Members are interested in a flexible market, but we want it to be genuinely flexible and to bend in favour of employees and employers. Any part-time employer will confirm that the market is flexible in favour of the employer.

Too often the Government talk of the flexible attitude to employment when what they truly mean is the right of management to hire and fire at will. Companies use part-timers to save on wages. A woman in part-time, non-manual employment earns on average 48 per cent. of a full-time man's wage, and 61·3 per cent. if she is in a manual industry. It is scandalous to think that in 1989 women still earn so little compared with a man's average wage. The true position is likely to be worse as those figures are based on the new earnings survey, which excludes employees whose earnings fall below the threshold for income tax. It is estimated that 25 per cent. of part-time workers are not included in the survey. If one made a projection, it would show that the figures are much worse than they are at present.

Companies use part-time workers to avoid pension payments and holiday entitlement. Using two part-timers instead of one full-timer, they can save on national insurance contributions. Labour Members are in favour of job sharing, but we are not in favour of job splitting, which is preferred by employers. The National Union of Public Employees, which represents many part-time workers, has made some simple but interesting calculations. An employer employing two part-time workers on £39 a week pays no national insurance contributions, but for a full-timer on £78 a week the employer must pay in excess of £5 a week. Part-timers lose out on contributory national insurance benefits, and if they are sacked they are not entitled to unemployment benefit. They can also lose out on profit-sharing agreements, occupational sick pay, special leave entitlements, early retirement provisions, staff discount schemes and subsidised loans. All those benefits are offered not to part-timers but to full-timers. Part-timers lose out all round. Employers exploit that, and in their actions enjoy the full support of the Government.

This Government increased the qualifying period from six months to two years for employment rights. A couple of years ago, this Government veteod an EEC draft directive—they are fond of doing so—designed to give equal rights to part-timers and full-timers throughout Europe. In the 1986 White Paper, "Building Businesses . . . Not Barriers", this Government proposed reducing employment rights still further. The proposals included changing the eight to 16 hours threshold to 12 to 20 hours. Employees falling within those hours would have to work five years to qualify. Those working less than 12 hours would lose all their rights. I appreciate that the Under-Secretary of State for Employment, the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls), is not present —yes, he is; that shows just how invisible he is—but at the beginning of the year he said that the proposals could not come into force. I wonder whether he will repeat that assurance. He has been making many notes as I have been speaking. Will he assure the House that he will not attempt to subject race, sex or trade union discrimination to any qualifying criteria?

The Labout party is committed to full employment rights for all employees. If people take part time-work because no full-time work is available, we shall endeavour to ensure that the absence is genuine and that an employee's pay does not suffer. We shall also endeavour to unscramble the vicious circle in which many women find themselves. For many women, part-time work is the only way of combining work and family responsibilities such as running the home, looking after children and sick, disabled or elderly relatives and, often, their husbands. Some 63 per cent. of women who work part time have dependent children, compared with only 21 per cent. of women who work full time. The reduction in social services engineered by the Government, together with their dismissive attitude to child care facilities, makes this problem worse.

5 pm

Yesterday, I briefly took part in a debate on child care which was organised by the European Movement. All the parties were invited and all except one sent a representative to discuss their plans. Guess which one did not? The Tory party. That fact was noted.

Unfortunately, part-time work is not always available in the better-paid occupations and, as a result, women returning from maternity leave are often forced into low-paid part-time jobs, and the vicious circle continues. The only way out is to open up to part-time workers jobs in all occupations and at all levels. The first step is to guarantee the same rights for everyone. The trade union movement is aware of this idea and in the past two years has taken major steps to recruit part-time workers. The General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union and the Transport and General Workers Union have carried out a "Link Up" campaign and have done an excellent job in informing the nation's 6 million temporary and part-time women workers of their limited rights. When new clause 1 becomes law—either now, if the Minister accepts it, or after the next general election when there is a decent Employment Act—those rights will be the same as for everyone else.

I challenge the Government: if they are committed to the idea of women joining the work force and to the concept that part-time work is a good thing for people to do, and not just something that is convenient for employers, they will support the new clause. We shall rejoice at that.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I apologise for not being present at the beginning of the remarks by the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson).

[Mr. James Wallace]

New clause 18 differs from new clause 1 because we believe that there should be a qualifying period, although it is short compared with that provided for in the present statutory provisions. We argue that there should be a minimum number of average hours worked per week before an employee can take a claim to an industrial tribunal. We make that distinction because we are not in favour of abolishing the qualifying period. There must be some benchmark by which it is decided that a person is in regular employment. On purely practical grounds, I foresee difficulties under new clause 1 in determining whether a person is in employment.

Many of the arguments that I would advance in support of new clause 18 are similar to those that were advanced by the hon. Member for Barking. Given demographic forces, it is clear that the size of the work force is likely to fall over the coming decades and that people will be persuaded to return to the labour market to do part-time work. That trend has already begun. On Second Reading and in Committee it was said that the Bill's purpose was to sweep away barriers and to encourage people to return to the labour force. New clause 18 would provide one way to encourage people to take up part-time work.

Working 10 hours a week is equivalent to working a few hours every afternoon. The offer of rights to part-time workers could act as a positive incentive to bring people back into the labour market. Steps should be taken to give people more rights. People in part-time employment often do not have as many rights as full-time workers or have the protection offered by health and safety legislation. One of the subsequent new clauses deals with that matter, about which the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) is concerned. Psychological barriers prevent people from taking up part-time work.

On a more technical matter, employees can lose some of their rights even if they have been working for a company for more that five years if they do not work more than an average of eight hours a week. As people get older, they may see more sense in working fewer hours. Society would find it unacceptable if the rights of people who had spent a considerable part of their lives working for a company declined as their working hours decreased.

I shall not detain the House because the hon. Member for Barking has covered many points. When legislating on employment rights, it is our duty not to ignore the contribution made by a substantial part of the work force who are working part time and, as the Treasury Bench constantly reminds us, playing a valuable part in our economic life. They are entitled to rights and protection. We should encourage more people to join the labour force. New clause 18 would do that in a more modified way than new clause 1. We believe that there must be a qualifying period. Although we shall support new clause 1—to show our support for the principle behind it—I believe that new clause 18 would, in practice, be more workable.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): My hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) put our case so powerfully and conclusively from the Labour Front Bench that I thought that the Minister would immediately get up and say that he accepted the new clause, and we could have disposed of it. I can think of no good argument that he can produce against my hon. Friend's speech. It appears, however, that the Government may be thinking of resisting our proposition.

There has been a transformation in the labour market in terms of the numbers in part-time employment. The House of Commons and anyone who seeks to protect workers must take account of all the new developments. The last Labour Government surveyed what was happening and introduced for the first time provisions to protect maternity grants and introduced provisions to protect women. I cannot pretend that we took the legislation as far as we would have wished, but we did our best. We put into operation the Equal Pay Act 1970, which had been introduced five years before by Barbara Castle when she was at the Department of Employment and Productivity.

Given the development of our labour market, it is necessary to have legislation of this character. The Minister will probably protest and say, "This new clause will make it more difficult to take people back into employment or get people into employment." That is a good excuse for having no protection. The Government will probably continue resisting these measures until the last moment. They will be swept away because of their attitude on this and other matters.

This measure will have to be introduced by a Labour Government—that is by far the best approach. Alternatively, the Government may be humiliated on this matter, as they have been on so many others. The discussions in the European Parliament are bound to affect legislation of this kind. There is no doubt that at some stage the Government will have to decide whether to catch up with the legislation that is made under European Community arrangements. The Government have a shameful record in having dodged the principles and practices introduced in reasonable European reforms. They have an even more shameful record, if that is possible, in going back on understandings under International Labour Organisation arrangements which have been in existence for generations. They have shown that, wherever they can, they seek out some way in which to retreat from the advances that have been made in this area.

The case has now become overwhelming. As my hon. Friend the Member for Barking explained, part-time employment has properly become an essential part of employment. We are not complaining about that. However, the Government and the country generally must accommodate such work and ensure that we obtain justice for women, young people and others who are part-time workers. The only way in which that will be achieved is by a change in the law. I hope that the Minister will show a little generosity and accept new clause 1. If he does not accept new clause 1, either a similar proposal will be introduced by the next Government or it will be introduced even more quickly, because the Government will have to bow to what is done in Europe.

My hon. Friend the Member for Barking referred to Britain's record in this matter. Only Britain and Ireland lag behind other European Community countries and that is shameful. Part-time employment has increased in many other EC countries in exactly the same way and it is a common phenomenon of modern society. This Government are pretty well the most reactionary Government in Western Europe and that is why, I presume, we shall get another no from the Minister today.

Mr. Nicholls: This has been a short debate, but it has not been without its interesting points. Before I deal with the remarkable speech of the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), I want to deal with some of the general propositions advanced by the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson).

We are dealing with two approaches to the same problem. First, there is the optimistic—or unrealistic—approach of the hon. Member for Barking. Perhaps one might call it the whole hog approach. New clause 1 proposes that the hours qualifications would go entirely. Secondly, there is the realistic—or half hog—approach of the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), who seeks to reduce the present 16 hours and eight hours to 10 hours and five hours respectively. In both cases, one has to address the question whether that would increase employment opportunities and whether it would produce any significant advantages for those presently working full and part-time, whether male or female.

The hon. Member for Barking told us about the figures for women who are part-time workers. I appreciate that in a short speech some concepts are run together, but the assumption running through this debate, as in other similar debates, is that to be a part-time worker means that one has no employment rights because one works fewer than 16 hours a week. That is not correct. Many women are already covered by employment protection legislation. I will quote some figures from the spring 1988 labour force survey. In March 1988, 57 per cent. of women were covered by the main employment protection rights and a further 38 per cent. worked a sufficient number of hours per week to qualify for employment protection, once they had done the necessary qualifying service. Only 6 per cent. of women worked for fewer than eight hours a week and, on that basis, were ineligible for all employment rights.

The same point emerges in relation not only to women, but to part-time workers generally. The 16-hour threshold includes many who are working part-time. Figures from the labour force survey show that 57 per cent. of all those working part-time—that is, fewer than 30 hours a week—work for 16 hours or more and are, therefore, eligible for the main employment protection rights after two years' continuous service, in the same way as ordinary full-time employees. The assumption that part-time workers will be deprived for ever of the ability to have employment rights is remarkable and quite wrong.

The hon. Lady went on to make two further points, one of which encouraged me and the other of which discouraged me and confirmed me in my original opinions. It was encouraging that she made the point, fairly, that the Labour party was not against part-time work. Praise for the sinner that repenteth. It was good to hear that progress was being made. Many of the debates in Committee I have attended seem to have run on the basis that part-time work was always exploitive work, which people took merely because they could not obtain full-time work. The figures are against that. The hon. Lady has helpfully taken the debate further by saying that there is nothing wrong with part-time work per se. However, she then went on to say that many employers were deliberately engineering their employment operations to ensure that they had only part-time workers who could not qualify for employment rights.

5.15 pm

I must repeat one of the points I made a few moments ago. Many part-time workers qualify for full employment rights. The idea that any employer with sense or with any hope of being able to carry on a profitable business would be looking not for well motivated workers who would help his business and profits but would seek to employ people with no employment rights as the be-all and end-all of his employment system is bizarre. Although I hear what the hon. Lady says, I must point out that I have never seen evidence that employers are doing that on any meaningful level, although I agree that there is always an exception who can be quoted to justify a spurious rule.

The hon. Lady asked what had happened to the proposals contained in "Building Businesses . . . Not Barriers", which would reduce the hours still further. It would be a somewhat sterile debate to go too far down that road, except to say that we received a number of representations, which were often critical, about those proposals from those whom we hoped might benefit from them. The proposals are still there, but I need say no more than that. They were not included in the Employment Bill and that is the end of the matter. The hon. Lady asked for an assurance that the Government were not thinking of altering the law so that there would be some sort of qualifying period for race and sex discrimination cases. There is no question of that.

Surely we do not increase people's employment prospects by telling an employer, "The moment you employ this person—from week one, day one, hour one—he has got the full range of employment protection rights and can use those against you. You may even be taken at once to an industrial tribunal. You may succeed there, but you are vulnerable right away." The history of employment protection legislation is a question of balance—a phrase often used, but one that I must use again. On one hand, we have to ensure that those employees who have shown a commitment to their employers and to their work receive employment protection rights. On the other hand, we must ensure that those rights are not so instant and draconian that employment is positively discouraged. To suggest that that process would be advanced by giving people employment rights instantly is a dubious proposition.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland, with his half-hog approach, felt that new clause 18 would have the effect of sweeping barriers away. I appreciate that only half of what I said to the hon. Lady is applicable to him. At least he has conceded—I am not sure how willingly—the principle that there should be some qualifying number of hours, but he also feels that the number of hours should be halved. It depends where one draws the line. I accept that the effects of new clause 18 would not be as deleterious as those of new clause 1, but they would go so far in a particular direction that they would be a force for ill rather than for good.

The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent said that he could think of no good argument for resisting new clause 1. That was a remarkable statement. I can think of one argument that I could give to the right hon. Gentleman, although in itself it is not a good argument. That argument is that when the right hon. Gentleman was Secretary of State for Employment all those years ago—in 1975—the Employment Protection Act introduced the hours thresholds that we are talking about now. In the past 10 years, the Government have shown themselves to be

[Mr. Nicholls]

willing to deal with legislation that was passed by Labour Governments. Those thresholds have not been attacked by us. We have been prepared to say that the thresholds that were introduced by a Labour Government—introduced by the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent as Secretary of State—were appropriate then and are appropriate now. Citing the right hon. Gentleman as authority for anything would not usually convince my hon. Friends that we have got it about right. Of all hon. Members, the right hon. Gentleman who introduced the thresholds cannot say that there is no good argument in favour of them.

Mr. Wallace: The Minister said that there is a balance to be struck. He clearly thinks that the new clause does not get the balance right. He must surely recognise that, since the legislation was first introduced and put on the statute book by the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), things have changed. More people are in part-time employment. With the labour force changing, we want to attract more people to part-time employment. Given the significant changes in the structure of the work force, how would a balance that was struck in 1975 still be appropriate in 1989?

Mr. Nicholls: That is probably a fair point. However, 1975 was so long ago that the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent has perhaps forgotten that he was responsible for the legislation. I do not agree that, merely with the effluxion of time and successful Government policies for reducing the rate of unemployment, the levels are now unacceptable.

Mr. Foot: As the Minister knows so much about the matter, perhaps he will tell us the exact number of women in part-time employment when the legislation was introduced.

Mr. Nicholls: I will not enter the debate on those terms. The right hon. Gentleman said that there was no good argument and then attacked the proposals that he himself brought in. That requires some sort of explanation, but we did not get one. The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland made a better point. He said that perhaps we should consider the matter afresh and ask whether the hours are still acceptable. We believe that the balance must still be struck in this way.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): The Minister really cannot get away with that. The Government have a policy —*[Interruption.]* The Minister can hear all right. He used to hear all right upstairs in Committee. He must realise that the Government's policy is to create more and more part-time work. That is what they are about. Opposition Members are always squealing about full-time work. About 2 millon people cannot get a flipping job, and all that the Minister and the Government can do is to provide part-time work. Opposition Members are thinking about the future. That is what my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) talked about. Never mind 1975. We are talking about the future and the Government's policies on part-time work. The Minister should address that point. He completely ducked my right hon. Friend's intervention. Now come on, let's be knowing.

Mr. Nicholls: The hon. Gentleman's view of these matters is even more antique than that of the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent. The hon. Gentleman has been honest enough to attack the whole——

Mr. Haynes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.I might be 63, but I am not an antique, and I resent that type of remark from a young whippersnapper. He does not know what work is. He is a lawyer. I know what flipping work is, after 35 years in a pit, mate.

Mr. Nicholls: Perhaps it will help the hon. Gentleman if I reiterate that I was saying that his views are antique. I would never dream of taking that argument any further.

As always, the hon. Gentleman is honest enough to attack the whole concept of part-time work. The hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) said that there is nothing wrong with part-time work. I remember a famous exchange in the last Parliament, when the hon. Gentleman derided the fact that, if Government policies went the way in which they were destined to, we might be turned into a nation of waiters. The hon. Gentleman will not accept the word "antique", but he will agree that he has a traditional view of these matters. Bluntly, we have not. We see nothing wrong with service industries, or the concept of part-time work.

When we consider employment protection legislation, we must ask whether it works towards getting people jobs or kills off jobs. The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent compared the Government's record with those of Governments in the rest of Europe. He omitted to point out that unemployment in this country is falling faster than in any other major industrialised nation. At the same time, the majority of part-time workers can actually enjoy the full protection rights to which I referred a moment ago. That shows that we have got the balance about right. It is a matter of judgment where that line lies. We think that we have got it right. The rates were applicable in 1975, and, so far, no case has been made for saying that they are no longer applicable.

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): I am always interested to hear the Minister's response to these matters. He puts his arguments in such a way that he reveals the Government's real motive. He said that the Opposition's proposition would be tantamount to saying to an employer, "From day one, hour one, your employees can have full employment rights and can use them against you." That reveals a lot about the Government's attitude to employment rights. It certainly reveals the Minister's attitude to them. He apparently sees them not as rights to be bestowed upon employees to protect them against exploitation by employers, but as weapons to be used against employers, so, given the Government's favourable treatment of employers as opposed to employees, it is not surprising that they are keen to abolish employment rights. Hon. Members should be grateful to the Minister for at least clarifying the motives behind the legislation.

Ms. Richardson: I am pleased that the debate has suddenly livened up. Naturally, I am disappointed that the Minister should rubbish the serious point that part-time workers actually work. The assumption by some members of the Government and some parts of society seems to be that a part-time worker is a dilettante who does nothing —*[Interruption.]* I do not attribute that remark specifically to the Minister. Some people believe that

part-time workers should not have any rights until they have earned them or qualified for them and done a certain number of hours' work, in case they run away. If, for some reason or other, all part-time workers withdrew their labour, the country would fall to pieces.

I am not saying that we want more or less part-time work. I simply want the word "work" to be respected. People who do part-time work, whether they do it because they have other responsibilities and get no help from the Government to cope with those responsibilities—for example, at home—or whether they are able to do a full-time job, should feel that they are contributing something and getting some rights in return. That is all we are talking about. That is why, quite obviously, other European countries have become more enlightened than the United Kingdom.

I repeat that every country except the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom accords the same rights to part-time workers as it does to full-time workers. It does the Minister's case no good for him to rubbish our argument as pie in the sky that can never be achieved, when many other countries in Europe have achieved it. Their employers and Government institutions are coping with it.

If the Government are serious about their concern that in the 1990s there will be an increasing need, because of demographic changes, for employers to look at the possibilities of employing women workers, they must look seriously and thoughtfully at what part-time work really means. It is no good wishing that, come the 1990s, women will somehow be able to cope with all their other responsibilities and turn up for full-time employment. There will be an increasing number of part-time workers, and more and more women, as they become more confident and articulate, will demand the same rights as full-time workers, to which, indeed, they are entitled.

5.30 pm

I wish that the Government would wake up now, in 1989, to what will happen after 1990. They should think about the difficulties that they are now heaping upon the heads mainly of women by keeping these stupid restrictions. They should put this modest proposal into what is, generally speaking, their ragbag of an Employment Bill.

Mr. Nicholls *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Does the hon. Gentleman wish the leave of the House to speak again?

Mr. Nicholls: If I may.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Mr. Patrick Nicholls.

Mr. Nicholls: I entirely accept what the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) has said, that part-time work has a valuable contribution to make. However, I do not accept what ran through her concluding remarks. The assumption was that, in some way, part-time workers at present are a sort of sub-culture and have no employment rights at all. Some 57 per cent. of all part-time workers already qualify for full rights. The hon. Lady talked—which is understandable—specifically about women, but only 6 per cent. of women are not working for at least eight hours a week, and are therefore not gaining the necessary hours to get themselves full-time rights in the end. Some 94 per cent. are working sufficient hours to get full employment rights in between two and five years.

We do not in any way devalue or deride part-time work. The proposition that must be dealt with is whether the job prospects of those who are currently in work, and those who would like to be, would be automatically enhanced by sweeping away any restrictions on the hours that must be worked. We do not believe for one moment that that case has been made out.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 178, Noes 248.

Division No. 204] **[5.32 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun

Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Meacher, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'de E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Cook and
Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'th's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Maclean and
Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory.

Question accordingly negatived.

5.45 pm

New clause 3

EMPLOYMENT OF YOUNG PERSONS

'.—(1) No young person under the age of eighteen shall be employed without competent adult supervision in the following industries—

(a) mining and quarrying,

(b) the manufacture of coke or smokeless fuel,

(c) construction,

(d) offshore oil and gas.

(2) The Secretary of State for Employment may by order specify industries in which young persons shall not be employed without competent adult supervision in addition to those specified in subsection (1) above.—*[Mr. Strang.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following: New clause 5—*Statistics*—

'The Secretary of State for Employment shall lay before the House of Commons each year statistics which shall show—

(a) the number of persons under eighteen in paid full-time employment,

(b) the average number of hours worked by persons under eighteen in such employment.

(c) the average wages paid to persons under eighteen,

(d) the number of industrial accidents involving persons under eighteen.'.

Amendment No. 40, in clause 8, page 6, line 39, after 'effect', insert

'except insofar as that would be inconsistent with Article 7(8) of the European Social Charter.'.

No. 41, in page 6, line 44, after 'age', insert

'except insofar as any such amendment would be inconsistent with the provisions of Article 7(8) of the European Social Charter.'.

No. 42, in page 7, line 16, after 'age', insert

provided that no provision made in any order under this subsection, shall be inconsistent with Article 7(8) of the European Social Charter.'.

Mr. Strang: The new clauses and the amendments have been tabled in response to the notorious clause 8 of the Bill, which repeals the law that seeks to protect young workers from exploitation by unscrupulous employers. In Committee it became clear that that clause was the most important of the Bill. Many of the regulations that protect young workers derive from the Factories Act 1961 and the Shops Act 1950.

The regulations have the effect of giving young workers protection which, in many circumstances, is desperately needed. The regulations limit the hours of work, provide for meal breaks and, of course, restrict night shift working. By young people we mean those who have left school, but have not yet reached their 18th birthday—in the main 16 and 17-year-olds. The 1985 labour force survey recorded that there were 887,000 such young people in the work force and that no less than 70 per cent. of them worked in areas where current legislation controlled their hours of work.

The origin of clause 8 was mooted in the Government's consultative document "Restrictions on Employment of Young People and the Removal of Sex Discrimination in Legislation" In that document the Government spelt out their proposals for the removal of the controls on the working conditions of young people. The first paragraph of the document refers to the legislation governing young workers and states:

"It is unlikely that such a complex framework of legislation would be introduced today. This document therefore takes as its starting point that it is the maintenance, rather than the repeal, of restrictions on young people's employment that must be justified."

That is an illogical conclusion. The emphasis is on the complexity of the framework of legislation. Of course we recognise that the legislation is complex, indeed it has been built up over more than 100 years, but to say that, because the legislation is complex, the principle—that there must be some protection for young workers—is no longer acceptable is outrageous. It is a reflection of how extreme the Government are that such a clause could come before the House. It is not surprising that such opposition was expressed to the proposals about young people's hours of work, and so on, in the consultative document.

As we would expect, the Trades Union Congress made it clear that it was totally opposed to the proposals. It said:

"The TUC considers that more research is urgently needed into the effects on young workers of extended hours of work, shiftworking and exposure to toxic substances. There is also an urgent need to examine the causes of accidents to young people at work in order to explain the increased risk of accidents that they face. Until this is done, existing legislation protecting young people from long hours, shift or nightwork and other hazards to health and safety, should remain in force."

The Confederation of British Industry recognised the need to maintain legislation. In its response to the consultative document, it said:

"Many CBI members recognise however that young people could be obliged to work excessive and unsocial hours by unscrupulous employers. We would therefore accept some limitation on night work for young people and some general guidance on what are seen as reasonable working hours for them today."

I acknowledge that, in the main, the CBI supports the thrust and vast bulk of the Bill's proposals. However, it is significant that the CBI opposed the sweeping away of the controls.

Most startling of all is the fact that the Government have seen fit to ride roughshod over the response to the document of the Health and Safety Commission. It said:

"that the restrictions may be unnecessarily detailed and elaborate, although not an apparent burden on industry, but that they should not be replaced without some form of control of young persons' hours of work in order to safeguard their welfare and opportunities for education, training, and social development."

It is a measure of how sweeping the proposals are and of the scale of opposition to them that the CBI, TUC and the Government's own Health and Safety Commission opposed such drastic legislative changes.

The Liberal amendments that we are taking with the new clause refer to the Council of Europe's European social charter, which was signed in 1961 and came into force in 1965. Article 7 states:

"With a view to ensuring the effective exercise of the right of children and young persons to protection, the Contracting Parties undertake: to provide that persons under 18 years of age shall not be employed in night work with the exception of certain occupations provided for by national laws or regulations."

The Council of Europe's social charter is purely a statement of objectives. It is interesting that today the European Commission's social charter of workers' rights has been published. I have not studied the contents of that

[Mr. Strang]

charter, but it is important that if it is agreed by the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament, as it undoubtedly will be, it will be binding.

I have no doubt that the basic principles in relation to workers' rights that are contained in that charter will mean a general advance in the conditions of this country's work force. It was predictable that in today's press conference by the Commission the British Government would be singled out as the only one opposing the idea of enacting basic rights for workers in relation to wages, conditions of work and—as contained in another European directive—health and safety.

The Government's proposals are totally out of line with the legislation that exists in most other European countries and they certainly move in the opposite direction from that which the European Commission and European Community will, no doubt, take in due course. That is a measure of how backward the Government are on workers' rights and the need to develop decent social standards and maintain conditions at the work place. The issue of health and safety at work is germane to this debate. In our view, there is no doubt that if the legislation is enacted it will jeopardise young people's conditions at work. That is why our new clauses specifically refer to that.

In Committee it seemed, remarkably, that Ministers were suggesting that a young worker was no more likely to be at risk than an older one. Frankly, that is nonsense. The idea that an inexperienced worker, a young person, is no more likely to be involved in an accident or to subject himself to hazards from toxic substances is patently indefensible. The statistics that we have point in that direction. I say that the statistics "point in that direction" because they are inadequate and we had considerable discussion on this matter in Committee.

The main information that we have about this comes from the Health and Safety Executive. Its 1984-85 statistics analysed in detail the correlation between the age groups of workers and accident rates. It would be inappropriate to consider the detailed figures here, as we did in Committee. It was quite clear that there is, of course, a correlation between the two, particularly in the figures for workers under the age of 26. Unfortunately, we did not have a detailed breakdown on workers aged 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20. That should be available and that is why new clause 5 specifically asks for those statistics.

It asks for data about

> (a) the number of persons under eighteen in paid full-time employment,
> (b) the average number of hours worked by persons under eighteen in such employment,
> (c) the average wages paid to persons under eighteen,
> (d) the number of industrial accidents involving persons under eighteen.'.

We want even more comprehensive information than that. We want the figures for the different age groups.

If the Government proceed with the legislation, over a period there will be a risk that accident rates will be higher for young workers. That will not be obvious at the beginning. They will not be high, as they are now, with protective legislation in place, merely because the workers are young. They will be even higher because existing legislation will have been swept away. Young people will face other dangers as a consequence of the removal of restrictions.

New clause 3 deals specifically with health and safety. Some hon. Members may be slightly surprised to know that it specifies that

> "No young person under the age of eighteen shall be employed without competent adult supervision in the following industries".

It then lists four industrial groups, which are the most dangerous, but naturally we would expect the Secretary of State to add to these groups. Rather than placing a long list of industrial groups on the Amendment Paper, we merely list four because the clause goes on to state that

> "The Secretary of State for Employment may by order specify industries in which young persons shall not be employed without competent adult supervision".

The Government must face up to their responsibilities: there is no doubt that they will live to regret it otherwise.

Dangers in the work place are not the only aspect of the problem. Exemptions laid down by the Health and Safety Executive will be swept away by the Bill, along with the power to make such exemptions. That will mean that some young people will be alowed to work night shifts. Although there is a general assumption at present that they should not do so, in many instances the existing legislation permits it, and the Bill will place no controls on their exploitation.

6 pm

When young people work night shifts it is necessary to ensure that the terms and conditions of their employment are properly met: often, for instance, transport must be provided to take them home. My hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson), speaking on the previous new clause, rightly focused on the special position of women workers. Many young workers, especially young women, will not have cars in which to drive home from night shifts—as a high proportion of older workers have—and that will make them particularly vulnerable. Last week Labour Members who met Edinburgh's chief constable were told of the large increase all over the country in reported cases of rape and other sexual assaults.

We are also worried about young people on youth training schemes. YTS accident rates are unacceptably high. Is there anything more tragic than a young person on a YTS being seriously injured or killed at work? Such tragic accidents are reported from time to time in the press. On Second Reading and in Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) raised the case of Derek Cain, the Shefield boy who was killed by a paper baling machine within three weeks of starting work at a factory in the town.

I remind the House of that case not because of the substantial compensation that was eventually paid—after a long struggle—but because the authorities were liable. Effective action is needed to reduce the risk to young people on such schemes, particularly those working in potentially dangerous factories. We need proper supervision, and a reporting system to ensure that careers offices or other authorities involved inform the Health and Safety Executive and the factory inspectorate that YTS people will be employed in the work place.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): New clause 3 seems slightly defective. It picks out four industries in which it proposes that all jobs must be under adult supervision, and the hon. Gentleman implies that all those jobs are potentially hazardous. In the construction industry, for example, many young people may be employed in office work, which would not be regarded as hazardous in any

terms. Does the hon. Gentleman think that the inevitable consequence of putting in statutory terms a requirement for excess supervision over and above that required by normal safety considerations would be a reluctance by employers to recruit people for such office jobs?

Mr. Strang: We do not refer to "excess supervision". We should certainly not object if the hon. Gentleman persuaded the Minister to table a slightly adjusted form of the new clause including the phrase "appropriate supervision". Of course some jobs require considerably more supervision than others; that is not at issue. The new clause is intended to reduce the risk to young people in the work place, for we have no doubt that if clause 8 is passed unamended the opposite will result.

The new clause would also cover school children working in factories to gain work experience. I know that the Bill will not affect such people, but the new clause will enable us to establish a new and comprehensive framework. We do not argue with the Government's view that piecemeal legislation is unsatisfactory, and there is certainly a need for new legislation in this regard. What we oppose is the elimination of measures aimed specifically at protecting young workers.

The Bill is a further chapter in the saga of young people's exploitation for which the present Government have been responsible. Young people suffered the most from the horrific levels of unemployment at the beginning of the 1980s. A whole generation was affected, some of whom may have been lost for ever. They may never work as a consequence of the misery and deprivation brought about in their communities—communities in which the vast majority of young people, perhaps three quarters, had no job and no hope of obtaining one.

More recently, there was the disgraceful removal of young people's right to income support unless they joined a youth training scheme. Further legislation affected the wage councils, removing all statutory protection from the wages of workers under 21. As a result there is no statutory minimum that an employer must pay a young worker, and no limit to the possible exploitation. Now, shamefully, the Government are introducing a Bill that will remove legislation aimed at protecting standards relating to working hours, night shift working and, undoubtedly, health and safety.

The changes relate to the Government's so-called flexible labour market. Employers will be free to recruit workers—including young workers—on terms dictated by them rather than negotiated with trade unions, and, when it suits them, not to provide decent, secure, permanent jobs.

Hon. Members will say—and I agree—that the last thing that the vast majority of employers want to do is exploit young workers or put their health at risk. But there are enough unscrupulous employers who will, and the working of the market will cause them to bring pressure on others. By exploiting young people they will reduce an element of their costs, thus bringing about unfair competition and forcing other employers to lower their standards. That is why we need national legislation, and why, if we cannot have such legislation, we should support the European Commission's proposals for EEC legislation to require recalcitrant Governments such as this to legislate for basic standards in the work place.

By pressing ahead with clause 8 and refusing to accept the new clauses, the Government will go down a dangerous road. They are gambling with the health and safety of our young workers, and in some instances it may be a matter of life and death. We appeal to the Government to draw back before it is too late.

Mr. Wallace: I support the new clause. I shall also speak to amendments Nos. 40 to 42 which are in my name and the names of my hon. Friends.

On Second Reading my hon. Friends and I tabled a reasoned amendment. It acknowledged that there were anomalies in youth employment legislation, some of which will quite readily withstand repeal. It was important that we did not seek a blanket repeal because there are some provisions in the legislation which protect young people. On Second Reading the Secretary of State gave some ludicrous examples of employment laws in relation to the working hours of young people. Never in a month of Sundays, although in that case we were talking about Saturdays, would such laws ever be operated in this day and age. I do not think that any hon. Member would object to some anachronisms being repealed. However, in doing so we must ensure that necessary protection is not lost. It is important to protect young people in terms of the number of hours that they work and in relation to their workplaces to which certain standards of health and safety should apply. Those standards should apply particularly to the needs and aptitudes of young people.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) quoted from the response by the CBI to the Government's initial proposals. The CBI is known for its general support of the Government, although it does not always wholeheartedly support them in the way that the Government would like. The CBI has been critical of some aspects of the proposals. It expressed concern that young people could be obliged to work excessive and unsocial hours by unscrupulous employers. Once reduced standards become commonplace, some of the best employers find themselves under pressure to go down roads which in the normal course of events they would not go down.

We have heard statistics in this debate and in others, including the debate which dealt with health and safety in the construction industry. They show that young and old people tend to be more susceptible to accidents after they have been working for a long time. When we combine young people and excessive hours the likelihood of accidents increases considerably. It is incumbent on us as legislators, as the people who make the rules, to ensure that protection is given to people who might otherwise, in the words of the CBI, find themselves exploited by unscrupulous employers.

Our amendments refer to the European social charter which is the product of the Council of Europe. Today the European Commission published a social charter, but before commenting on it one would have to look at its terms. I and my party believe that as we look forward to 1992 and beyond, it is important to recognise that the opportunities and benefits of 1992 should not be confined to business. They should be open to all people, employees as well as employers.

The Government suffer from Euro-paranoia. They think that anything that comes from Brussels and has anything to do with social justice must inevitably be wrong. That means that the Government will attempt to deny to our citizens rights that have applied for years in many other European countries without any obvious

[Mr. Wallace]

damage to their economies. The Government's attitude is that everyone in the regiment is out of step except the Prime Minister. In the long term that attitude will damage Britain and in the short term it will damage the rights of young people. I shall have to look at the charter to see whether it refers to young people, but I am sure that it does.

6.15 pm

Some of the provisions of article 7 of the social charter are relevant to the debate but others are not. For example, it says:

"To ensure the effective exercise of the rights of children and young persons to protection, the contracting parties undertake to provide that persons who are still subject to compulsory education shall not be employed in such work as would deprive them of the benefit of their education."

The Bill makes the school leaving age the cut-off point and it would not be appropriate to include the whole article. The charter also says:

"a higher minimum age of admission to employment shall be fixed for prescribed occupations regarded as dangerous or unhealthy or where regular medical control is requred."

Those recommendations could have been incorporated in the Bill. In framing the amendment I highlighted article 7(8) of the charter which says:

"To provide that persons under 18 years of age shall not be employed in night work with the exceptions of certain occupations provided for by national laws or regulations."

I did that for two reasons, the first being because of the inherent dangers of expecting children unnecessarily to work at night. Secondly, the Bill repeals section 1(3) of the Employment of Women, Young Persons, and Children Act 1920. If that is repealed it will mean the derogation of Britain from the European social charter.

In their blanket repeal of old legislation the Government have not thought through the protection that should remain on the statute book. It does not do the standing of our country any good to create or support an economy in which young children have to fill shelves in supermarkets at midnight or have to sell petrol all night. Our economy can thrive and prosper without such things happening.

As the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East has said, young people who work at night often have to find transport to get home at times when public transport may not be available. That applies especially in rural areas where public transport is difficult to find at the best of times. The hon. Gentleman spoke about attacks on young women and there is an increasing number of violent attacks on young males. Young women working at night will travel home in fear of rape, sexual assault or other forms of harassment.

In spite of the practices of the House, people are daytime creatures. We are not nocturnal and many adults who undertake night work or flexible shift work find it difficult. That is why they do not have to do it for long periods. Young, inexperienced people are likely to find the problem of coping with that somewhat more difficult than many older and more experienced workers who themselves at times experience stress because they have to work at night. No one compels young people to work at night, but economics can compel them to do so. That can have a disruptive effect on family life. We are told that family values should be encouraged. I support that, but it is difficult to see how such values could survive alongside legislation which in the long term could oblige young people to work at night.

The Government could accept the new clause and the amendments without in any way thwarting the purpose of the legislation. We can still get rid of the anachronistic anomalies and the Bill, even with the new clause and amendments, will present more opportunities for employers to take on young people. In many respects we are asking for the bare minimum. The new clause asks for appropriate supervision and the amendments ask for some basic form of protection for young people who could be more readily exploited by unscrupulous employers.

We are not asking for much and I hope that the Government will seriously and sympathetically consider our requests. If they are not prepared to accept the new clause and the amendments because of technical deficiency, perhaps they will say that they accept the need for protection and have some measures in mind for another place.

Mr. Cope: It might assist the House if I intervene at this point, although, if points arise in the debate, I might seek to catch your eye again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with the permission of the House.

I appreciate that the two new clauses and the set of amendments provide a handy peg for a debate on the subject. Certainly we are as concerned as anyone about the health and safety of young people. We have not done anything in the Bill to remove any protection for the health and safety of young people that was considered necessary by the Health and Safety Commission, as we have repeated throughout the proceedings on the Bill. At the same time we cannot support the proposals in the new clauses. I shall explain why.

On new clause 3, which was moved by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang), we recognise that adequate supervision is important, particularly where young people are likely to be at risk because of their immaturity and inexperience. The same applies to inexperienced people of any age. In our view, there is sufficient protection, particularly from a supervisory point of view, in existing legislation, which is better and in many respects wider than the new clause would provide.

Section 2(2)(c) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 requires every employer to provide, among other things,

"such . . . supervision as is necessary to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety at work of his employees".

That means all his employees and not just young people.

The degree of supervision varies with the circumstances and with the individuals involved. Section 2 is framed in such a way as to allow for that. The new clause makes no distinction between the different jobs within an industry. It would apply, therefore, to a typist working for British Coal who would have to be under constant adult supervision, as my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) indicated in his intervention, although I accept that the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East offered at that point to change the new clause.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Can the Minister explain to the House the difference between the new clause and relying on the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act, as

he is doing? Where a person was injured and made a claim for compensation, would not the defence under the Act dwell on the words

"so far as is reasonably practicable"

in that the employer could argue that it would be too costly to employ supervision and therefore he could not be held responsible? The new clause says that there shall be supervision and would make it easier for the ordinary worker to get compensation for serious injury.

Mr. Cope: Several points arise. There could be a claim for compensation under civil law. The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act relates primarily to criminal law. The first court case would probably be for breach of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act. The nub of the point made by the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) was the words:

"so far as is reasonably practicable".

In practice I believe that the courts would find that there was an absolute duty in the light of what was sensible. Some cases demonstrate that.

Apart from that, it is important to draw attention to the fact that it is not just a matter of the employer saying, "It was not practicable, and that is that," or "It was too costly." It does not widen the provision much to include

"so far as is reasonably practicable"

but it ensures that the employer does not have to provide, as he might under the new clause, supervision in all cases, including the example of the typist in British Coal.

In addition to the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act there is specific protection relating to particular industries. That includes, for example, the Mines and Quarries Act 1954, which places a duty on a mine or quarry manager to ensure that nobody does any job unless that person has been adequately instructed, or trained if necessary, and is competent to do the job unsupervised. Again, that applies to all workers but obviously it is of particular relevance to young people working in mines and quarries, one of the industries specified in new clause 3.

Another example is the total ban on young people working on offshore installations. We do not propose any alteration in that. That goes further than new clause 3(1)(d). Young people under 18 are not allowed to work on offshore installations. Nor are we removing the many restrictions on young people operating dangerous machinery, driving locomotives or working with hazardous substances, such as lead. There are other restrictions which will not be affected by the legislation.

I appreciate that the industries listed in the new clause may be more dangerous, but where a particular hazard has been identified, legislation has been brought forward to cover it. The new clause provides for further industries to be added by order. That is unnecessary because there is already power to make regulations to improve health and safety under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act. The House will be aware that we frequently discuss additional regulations and orders that are brought forward under that Act. I hope that the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East will not think it necessary to press new clause 3 because supervision is already provided in legislation.

Similar arguments apply to new clause 5, which calls for new statistical returns. There are already several sources of information covering the statistics required, including the labour force survey, the new earnings survey and health and safety statistics from the Health and Safety Executive. It is not always appropriate to put the statistics together because the figures are compiled at different times of the year.

We could set up a new survey to provide additional statistics but it would not cover any figures other than those required by the new clause. The cost to the taxpayer and to employers would be considerable and would not be justified in our view, apart from the imposition of further form-filling burdens on employers. As I have said, the various statistics are produced already.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) spoke about amendments Nos. 40, 41 and 42 relating to the Council of Europe social charter. As has already been mentioned, that is not the same as the charter which is to be proposed by the European Commission for adoption within the European Community. I understand that there was a press conference in Brussels this morning, but the Commission has not issued a copy of the draft document on which it is working, so no one outside the Commission knows the details. From what has been said previously, we know the sort of things that are likely to be included in it. Health and safety regulations will no doubt be mentioned in the documentation but they are already covered by European directives and by the Single European Act. From time to time we discuss important directives that are brought forward under European legislation on health and safety.

From the health and safety point of view, the competence of the European Commission and its mechanisms is accepted. The charter to which the amendments refer is the Council of Europe charter which dates back to 1965. The argument is that article 7(8), the one referred to in the amendments, is no longer appropriate.

We believe that the control we have in respect of specific industries is best, and that a blanket ban on young people working in the night hours if they so wish is unjustified. We are committed to removing such unnecessary barriers to their employment. As the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East stressed at the end of his speech, it is important that young people have an opportunity to enter the employment market and take jobs if they so wish.

6.30 pm

Mr. Cryer: Will the right hon. Gentleman re-examine the British Railways (Penalty Fares) Bill, which is a private Member's Bill that has the declared aim of removing British Rail staff from railway platforms? With people being encouraged to work at night, the removal of public service staff such as those of British Rail—whose trains will carry many millions of people to and from work at night and early in the morning—and employers exploiting the Bill's provisions, is there not a danger that the risk of attack and molestation will be even greater?

Mr. Cope: I know of the hon. Gentleman's interest in railways, and I am sure that he will raise that point when the Bill to which he refers comes before the House.

Amendments Nos. 40, 41 and 42 draw attention to the fact that article 7(8) of the European social charter presents a problem, and therefore we intend notifying the Council of Europe of our intention to denounce article 7(8) at the next opportunity, which will be on 26 February 1990. Until we have denounced article 7(8) the ban on young people working at night and contained in section 1(3) of the Employment of Women, Young

[Mr. Cope]

Persons, and Children Act 1920 will be retained. That is why that legislation is dealt with separately, in schedule 7 to the Bill, rather than in clause 2 with the rest of the provisions concerning young people. Our intention is to repeal that provision when once we have denounced article 7(8). We take our obligations under the Council of Europe's social charter very seriously and in that way we shall not breach it.

Mr. Batiste: In the European Community's document No. 15, "Developments in the European Community, July-December 1988", that the House will debate tomorrow, it is stated in paragraph 8.4:

> "The Council reached a common position on the proposed framework directive on measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health of workers at the workplace. This is not the keystone for setting minimum standards for health and safety at work and is broadly consistent with the existing United Kingdom legislation in this area."

Is my right hon. Friend satisfied that our legislation meets the standards set in the general framework of European legislation?

Mr. Cope: Yes, we believe that it does. The House will have an opportunity to debate the framework directive in due course. Taking the Bill into account, our legislation fulfills and will fulfil the requirements of the framework directive—but that is another story, for another debate, for another occasion.

Overall, we yield to no one in our desire to see preserved the health and safety of young people at work and elsewhere. The Bill preserves all the health and safety provisions said to be necessary by the Health and Safety Commission, but, as the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland said, we have done away with some of the older parts of the legislation that are inappropriate to modern conditions. Neither the proposed new clauses nor the amendments are necessary to ensure the safety of young people.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): I know how desperate young people can be to get a job. Young people in my constituency and in those of other right hon. and hon. Members will, because of the economic problems that they face, accept night shift. When I was a young apprentice, I was not allowed by law to work overtime until I was aged 18. Nevertheless, I worked overtime from the age of 15 because I knew that my mother needed the extra money that it produced. The same was true of many other young workers in that same factory. I did not start working shifts until I was aged 22 or 23.

The medical profession has not done enough in studying the effects of night shift working. Anyone who has worked night shift knows that it has an effect similar to that of jet lag on those who travel on transatlantic flights. People working night shifts suffer from high blood pressure. They are compelled to eat meals in the middle of the night, but their digestive system has a time clock that switches off so that the food in their stomach is undigested until the following morning, when they are asleep. As a result, they do not enjoy proper sleep. When young people in particular work night shifts, their concentration often suffers.

Young people aged 16 or 17 are supposed to give their young bodies every opportunity to develop, because at that age they are still growing. The Bill will deprive young people of sunlight hours. They will go to bed when the sun is shining and go to work at night.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) spoke about the dangers of travelling on public transport at night. The situation is not too bad when someone sets out to start their night shift at 9 o'clock in the evening, leaving to return home at 8 o'clock in the morning. However, a young person might be taken ill in the middle of the night. How will that boy or girl get home?

Has the Minister given any thought to the fact that industry currently works 10-hour shifts, so that workers can have their Fridays off? That is a good arrangement, but it means that young persons, even if they live in the same locality as their workplace, will have to allow themselves one hour to get to work and another hour to return home. They will be away from home for more than 12 hours, which is ridiculous in this day and age. It is tantamount to slavery.

Night shifts are also unpopular among adults, with foremen and general supervisors unwilling to work them. That will mean that, if a dose of the flu goes round a small factory, the usual supervisors will be absent and the young person may not be properly supervised. Two or three young people could be working dangerous machinery with no responsible person in the factory aged more than 21 or 22 to supervise them. The employer for the day shift may have made adequate arrangements, but then, because of absenteeism, a whole new set of circumstances might apply. The Minister should give this issue further thought.

I left school at 15. At school, just round the corner from where I lived, I had school dinners. When I began work I had to travel for an hour to get to my factory, and instead of school dinners I had to get used to cold sandwiches. I realise now that when I worked at night, my concentration at the end of the shift, at 7 or 8 o'clock in the morning, had become impaired. It must have been more dangerous for me to be using machinery in that tired state.

At my present age, I can recognise fatigue. As a youngster, I did not have that recognition. I fear that, by these provisions, the Government are putting youngsters at risk. I beg them to think again.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): The Minister said that the Government would yield to nobody in their concern for young people and their health and safety. Frankly, not only do I not believe that, but many hon. Members in all parts of the House, certainly on the Opposition Benches, do not believe it and working people in general do not believe it. The least he should do is accept new clauses 3 and 5.

I thought it ironic when the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) spoke of the need for Britain to honour the social charter which the Government, by the inclusion of clause 8, will have to abrogate. I describe it as ironic because clauses 1 to 7 are concerned with protective legislation for women, and in that respect the Government are implementing a Council of Europe directive. The Minister seems to be suffering from a severe case of split personality.

It would be invidious to describe clause 8 as the main clause in the Bill. I feel equally fired up about the reduction in employee rights, the introduction of the £150 industrial tribunal deposit, the reduction in the degree of protective legislation for women and the reduction in the amount of

time off to enable trade union officials to perform their duties. Nevertheless, clause 8 is a key provision in the Bill, especially the effect it will have on young people.

Clause 8 seeks to abolish the present restrictions on the employment of young people. About 600,000 youngsters, or two thirds of school leavers, are at present covered by the Factories Act 1961 and the Shops Act 1950. The legislative cover, the umbrella provided by those measures will disappear if that clause remains unamended.

Young people will be eligible—I am not saying that they will queue up to take the opportunity—to work shifts, including nights, of 11 hours a day and over 54 hours a week, which they are prevented at present from doing. As my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) said, the only promise we got from the Tories when we debated this issue in Committee was that no young person would have to work more than 24 hours in any one day. The Bill represents an open-ended opportunity to exploit youngsters in their hours of work.

I asked in Committee for any Tory Member to raise a hand if he or she would allow a daughter aged 15 years and eight months to work under the conditions that would be permitted once the Bill became law. Not one of them took the opportunity to answer me. Of course not, because Conservative Members can buy their way out of this problem. Their bairns do not work at filling the shelves in Sainsbury's or the Co-op. They do not work in the bakeries or other similar industries. They can buy their children out of working long hours, whereas our children have no choice, apart from cheap labour YTS schemes and the inadequate levels of income support, if they get support at all. The alternative is to accept low-paid jobs, often in a part-time environment. Working-class youth will be especially hit unless we amend the Bill.

Clause 8 does not propose an adult wage for an adult job, even though we are talking about youngsters working the same hours as their adult counterparts. One can die for one's country at 16, pay the poll tax at 18 and be exploited as a school leaver—or even when at school—by rogue employers; but one cannot get a decent rate of pay until one is 21. That is when, according to the Government, one becomes an adult.

6.45 pm

I predict that, unless the Opposition new clauses are accepted, the trade most likely to take immediate advantage of this deregulation will be the bakery industry. It is already common in that industry to find night shift staff doing an average of 53 hours a week. I again extend my offer to Tory Members: which of them would allow their sons or daughters aged 15 years and eight months to work more than 53 hours on nights in a bakery? I pause, but not one of them on the Government Benches is prepared to take me up on that. Why should our youth, working-class youngsters, have to endure that?

In Committee—I have no doubt that the same will apply tonight—the Government's justification for the Bill was that such restrictions on young people's hours were a burden on business, unnecessary and out-dated and hard to justify on health and safety grounds; that there was no evidence that long hours, shift or night work had a different effect on young people than they had on adults; and that we should leave such matters to market forces. All those arguments were demolished by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin).

If the Minister is confident about the need for these provisions, why will he not accept, say, new clause 5? That would enable us to conduct an examination with proper statistics because the Secretary of State would have a statutory responsibility to collect such figures and publish them. If the Government refuse to take that step, people will draw the conclusion that the Minister has something to hide and that he does not believe in the arguments that he is using in favour of the Bill.

The Bill promotes the increasing exploitation of young workers. It sweeps aside the consequences of accidents, stress and strain, deteriorating health, safety conditions and declining wages. Unless we amend clause 8, it will repeal section 61 of the Factories Act and section 50 of the Shops Act. I feel it important—if only for the benefit of hon. Members who did not take part in our Committee deliberations—to point out just what will be repealed.

At present, youngsters aged 15 years and eight months, girls or boys, are prevented from working more than nine hours a day, or 48 hours a week, or more than 11 hours in any one day; are prevented from starting earlier than 7 o'clock in the morning and finishing later than 8 o'clock at night; and are prevented from finishing after 1 o'clock on Saturdays. Youngsters must have a 30-minute break after working four and a half hours and they must not work overtime above the maximum employment time of 12 hours, including breaks. That is all spelled out in the Factories Act 1961.

The Shops Act 1950 covers warehouses as well as shops. If any area of the service economy is growing, it is the warehouse sector. I have often made the point that the lack of investment in manufacturing industry means that, whereas we used to be known as the workshop of the world, we are rapidly becoming known, in view of the level of imports, as the warehouse of the world.

Under the Shops Act, a girl or boy aged 15 years and eight months must have a 20-minute break after three hours of work; may work a maximum of 48 hours in any one week; must have 11 consecutive rest hours in 24; and is not allowed to work between 10 o'clock at night and 6 o'clock the following morning. Every one those conditions will pass into the legislative dustbin of history if the Bill goes through unamended.

Tory Members are telling the working-class youth of Britain that all that protection is no longer needed. My hon. Friend the Member for Springburn made the central point, which I reiterate, that it is an inevitable conclusion that longer hours, particularly outside the normal cycle of the body clock—working nights and shifts—weaken the constitution, so that accidents towards the closing hours of shifts become more prevalent.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) spoke about transport. Since deregulation of the buses in October 1986, in many urban areas fewer buses run in the evening, which makes things even more difficult for young people. What will happen if there is an incident such as that which happend in Central park in New York a few weeks ago, when a woman was raped by 40 animals? Say that happens to a young person here: what excuses will be given—lack of policing, she invited it? Will we turn the pages back and ask why a 16-year-old was working at 11 o'clock at night? Why was she walking down that street late at night? Will we put the blame where it lies—on legislation such as this?

We cannot deal with this legislation in isolation from the other things that the Government have done, such as

[Mr. Dave Nellist]

the abolition of the wages councils for the under-21s and the loss of income support for 16 to 18-year-olds not on YTS. I served on the Committees considering the Bills that brought about such changes. If clause 8 is not amended by our two new clauses 3 and 5, it will reinforce the trend that the Government have promoted of reducing the wages of young workers in comparison with adult workers. In the six years that I have been here I have often quoted—perhaps too often for Tory MPs—the words of Sir John Hoskyns, who invented the YTS. He wanted a scheme to increase the differential between youth and adult workers. There was nothing about a bridge from school to work or about high quality training. In April last year, average earnings for those under 18 were £88·40 a week, for the 18 to 20-year-olds £120·90, and for those over 21 £224·30. The gap is widening. In 1979, 18 to 20-year-olds earned 60 per cent. of the wages of those over 21. By last year, the rate was down to 54 per cent. Similarly, 16 to 17-year-olds in 1979 earned 42 per cent. of the adult wage; last year, it was 39 per cent.

Tories may argue that youngsters should not be paid too much because they are receiving training and they do not have experience. Sometimes, that is true, but the figures that I have quoted are of those in work, not of those in training. Since the Government introduced the two-year YTS scheme, most employers have used YTS as the basis for their retraining. A 16-year-old on the scheme gets an allowance of £29·50. If that allowance had kept pace with the rise in earnings since April 1978, when the youth opportunities scheme was introduced by the then Labour Government, those youngsters should be on £60·65. They are losing £35 a week because of the repetitive freezing of the YTS allowance. Those youngsters are not included in the figures that I quoted. The fall in pay is that for youngsters who are in work, not for those receiving training. Most get repetitive jobs for which they do not need much training.

As I have said before, one does not need much training to fill the shelves in Sainsbury's or the Co-op and increasingly, those youngsters are being used as substitutes for adult workers, often adult women workers. Sometimes the Government say, as they may do later, that their measures on the wages councils and the deregulation of hours and pay have had results, that the proof of the pudding is in the eating and one has only to look at the reduction in the number of unemployed youngsters. However, they do not examine how unemployment has shifted over the age spectrum and how older workers are put out of work because of substitutions.

The effects of clause 8 if it is unamended cannot be set apart from the effects of earlier legislation. Our new clause is an attempt to get some evidence about the effect of clause 8 if it is passed unamended. I have tried to get evidence on other changes, but the Government have been less than forthcoming. On 10 January, I asked about the supposed increase in job opportunities for 16 to 18-year-olds, including the abolition of the wages councils, but was told that there was no evidence. All that we had in Committee and on Second Reading was anecdotal evidence. Tory Members repeated stories that they had heard over dinner with somebody at the CBI or the Institute of Directors. Specific evidence is not available. That is the central reason why new clause 5 should be passed. There must be a statutory responsibility on the Secretary of State to provide the evidence so that we can test what happens with this legislation.

I asked whether there had been an increase in jobs for youngsters following the abolition in 1985-86 of the wages councils for under-21s. We were told that this would result in 50,000 new jobs, just as we have been told that if, through this clause, we get rid of the inflexible restrictions on hours worked by young people, employers will queue up to employ them. I asked the Minister whether the Government would monitor the effects of the Bill, but he refused, and that is why we need new clause 5.

There has been a fall in the number of unemployed school leavers, but when we examine the figures—we have to do it because the Government will not—and put that fall alongside the rise in the number of places on the YTS schemes, we can see the direct correlation. In Coventry, the September-to-September figure for the 16 to 18-year-olds without permanent work was 5,540 in 1980, and 5,694 in 1988. The number of those wholly unemployed was 3,826, which went down to 2,604. For those on schemes, the number was 1,714, which went up to 3,090. In other words, if one counts YTS as being without permanent work, which is what it is, there has been no rise in the employment of young people because of the Government's deregulation measures. Clause 8 will also make no difference.

I could take the debate into many other sectors, having spent so much time on it in Committee and in other places. However, I shall concentrate now on health and safety. The background notes from the Department said about clause 8:

> "Ministers decided as a result of the review that there was a strong case for lifting the stringent restrictions on young people's hours and that other restrictions on their employment should also be examined to assess their continued relevance."

They also said that there were no safety objections to lifting the restrictions. Part of clause 8 gets rid of the need for employers to tell local careers officers when they take on school leavers straight from work.

My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) mentioned the case which, on behalf of his father Richard, we have raised a number of times—that of Derek Cain, who was killed at the paper shredding plant of Plumb and Son, Sheffield in December 1982, when he was on a YOP scheme. That was a horrific murder. The Minister has had before him the transcript of the judge's decision of December last year, when he raised the original £52 of statutory compensation to hundreds of thousands of pounds.

We feel—this is why we have tabled these new clauses—that Derek Cain and the other 52 youngsters who have died on the YTS in the intervening period should have a memorial to them. Those deaths should jog the consciences of Tory Members of Parliament—if they have them—so that they make sure that these things never happen again. Unless this clause is amended, Derek and the other lads and lasses who have died on the scheme will be just another statistic in a long line of such accidents.

My hon. Friend the Member for Springburn was absolutely right. If youngsters are not supervised, if they are tired after working long hours—there was no supervision of Derek Cain—and if careers officers are not told where these youngsters are working—the factories inspectorate did not know that Derek Cain was working at

Plumb and Son—there will be accidents. We have the evidence of what happens when there is no supervision and careers officers and other agencies are not involved, and when youngsters are working long hours. That is why we are pushing so hard to stop the Government passing legislation that could lead to further tragedies.

New clause 3 is the minimum provision that the House should accept. A while back, I introduced a private Member's Bill. Under its provisions, no youngster would be allowed into any workplace unless they were members of a trade union. The trade union, as well as the Health and Safety Inspectorate, had the right to check safety and it would monitor such schemes. The Government have now removed all trade union involvement by abolishing the Training Commission, at the end of the Bill, and by removing the local veto that the trade unions had. They have taken us back to the days of the 19th century, when the Acts that we are amending with this Bill were first thought of—for example, that concerning the employment rights of children—and later became the Shops and Factories Acts.

The argument about what percentage of employers are good employers provoked debate in Committee. I was baited by Tory Members to give a percentage and said that it did not matter whether it is 50, 60, 70 or 80 per cent. They said, "Ah, Nellist is admitting that 80 per cent. of employers are good." We are not discussing how many employers are good employers but legislating to deal with the percentage of bad employers. My hon. Friends the Members for Springburn, for Bradford, South and for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) gave examples of youngsters being put at risk. However, if there is only one example of a rogue employer taking advantage of a youngster, new clause 3 and new clause 5 should be passed.

We had a lengthy debate in Committee, and tonight's debate may have been too long for some hon. Members, but anyone who, like me, has met families who have lost youngsters on YTS, anyone who has worked on a shop floor or factory and has had the protection of the Factories Act 1961, which provides what youngsters can or cannot do, or anyone who has seen the eyes and shaking hands of workers who have done a shift and a half or two shifts in an engineering factory or power station, both of which I have done, will not willingly allow this legislation to pass on to the statute book unamended. The House should pass new clause 3 and new clause 5 and, on Third Reading, chuck out the Bill entirely.

7 pm

Mr. Cryer: I want to make a few remarks about new clause 3 and new clause 5, which are both important.

It is clear that the Minister has no co-ordinated approach to the legislation. Earlier, I raised the British Rail (Penalty Fares) Bill, of which the Minister should have been aware, because clause 8 will remove restrictions on night work, which will be exploited by employers. If young people refuse work they will lose their unemployment benefit, which is another penalty that will lead to them taking night work. The Government have stitched up a deal with British Rail's management, who go home in chauffeur-driven limousines, to pass that Bill, which is inevitable because of the Tories' majority. Young men and women use trains to travel to work. If, on their journeys to stations, there are shadowy figures lurking in the road they may wish to seek help from a British Rail employee. However, such help will not be available because British Rail will have substituted ticket barriers, whereby magnetised ticket strips are used to open gates. The sponsor of the Bill explained that that is what will happen. As my hon. Friends have made clear, because of Government legislation and the deregulation of transport, unprofitable in-fill bus services have disappeared. Night workers are being forced to do tasks by Government legislation, but the services necessary to make their jobs easier will not be available.

New clause 3 provides the requirement of supervision. It is unqualified because it says that there "shall be . . . supervision", not "so far as reasonably practicable." The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 was consensus legislation passed by the minority Labour Government between February and October 1974. The qualification of "so far as reasonably practicable" was severely criticised by a number of hon. Members at that time. The Minister did not seem aware that when people are injured at work they seek compensation for the loss of a limb, loss of sight, loss of hearing or because an injury has caused them to lose their working capacity. The breach of an absolute provison makes it easier for them to obtain compensation in a civil court, which is where significant sums of compensation are obtained.

Why should not ordinary workers obtain adequate compensation in a civil court if pop stars can roll along to a civil court and obtain vast sums in a libel action against a newspaper? Today, the hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) mentioned the unfair way in which the libel laws act. However, there is a greater discrepancy between the way in which huge sums are handed out to the rich and famous, yet relatively small sums are paid to workers who lose their livelihoods or part of their body as a result of an industrial injury.

In judicial terms the words "so far as reasonably practicable", if it was not possible because of cost to have done something that would have prevented injury, can be invoked as a defence by an employer. Therefore, new clause 3, which provides for unqualified supervision, is an advance on relying on the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act.

Section 1(1) of the Mines and Quarries (Tips) Act 1969 states:

> "Every tip to which this Part of this Act applies shall be made and kept secure."

Why is that unqualified? Why do not the hallowed words used by employers and lawyers "so far as reasonably practicable" not appear? First, it was passed by a Labour Government that had a healthy majority, but there was a further factor. That Act followed the terrible tragedy in Aberfan, when a tip slid on to a school and overwhelmed and killed dozens of young children. Hon. Members said, "We will provide legislation that makes an absolute provision to ensure that tips are safe." I have always used that as a good guide. The tragedy received much news coverage and the nation rightly talked in hushed tones about it. The nation does not talk in hushed tones about the tragedies that occur day in and day out at workplaces because they are isolated examples. If those isolated examples are added together, they exceed the number of people killed at Aberfan. Why cannot we say that there should be unqualified supervision? New clause 3 places an obligation on adults, which is important, because they will have a responsibility.

[Mr. Cryer]

I should like to mention briefly an incident which occurred not in my constituency but at Hantgantic quarry. Two young men who were just outside the age range that we are discussing were in a bucket on a quarry face. The bucket was suspended from a Scotch derrick crane. Over the years, adults had fallen into pretty easy ways. An adult had inspected the bearing caps holding the drum in place. An adult was authorised to inspect the crane, but did not know the difference between steel and cast iron. The Health and Safety Executive had sent around a note saying that bearing caps of cast iron should be replaced by steel bearing caps, but no one took any notice.

On that fatal morning when the two people were lowered to the base of the quarry to drill for the placing of explosives, the bearing caps broke and the receptacle holding them fell 200 ft to the quarry floor. Both were killed. When their fellow workers reached them, they were still moving and just able to speak—they were simply asking, "Why?" This is all in the record of the coroner's inquiry. It is a past accident, forgotten by the general population but remembered deeply by those whom it touched because of their close relationships with the workers.

It is not a bad thing to say to adults, "You have an additional responsibility. Young people are working here, so you must check. Notes sent by the Health and Safety Executive must be read and understood and the instructions carried out." Let no one think that Hantgantic quarry was run by a poverty-stricken family. It was run by a large multinational company which could more than have afforded to carry out the necessary work. New clause 3 is not, therefore, a bad idea.

New clause 5 places an obligation on the Secretary of State for Employment to provide statistics. He has passed legislation to remove the obligation to report accidents at work that cause three or more days loss of working time because of industrial injury. That reporting provided a handy source of information. I have asked for information and found that the statistics stopped in 1984. The Department does not have any more comparative statistics to publish.

What does this lack of information mean? The Department of Employment is no longer in possession of statistics which are automatically returned, so it cannot focus as a matter of routine and automatic estimation on employment areas with the most injuries and loss of hours. This is a serious matter. The automatic production of information meant that there was an important source of information and that remedial action was taken by the Department of Employment. The Department could say, "This substance is causing a loss of working hours."

The Government have poured out legislation to attack trade unions because, so they say, working hours are lost through strike action. The Minister knows, or should know, that in an average year more days are lost through industrial injury than through strike action. The Government should introduce legislation to reduce the loss of hours and days and of life and limb through industrial injury. They should not be exercising their venomous obsession with attacks on the trade union movement.

The trade union movement takes a great interest in health and safety at work. The Transport and General Workers Union and the General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union have taken an interest in the use of asbestos and the development of mesothelioma and other dangerous lung diseases. That work has been done, but not at the Government's behest. Those organisations are under vicious Government attack.

New clause 5 is very useful. It just asks for information. The House of Commons and the public at large have the right to have that information so that they can judge whether the Health and Safety Commission and Executive are recommending to the Minister regulations to reduce the number of injuries. That is a sensible proposition. The Government know full well that we no longer have the statistical information that was available a few years ago. The new clause is a step towards remedying that position.

I am sure that all but the most venomous and biased Governments would accept these modest proposals. I am sure that my hon. Friends will press for a vote. I have no doubt that we shall lose again because all the Tories who are not here, who do not give a fig about health and safety at work and use excuses about deterring employment to put off improved health and safety standards, will troop through the Division Lobby. The time is not far off when the next Labour Government will ensure that all these ills are properly remedied.

7.15 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): The Minister expressed concern for the safety and wellbeing of young people, but it will take more than a pained expression to provide some defence for them. He is responsible for shepherding the Bill through the House. He shares ministerial responsibility for the Bill and has individual responsibility for what has happened.

Many disgraceful features in Standing Committee have been extended to the House. One of the worst of them has been reflected in the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) about Tory Members trooping in and voting Labour down when they have not considered the arguments or been connected with the debate. At one stage in Committee, we observed that only three junior Ministers were left on the Government side, so a sufficient number of Opposition Members walked out to destroy the quorum. The fact that the quorum could be destroyed on that measure out of all those in the Bill tells us something about Conservative Members generally and certainly about Conservative Members of the Committee.

We attempted first in Committee to remove the major elements from the clause—the restraints that were to be placed on working hours and the provisions to eliminate protection for workers. We were roundly defeated. On no occasion did Conservative Members vote with us in Committee. On one occasion, one Conservative Member abstained in the vote on a motion that he had tabled because Labour Members supported it. On no occasion was there a response to our arguments and appeals.

We were pushed back. We attempted to prevent the Government from having the power through the Secretary of State to repeal certain regulations, but we were solidly defeated. We tried to get consultation with the TUC on the operation of the measures, and our amendments were defeated. We then introduced a measure, which has been discussed today, which dealt with whether young people would be deemed to be unavailable for work if they refused

to take a job with excessive hours, bad shifts and other limitations. That measure was solidly defeated. As a final stopgap, we tried to hold up the operation of the Bill for 12 months, but we were soundly defeated.

Perhaps the Government know not what they do. They often represent forces that are not associated with the working lives and conditions of people on the shop floor, so they act out of ignorance. In the London docks strike of 1888, when there were marches through the west end, attitudes about the strike changed because people suddenly saw the poor conditions and standards under which people lived in the east end. This caused a culture shock which had an impact on the political system.

It may be that, as with much of the legislation that the Government put before us, this measure is a result of ignorance. The Government need to associate themselves with the condition of ordinary people. We might expect them not to understand issues such as women in the pits, time off for trade union education or redundancy provisions, but I find it hard to appreciate that the Government cannot put themselves in the position of young people. Even Conservative Members—hard though it may be to believe—have once been young people themselves. Some have children who are young adults and who go through the various problems of life. Were all Conservative Members whizz-kids who never had difficulties in making their way in the world, who never found problems of exploitation and who never had fears in the period in which they needed to adjust to some of the disciplines of life in industry and commerce?

The removal of restraints, which will allow extra overtime working and night working, remove meal breaks and introduce the possibility of Sunday working without time off in lieu, will produce tremendous burdens for young people. Decent parents tend to want to encourage their children to study and to acquire skills, but they also want to encourage them to enjoy life and to adapt themselves to adulthood. Many parents, especially those from working-class backgrounds, look on the years from 16 to 18 as the halcyon days of their own life, when the pressures were not so great and there were things to do apart from working all the time. There is an interest in members of the opposite sex and in entertainment. Should not young people have the opportunity to enjoy that, or are we trying to place them in circumstances where we allow the removal of prohibitions because of the strange notion that, as a result of a decline in the birth rate, young people will be in a fantastic negotiating position in the future in which they can negotiate individually for decent wages and conditions? Those negotiations might have some impact if young people were allowed to be properly organised and mobilised, but there would still be other pressures, which my hon. Friends have mentioned.

The Opposition are trying to put back into the Bill some protections, especially in relation to supervision by adults. Why is such a provision supposed to be hideous? I cannot imagine. Supervision is a benefit to the adults themselves as well and to work generally, so one would have thought that it would appeal to Conservative Members. But they have an ideological commitment to there being no restraints at all on industry and they believe that market forces should determine wellbeing, however harsh those market forces may be.

New clause 5 relates mainly to statistics. That is an area which contains an element of change for the future because the statistics that we seek will often be the statistics of doom. The statistics that we seek will reflect the conditions and average hours of young people, their wages and, if the market forces theory is to be believed, the decent standards that young people will enjoy. The statistics will also show the number of industrial accidents suffered by young people under the age of 18, as well as the number of people in full-time employment. That basic information would seem to be required if there is to be change in the future and if people's perceptions are to altered.

If there is even a little truth in what we have said in Committee and in this debate, should not the Government at least respond to new clause 5? They could at least say that, although they were right, they would give us a chance to find out the relevant information. But this Government are not interested in providing information. They manipulate information, as they have done with the unemployment statistics. They spend millions of pounds on misinformation, on artwork and other productions to push their ideas down people's throats. But they will not give us the basic material to help us work out ideas for ourselves and perhaps to change matters in the future. I ask the Government to think again and to give us one provision in the Bill that would mean that we could build a decent world for tomorrow—if not immediately—out of this legislation.

Mr. Foot: To give the Minister some credit, he showed a certain diffidence in putting his arguments to the House. Perhaps I am being too generous, but he seemed to have some doubts about his proposition, especially in his reply on new clause 5. I would have thought that the Government should be only to eager to accept new clause 5. I am sure that they must understand that health and safety is a developing area, which changes constantly. Health and safety is being affected by new and different industries, which is why we introduced the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, which was a general measure that also improved specific areas. Everyone interested in health and safety foresaw that there were huge new developments in different industries, such as the chemical industry, which would require a far more comprehensive means of dealing with health and safety than anything achieved under the old Factories Acts. That was the basis on which we established the Health and Safety Commission and the Health and Safety Executive, with their associated legislation.

The Minister claimed earlier that all the recommendations and advice on this subject he had received from the Health and Safety Commission had been incorporated in Government action. I am not sure that that is so, but if it is, it is only a sign that we must carry the work much further still. If that is the Government's claim, they must also acknowledge that the Health and Safety Commission and the Health and Safety Executive say to the Government every month of every year—whenever they have the opportunity—that to do their job properly in a changing world, where many people will be threatened with new kinds of illness in new kinds of industry, they need many more inspectors, more provision, far more analysis and far more detailed evidence.

I am sure that the Health and Safety Commission would be only too eager for new clause 5 to be accepted because it deals with information. The Government should also provide more funds to ensure that the Health and Safety Commission has an expanding role in our society.

[Mr. Foot]

My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) said that the 1974 Act was a consensus measure which did not achieve everything that we wanted, and that is true, although it was a good measure none the less. We would, of course, have liked to carry it much further. However, under the Act, the 5 million people, including many young people, in various industries who had never been covered by health and safety provisions were covered for the first time. That process had to be supported over a long period by a Government who understood that they faced a new problem. That is why we introduced a series of measures so that trade unions could have improved health and safety provision. There also had to be provision for trade union representation in health and safety matters. Instead of a Bill such as this, which undermines some of the measures that existed in the past and detracts from previous factory provisions, we should have an up-to-date measure to take greater account of health and safety provisions.

7.30 pm

I give one striking example of what happened when we introduced the measure, just to prove how different the attitude was in those days. We tried to introduce health and safety provision to cover not only young people but agriculture. We did not have a majority in the House at the time. Lo and behold, the House of Lords threw out the part that stated that health and safety provisions should apply to agriculture. Almost as many peers rallied to that great cause as defeated the poll tax. They were present in great numbers to defeat the simple proposition that health and safety provisions should apply to agriculture. The facts prove that the provisions in respect of agriculture should have been greatly enlarged, because dangers in that industry were constantly increasing. Fortunately, when we got a majority, we were able to put that right. Nobody since—not even anybody in the House of Lords—has been foolish enough to say that such a provision should be knocked out. I hope that the Government will not re-examine the measure to see whether they should curtail it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) deserves great credit for the way in which he put his case in the House and throughout the country. Anybody who has heard him speak knows that the Government have not answered his case. Opposition Members must answer it when we have the power to do the job properly.

The Secretary of State has got himself into a hopeless tangle about the Council of Europe's provision. The Government have already decided that they will abrogate it. The right hon. Gentleman said, "We will not be guilty of disobeying the law, but, as soon as we can, we will do away with the provision that makes us responsible under the Council of Europe operation." Has it occurred to the Government that, just when they abolish that provision by the legal methods that they use, they may face a new clause dealing with similar matters from Europe dealing with social matters?

It is much better for the dignity of the country that hon. Members adopt safety measures for protecting common human decency. Why do we not do that? Instead, the Government will be dragged screaming into the 1990s on a range of social issues, including the simple issue of how we are to protect young people at work from risking their lives and safety. It is shocking that, instead of proceeding fast to a new health and safety provision, the Government are retreating. They will not even accept the new clause. There have been five or six wretched employment Bills over as many years. I renew the appeal that I have made to the Government many times. They have had 10 years or more since the introduction of the health and safety legislation and the establishment of the Health and Safety Commission. There has been huge development. The Government should go to the commission and say, "How can we make your work much more effective over the coming 10 years?" They will discover that it costs money. They can consult the people who really know.

Many of the commission's inspectors are dedicated men and women who worked in the old factory inspectorate which was incorporated into the Health and Safety Commission. It is one of the jobs in which people apply their dedication to a great cause. Many splendid people work in the commission. They could give plenty of advice to the Government, if only the Government would use one tenth of the eagerness and hard work that they put into squalid measures for undermining trade union rights and do something about health and safety. I ask the Government to introduce a major health and safety measure in the next Session. If they do not, a new Labour Government will do so as soon as they possibly can.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Unlike my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), I do not hold out any hope that the Minister will change his mind and accept the worthwhile new clauses. Clause 8 and the removal of protective legislation for young people go right to the heart of the Government's obsession with flexible work. They are seeking to create a reserve army of young malleable workers who will ask no questions and be prepared to put their lives at risk. Sadly, if our proposals are not accepted, we will run behind the more advanced economies in western Europe. We are to have a new charter. As my right hon. Friend said, the Government may be dragged screaming and kicking and forced to behave like a modern, civilised western democracy.

New clause 3 is eminently sensible. I examined some of last year's statistics on the construction industry. The number of reported major accidents is rising faster than ever. Last year, 157 building workers—36 of them in London alone—were killed on site. The number of fatal and major accidents is up by two thirds on the 1981 figures. It is vital for the Minister to reconsider his attitude to new clause 3 and at least to accept this small measure of protection so that young people will be supervised by a competent adult.

It is no secret that young people are adventurous, have energy and want to explore workplaces. Some of them are mischievous—that is part of being young—and therefore it is even more important to protect them. The citizens advice bureau in Chesterfield conducted a survey on what is happening to young people in the workplace. My hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) is right. Young people are already exposed to dangers, in spite of the protective legislation that the Government are seeking to remove. Young people often lack confidence and often give in to authority when they are told to do something. Adults often think, "That is not right," and challenge authority.

The citizens advice bureau survey in Chesterfield showed that young people are often selected to do the most dangerous jobs or work the most dangerous machinery, and that enforcing health and safety rights can be problematical. Employees querying health and safety at their work place are often victimised and dismissed in this free enterprise economy where two or three workers chase every job.

The survey gave examples of incidents involving young people. A building worker, aged 17, was working in extremely dangerous conditions, often at great heights, without adequate supervision, and on very low pay, too. The survey states that the eyes of a young man of 17 were damaged by a welding flash. That young man was sacked when he questioned safety at work with his employers. In another case, a water pipe burst near a machine operator, aged 20. The water mixed with the glue and oil from the machine, but nothing was done despite protests to the management to clean up what was obviously an unsafe situation. The machine operator slipped and damaged her back. The survey gave example after example of incidents involving young people. All those events occurred despite the fact that every employer has a duty reasonably to care for the safety of staff.

At present, young people have certain protections. The Minister should ensure—if not on the ground of conscience, out of a sense of honour to our country—that we do not get dragged screaming and kicking by EEC directives into doing something civilised to protect young people. We should not remove that small measure of protection.

New clause 5 is a reasonable request to keep information. The Government have masses of resources to hand. In any modern civilised state such information would be automatically kept. Why will the Government not keep statistics of the number of young people under 18 years of age who are in paid employment, the average number of hours worked by persons under 18 in such employment, and their average wages? We could all hazard a guess as to why they will not tell us about the average wages. I shall be talking about low pay in a later clause. It is vital that we know the number of industrial accidents involving young people under 18.

I urge the Minister to reconsider and to accept the two new clauses. If he feels that he cannot do that, at least, when we come to Third Reading, he could kick out clause 8.

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): I apologise to the House for not having been present at the beginning of the debate. I was in the Select Committee on Social Services, which was considering the health White Paper, cross-examining people who were anxious to give evidence to show the damage that will be done by the Government. I am pleased to have arrived in the Chamber in good time to hear a substantial amount of the debate and to participate in it.

I want to refer to a simple matter that affects young people. There has been a change in definition of the term "young person" for the purposes of employment law. No great play has been made of it, but a change of definition has just been tucked into the Bill. The change is that, whereas at present a young person is someone aged 16 but under 18, when the Bill becomes an Act the young person will be of school leaving age and under 18. To the casual eye, that may appear to be the same thing. We are accustomed to talking about the school leaving age being 16 years. However, that is a gross simplification. A school leaver can be 15 years eight months through to 16 years seven months, according entirely to his or her birthday. That change in definition will bring into the net youngsters from the age of 15 years eight months, and will remove a considerable amount of employment protection.

7.45 pm

In Committee, I asked Ministers the simple question how many of the young people concerned would be under 16, and they could not produce an answer. For three separate Committee days the Ministers could not produce an answer. In the Bill there was a change of definition bringing in a large number of extra very young people, but the Ministers did not even know how many would be involved. I should have thought that it would be simple for a Minister to discuss the matter with his opposite number at the Department of Education and Science. That should have been done before any idea of a change in definition was considered.

Anyway, three Committee days came and passed, and during that time I obtained, by the normal procedure of a parliamentary question, an answer from the Department of Education and Science. So I, from the Opposition Benches, told the Ministers how many 15-year-olds they were bringing into the legislation and stripping of even more employment protection. I told them that every year more than 100,000 young people under the age of 16 leave school. I am not sure whether the Minister wants to intervene. No, he has changed his mind. Perhaps he still does not realise the number involved and it will take time for that to be absorbed. That change of definition is a mere casual afterthought, just tucked away in the Bill, but 100,000 under 16-year-olds will be brought into its ambit and will have even more employment protection taken away.

Of course, at present those young people are protected as children. Therefore, we were taunted about the fact that we wanted to keep those youngsters as children, whereas the Government wanted to give them the extra status of treating them more as adults. That would be a point of view that they could argue were it not for the fact that for the purpose of social security legislation a young person under 16 does not even exist in his or her own right. Therefore, we have the astonishing fact that, if a girl is 15 years eight months and is unfortunate or misguided enough to be having a baby, she does not exist in her own right and cannot claim social security for herself or her baby. She is regarded as a child, completely dependent on her parents. However, under this Employment Bill, the Government will have a girl of 15 years eight months working down a pit. When I was 15 and working, I was anxious that people should regard me as an adult, but I know that I would have deeply resented being regarded as a child when it came to Government pay-outs and as an adult when it came to exploitation, which is exactly what will happen to young people under the proposed legislation.

I ask the House to bear in mind that, under the clauses which talk about young people under 18, we are perforce considering some young people who are even under 16. The fact that we are asking for accident statistics makes the clauses even more relevant.

My hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) stressed that young people cannot be regarded as having old heads on their young shoulders, when it comes to

[Mrs. Audrey Wise]

taking care in dealing with machinery and hazardous work or in dealing with employers who may be pushing them to do things that they should not do. Young people may feel in great need of protection, but the Government will remove it.

Ministers are a bit careless about figures. This morning in Committee I was told that only a small number of women would be affected by a particular matter that we were discussing. I asked how many, but, once again, Ministers did not know. I think it is absolutely scandalous that Ministers do not know how many people are affected by their legislation.

In Standing Committee we were told that not all young people are eligible for employment protection in the first place. We were told that only those working in mines, quarries, shops and factories were protected. I accept that, but I would have thought that a responsible Government would have then decided to protect those not currently protected. The Government, however, prefer to give the impression, once again, that, what has been done is of no great consequence. However, they are stripping protection from 73 per cent. of young people, quite apart from changing the definition of young people to include some 15-year-olds.

If I were to complain to the House, I would complain that the new clauses are too modest. I assume that it was thought that it was worthwhile to be modest in the hope that, some day, we shall get some response from the Government, but I believe that we have erred in our modesty.

In new clause 5 we ask for the

"average number of hours worked by persons under eighteen"

in paid full-time employment. I believe that we should go further. Once the Bill becomes an Act I would like to know the range of hours worked. After all, the Bill will remove from young people the protection of not being allowed to work more than 48 hours—sometimes 54—in a week.

Will the Bill affect the number of hours worked? The Government have been engaged in a peculiar process. In Committee they told us repeatedly that the Bill would provide more employment opportunities for young people. Since the only mechanism to achieve that result would be to let young people work longer and in worse conditions, we naturally asked what sort of employer would offer extra jobs to youngsters for more than 48 hours a week. However, Ministers said that employers would not offer such jobs. We were even told that young people would be like gold dust and that it would not be possible to push them around. If that is so, why do the Government need clause 8? If young people will be able to offer their labour in a seller's market, why strip away their protection? Why take away that protection if its removal will not create any extra jobs as employers will be too good-hearted to say to a young person, "You can have a job, but only if you are willing to work 50 or 60 hours a week"?

The Government cannot have it both ways, but they try. The burden of their argument appears to be that more jobs will be created because conditions will be worsened and that therefore there will be more chances for exploitation, but when challenged on that the Government say that employers will not exploit young people. Such a response treats this House with contempt. But that is a small matter compared with the effects of the Bill on young people. Therefore, I want to know the range of hours that will be worked by young people under the age of 18, after the Act has had a chance to bite.

I am anxious to know the number of industrial accidents that have been suffered and those figures should be properly sorted out. When I have tried to get figures on accidents, the common answer is that separate figures are not kept for whatever category I seek information on. I want to ensure that separate figures are kept and that those figures are specifically drawn to the attention of the House so that they can be debated. When we have complained about the number of accidents on YTS, the answer from the Government is that those figures are no worse than those suffered in the employment market generally. All that means is that there are far too many accidents happening to young people in work whether it is full time paid employment—a proper job—or YTS or any other kind of manipulation.

I believe that the new clauses are extremely modest and I shall be disappointed, but not surprised, if they are not accepted.

Mr. Cope: With the leave of the House, I shall reply to the debate.

For the most part this debate has been a re-run of the arguments against clause 8 made in Committee. Those who were members of that Committee have run the course before, but the new clauses are specific.

New clause 5 refers to the collection of statistics, but it does not require a great many statistics to be collected. Many are collected already and are made available to the House through the *Employment Gazette* and publications from the Health and Safety Executive. I do not believe that collecting even more statistics, as suggested in the new clause, would help matters.

A recent analysis by the Health and Safety Executive suggests that young people at work are less at risk than the average employee. The reverse was true in 1984-85—those statistics were quoted in the debate—but in 1986-87 the fatal or major accident rate for 16 to 19-year-old employees was 81·7 per 100,000 employees, compared with 88·7 for all employees. I do not, however, believe that the bald statistics tell the whole story. For that we must rely on the Health and Safety Executive and the Health and Safety Commission. We must also look to the factories inspectorate—the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) paid proper tribute to it, with which I agree.

On 11 April I made an announcement about health and safety on YTS, which included a new and additional study of the statistics on YTS accidents that flowed from the consideration that I promised the House following the judgment in the Cain case, which was also referred to today.

New clause 3 would be more effective if it did not merely repeat existing provisions in our legislation. The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent and other hon. Members referred to the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the right hon. Gentleman have every right to be proud of the fact that you carried that Act through the House. It forms a good basis for health and safety legislation today. Therefore, I was sorry that the right hon. Gentleman seemed to suggest that we should introduce an additional new framework. I do not believe that that is required. One of the good things about the 1974 Act is that it enables us to bring orders to the House to increase health and safety in individual areas

as industry develops and conditions change. We frequently introduce such orders and the framework directive, referred to earlier, is such an example.

It is also important to point out that the Health and Safety Commission, which supervises that Act and the executive, involves the trade unions. It is not only the commissioners who are involved, but many of the specialist committees. I hope that the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent is not suggesting that we should replace that machinery by new machinery. We should build on it by bringing additional orders before the House as we see fit.

Mr. Foot: I am not suggesting we should introduce new machinery. I am suggesting that, after 14 or 15 years of the Health and Safety Commission, instead of the niggling measures damaging safety rights which the Government bring forward in different Acts, it is time to look at the machinery. We should see whether substantially bigger sums should be provided so that the inspectorate could be expanded. I bet that if the Minister were to ask the Health and Safety Commission what it thought of that proposition, it would think that it was a good one.

8 pm

Mr. Cope: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for clarifying what he said. We have granted the Health and Safety Commission the extra funds it has asked for this year, and the number of inspectors is increasing. At least we are moving slightly in the right direction.

Mr. Nellist: Does the Minister accept that we take, not with a pinch but with a ton of salt, his plaudits about the machinery of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974? I share the criticisms of my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) about the "as far as is reasonably practicable" point. The Minister's plaudits about the machinery are less than convincing if the operators are not there to put that machinery into operation. Despite the Minister's announcement about the increased numbers of health and safety inspectors, between 1980 and 1988 the numbers fell by 129, which is a 29 per cent. drop.

Mr. Cope: The hon. Gentleman has had the opportunity to make his point.

Mr. Nellist: Answer.

Mr. Cope: We have had a re-run of the debate that we had on the basic clauses in the Bill. Several hon. Members have indicated that their real target is clause 8. I did not expect to be able to convince Opposition Members on that matter this evening, but I would like to think that they would now be less convinced of the advantages of these new clauses, which I urge the House to resist.

Mr. Strang: The Minister is right that our main concern is clause 8 and the purpose of the new clauses was to focus attention on what the Government were doing. I rest my case quite simply on the Health and Safety Commission's comment because the Minister has repeatedly referred to the commission and has spoken at length about the valuable work that it carries out. We agree with that.

I remind the Minister that, in response to the Government's own consultative document in which they put forward the proposals for the elimination of the restrictions on the employment of young people, the Health and Safety Commission stated

"that the restrictions may be unnecessarily detailed and elaborate, although not an apparent burden on industry, but that they should not be replaced without some form of control of young persons' hours of work in order to safeguard their welfare and opportunities for education, training and social development".

The Government have not taken that advice. They are sweeping away the controls on young people's hours of work. For that and other reasons advanced by my hon. Friends this evening we shall vote for the new clause.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 181, Noes 244.

Division No. 205] **[8.02 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Fearn, Ronald
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*	Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Allen, Graham	Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Anderson, Donald	Fisher, Mark
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Flannery, Martin
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy	Flynn, Paul
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack	Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Ashton, Joe	Foster, Derek
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Foulkes, George
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Fraser, John
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*	Fyfe, Maria
Barron, Kevin	Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Battle, John	Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Beckett, Margaret	George, Bruce
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Godman, Dr Norman A.
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*	Golding, Mrs Llin
Bermingham, Gerald	Gordon, Mildred
Bidwell, Sydney	Gould, Bryan
Blair, Tony	Graham, Thomas
Boateng, Paul	Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Boyes, Roland	Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Bradley, Keith	Grocott, Bruce
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*	Hardy, Peter
Buckley, George J.	Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Caborn, Richard	Haynes, Frank
Callaghan, Jim	Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*	Henderson, Doug
Campbell-Savours, D. N.	Hinchliffe, David
Canavan, Dennis	Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Cartwright, John	Home Robertson, John
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*	Hood, Jimmy
Clay, Bob	Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Clelland, David	Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann	Howells, Geraint
Cohen, Harry	Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Coleman, Donald	Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*	Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Corbett, Robin	Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Corbyn, Jeremy	Ingram, Adam
Cousins, Jim	Janner, Greville
Cryer, Bob	Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Cummings, John	Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Cunliffe, Lawrence	Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Dalyell, Tam	Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Darling, Alistair	Kirkwood, Archy
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*	Lamond, James
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*	Leadbitter, Ted
Dixon, Don	Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Dobson, Frank	Litherland, Robert
Doran, Frank	Livsey, Richard
Douglas, Dick	Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Dunnachie, Jimmy	Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth	Loyden, Eddie
Eadie, Alexander	McAvoy, Thomas
Eastham, Ken	McCartney, Ian
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*	McFall, John
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*	McLeish, Henry
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*	McNamara, Kevin
Fatchett, Derek	McWilliam, John
Faulds, Andrew	Madden, Max

Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G'T Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Cook and
Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Maclean, and
Mr. Alan Howarth.

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 9

HEALTH AND SAFETY OF HOME WORKERS

'There shall be established a home-working unit within the Health and Safety Executive. In each division of the Health and Safety Executive an inspector will be designated to concentrate on the inspection of home workers' health and safety.—*[Mrs. Mahon.]*

Brought up, and read the first time.

8.15 pm

Mrs. Mahon: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

At present, home workers are effectively excluded from the protection of health and safety legislation. The Factories Act 1961 places a duty on firms in specified trades to notify local authorities about home workers for health and safety purposes, but the Health and Safety Commission noted in 1979 that that had more or less fallen into abeyance. Hackney was the first local authority to employ a home worker officer. Only 68 home workers were found to be registered, but it was estimated that 10 per cent. of all clothing production was carried out by home workers.

The 1981 Select Committee report on home working made a few recommendations, but the few that it made have been largely ignored. There is therefore a need to make firms register home workers and provide information about all materials, machinery and equipment used by them. The register should be available for inspection by trade unions and, of course, by the health and safety inspectorate, and the inspectorate should be given powers to prohibit the use of dangerous equipment and hazardous materials which are quite often used in the home.

If the new clause is accepted—I am fairly hopeful that the Minister will accept it—the Government should clearly provide adequate inspection and enforcement arrangements by increasing the number of inspectors substantially and providing the necessary back-up facilities. Home working is a long-standing example of casualised labour: there is no effective regulation of the suppliers, and the worker has no security, no rights and relatively poor pay. High unemployment, industrial restructuring and the withdrawal and weakening of regulatory mechanisms, such as the proposed abolition of the wages councils, form the background against which an increase in home working is predicted. Some people predict a substantial increase in both the numbers and the range of work covered.

As for the number of home workers, the figures vary considerably. Professor Peter Townsend estimated in 1968-69 that there were over 1 million and the 1981 Government census recorded 750,000. The general guesstimate is that there are now over 1 million, and it is largely accepted that most of them are women. They do a vast range of jobs, and the conditions under which they work can be intolerable—hence the need for the new clause. Some of those conditions would not be allowed in any factory, office or school. Many women are working in dangerous conditions, and the hazards are numerous.

The noise nuisance for people working with machinery is quite common. There is exposure to various chemicals and solvents and, obviously, there is the risk of fire from trying to do at home a job that should be done in the workplace. There is also the question of machinery and electrical safety.

Often, because of the long hours and the intricacy of the work, especially in knitting and sewing, there is a great deal of eye strain and headaches. There is also the problem of dirt and I shall look at that in detail when I outline the case of a home worker who uses electrical equipment. The nature of home work and the reason many women do it means that they work in small houses, in flats or even in bedsits. The work is often carried out while small children are in the room that has to be used. That is totally unacceptable. Home workers have to pay for their own heating and lighting and often for the electricity that is used to run welding equipment, computers, sewing machines or knitting machines.

Packing calls for masses of materials which have to be stored in passageways, living rooms and even kitchens. I visited some home workers in Halifax and could hardly get through the door: the small terraced house was piled to the ceiling with boxes ready to be packed. A variety of items such as Christmas crackers, Christmas cards and mail order catalogues are packed. Last year, *The Observer* carried the report of a sad case in Southwark in which a two-year-old child died while his mother was putting catalogues into envelopes. That shows the dangers that exist for women who work at home and try to look after young children at the same time.

As I have said, some home workers are exposed to hazardous substances. Some hon. Members will have heard about the widely reported case of a woman who was sticking felt on to piano keys and using benzine. She was doing it in a confined and poorly ventilated room and contracted leukaemia. The most vulnerable group of workers, those who are likely to have young children with them while they work, sometimes quite unknowingly expose themselves to great danger. The new clause would go some way towards providing for the inspection and examination of the workplace and the kind of work that women are doing.

Women carry out such work because it is the only sort of work they can do. If they are not caring for children, home workers are often found caring for elderly or disabled relatives. Because of the need to get work completed on time, children often help mother to carry it out. In the article in *The Observer* last June, one home worker said:

"My daughters aged 13 and 14 used to come in from school, eat, and start sewing. I could never have got enough money from the work if my children had not helped. We were absolutely desperate for money as my husband had left. I challenge anybody to check, sew and lay a dozen sweaters at the rate they set and earn more than 66p an hour."

That seems to be fairly common practice among home workers.

The new clause deals with health and safety, but the other matters that I have mentioned are relevant. At present, there are no health and safety checks, and there is little training. I understand that many people think that home working is a minor matter in terms of unemployment. Some people have an image of home workers as a few women working for pin money. That image has been challenged by many factual accounts of women in financial need having to work long hours for appalling wages because they have no other choice. Sheila Allen and Carol Wolkowitz carried out a study into home working and published a book last year. That gave the

[Mrs. Mahon]

results of intensive research into home working, especially in the west riding of Yorkshire where I come from, and revealed the realities of the situation.

In west Yorkshire, Louise Crew, a researcher at Leeds university, studied in detail the large textile and clothing companies in the area. She and Sheila Allen and Carol Wolkowitz discovered that, while home workers largely earn a pittance, they are part of big business. For example, one west Yorkshire company uses 1,200 hand knitters, and a Huddersfield firm says that its home workers contribute £3·5 million to the company's annual turnover. That is big business. The managing director of that Huddersfield company says that his firm chooses to put work out because of the advantages of flexibility, cheapness and a reduced need for space. All that firm's outworkers are women and 95 per cent. of them are from ethnic minorities who may not be well equipped to organise or to find their way around health and safety legislation in order to improve conditions

When firms such as those that I have mentioned put out work, they also put out their health and safety problems. They no longer have any concern for the conditions in which the women work. They can take on workers when they need them and drop them when work is slack. They have no obligations about job security or regular incomes for the workers. This is a big and expanding business.

In the Government's deregulated Britain, it is tempting for employers to move into the home work area. However, in many cases the work is degrading. I have raised in the House the case of the women in my constituency who were packing Christmas cards for 24p an hour. Those cards eventually found their way to the shelves in Woolworths. When Woolworths' managing director, Mair Barnsworth, was contacted she seemed unable to see anything wrong with that. She thought that, if the women worked twice as hard, they could earn as much as 48p an hour. It is a different story when the chief executive of Kingfisher, which owns Woolworths, awards himself a 50 per cent. pay rise of £701,000 a year. He earns £14,000 a week, which works out at about £350 an hour. That is in sharp contrast to the Halifax women, who earn 24p an hour. He does not work in dangerous and unpleasant conditions with boxes of cards filling his living room.

A packer in Halifax has started a group to try to highlight some of the hazards that home workers face. I found her account of her experience quite moving and I should like to read some of it. Bernie has now given up outwork and is organising other workers. She says:

"When I did outwork, I used to make Christmas crackers. All in all it took roughly three minutes to make one. They consisted of six to a box and I was paid one penny per cracker. I earned roughly 40p per hour."

A normal rate of pay for packing work, which tends to be the lowest paid home work, is 40p to 50p an hour. I realise that considerably more is paid for some home work. She continued:

"I also made gift tags, which consisted of six tags, three green, three red, one red ribbon and one green ribbon. I folded them all, put them in bags and was given 1p per bag. There was many a time I used to stay up all night so as to get my wage packet at the end of the week, for buying shoes, clothes and sometimes food, for my children. Many people thought I did this for leisure money. But this was not the case. I did this to buy things which were a necessity. I could not go out to work, because I have small children, so I got them to bring work to me. I used to put in 90 hours a week. There would be boxes stacked everywhere—little toys, paper hats and mottoes all over the room. The paper was so dazzling that my eyes used to hurt and then would come the headaches, followed by migraine. I would get terrible backache. But I could not stop for fear of losing some of my wages."

That was the experience of one home worker with whom I had contact earlier this year.

8.30 pm

Home workers are susceptible to pressures which create worse conditions for them. Their very low rates of pay and the fact that they are on piecework mean that they have to drive themselves to work, often for long hours. Sometimes they cut corners on health, safety and welfare.

Knitting, which is a common form of home work, is not dangerous in itself, but when a heavily pregnant woman sits up all night to finish work, it becomes hazardous. Another experience was outlined to me by the woman herself who did the work in order to survive because she was on inadequate benefit. She was paid £5 to knit a very intricate mohair sweater which is sold in London boutiques for about £90. Because she was trying to pay off bills, she had to sit up all night to finish garments. That in itself was hazardous. I have many more first-hand examples from constituents, all of them women, who have to work for more hours than is good for them and their families.

With home workers we get the other side of the Government's flexible work force. Often home workers have no employment rights and are vulnerable. I shall give another example of better-paid home work in my constituency. The work was supplied by FKI Cableform, whose parent company is FKI Babcock plc. FKI Cableform gave out electronic assembly work. The rate of pay was 31p a piece for assembling the work in the person's home. That was cut to 18·9p per piece. My constituent was already working 40 to 60 hours a week. She could earn £75 to £80 for working very long hours. If she accepts the new arbitrary arrangements whereby the piece rate is almost halved, she will have to work nearly double the hours to maintain the same income. That could be detrimental not just to her but to her family because she has family responsibilities, as do the other women who work for that firm.

The building society will not cut her mortgage in half, quite the contrary with interest rates as they are. The cost of cornflakes and other foods will not be halved overnight, but if she wants to maintain her income she will have to put herself at risk by working nearly double the hours that she worked before. Such exploitation should be dealt with. An inspectorate would examine the obvious hazards. It would also take into account the welfare of the worker and would examine conditions in the workplace, in this case the home.

I hope that the Government will accept the new clause. The Trades Union Congress has been concerned for some time about home work. It has put forward many suggestions to the Government and to various bodies interested in the health and safety of home workers. In a charter it has given advice to local authorities, to the Health and Safety Commission and to the Government. It wants provisions on the statute book that would treat home workers as employees and put a duty on those giving out home work to make six-monthly returns to local authorities giving details of where the work is placed and information on the type of work and the materials and equipment involved. It has also sugggested that the

information should be available to trade unions. It wants an inspectorate with powers to prohibit dangerous equipment and hazardous materials which present risks that could not be controlled in the home. It makes other useful suggestions.

I hope that the Minister will consider carefully the new clause and will see his way to implementing it. I recommend the new clause to the House.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will know perhaps that a document, called the social charter, has been prepared by the European Commission and produced today. I understand that it is available to the Economic and Social Committee of the European Community. I have made inquiries in the Library because the document is directly relevant to the provisions of the Bill and to the new clause. It deals, amongst other things, with pay, hours, insurance, union membership and so forth. Many people believe that it is ultra vires of the treaty, particularly title III as amended by the Single European Act.

I want to take the opportunity to ask if we can make a protest on behalf of the House at the manner in which the House has been bypassed and ignored by the production of the charter without it even having been made available, as I understand it, to the Government, let alone to Parliament. I make that as a point of order that is directly relevant to the provisions of the Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am not aware of the matter to which the hon. Gentleman has referred, but I understand his concern. No doubt the Minister has listened to what has been said. He may find it relevant to comment on it when he intervenes, as he doubtless will, in the course of the debate.

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): I endorse fully the sentiments expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) who summarised some of the points that I intended to make. The debate is timely in view of the fact that only this afternoon the Select Committee on Employment has been interviewing three young women who came to give evidence about part-time work and home work.

Home workers are usually women with young children, and they often use fast-moving machinery. To increase production and make more money they sometimes remove safety guards so the machinery then represents a hazard to their children. They also use adhesives and other solvents, yet they are not aware of their toxic content. That is another example of a hazard that confronts them. Those women are exploited, are paid very little, and have no form of redress or defence. Nobody speaks up for them, no organisation represents them, and no legislation protects them.

The House may be interested to know that today three young women gave evidence before the Employment Select Committee for two hours. They made frank comments rather than attempting to present sophisticated statistics. They spoke honestly from their own experience and knowledge.

The Committee was given a document from the Diocesan Board for Social Responsibility, an organisation within the Manchester diocese. It is so concerned about and appalled by the conditions reported to it that it is up in arms and is disgusted with the situation. The exploitation of home workers is not confined to any particular city but can be found in Birmingham, Coventry, Manchester, Yorkshire, Halifax, and many other areas. Plenty of information can be produced about the wicked exploitation of people who are among the most disadvantaged. They may include the disabled who are unable to compete in the ordinary employment market and seriously handicapped in the limbs. Such disabled people may be able to use only their hands or fingers, yet they are desperate to make a little money. Also disadvantaged is the young mother of three or four children who cannot afford a babysitter. She cannot find employment in the competitive world and is stuck at home, desperate for money. Some employers are very conscious of such situations and exploit them.

The social responsibility document presented to the Committee gives a number of examples of the sheer greed of some employers. One example concerned hand knitting and designer wear, where a home worker in west Yorkshire was paid £4·50 for one week's work. It may be hard to believe, but that person was paid £4·50 for a hand-made sweater. That is the level of reward that is offered. It was found that home workers' rates of pay are on average 30 per cent. less than the normal remuneration for similar work. But such workers do not enjoy paid holidays, maternity rights, or sickness pay.

8.45 pm

Home workers are also sometimes expected to use their own equipment, such as sewing machines, as well as providing electricity, heating and lighting. Despite that, the ladies who gave evidence to the Committee this afternoon said that in some cases no increases have been paid for three of four years. That means that in real terms home workers are paid less than they were four years ago, and that their income is not even keeping pace with inflation.

The Committee asked the ladies if they could name some of the employers involved. Everybody imagines that such exploitation is only perpetrated by the owners of small factories or companies of 15 to 20 workers who are just trying to top up their labour force, but that is not the case. Big businesses also are involved. The Committee was given the names of Marks and Spencer, Woolworth, C and A, and British Home Stores. They are all involved in exploitation and pay women home workers only a few pence, when, year after year, they go swanking on the stock exchange and talk about the millions of pounds they have made. Any idea that such exploitation is restricted to small organisations trying to top up their labour force must be dispelled.

The Committee was also given examples of tax fiddles. One witness knew of a case in which an applicant was asked, "Will you submit two different names—one for the morning, and one for the afternoon?" That was done because of the tax fiddles that the company wished to enjoy.

Any fair-minded person will agree that it is time to clean up the home worker sector. That can only be done in this Chamber, because home workers labour in isolation, are not represented by any organisation, and have no one to speak up for them. If we really have a conscience, we can do something for them. We are putting the Minister to the test. He must either make a good case for ignoring our request—and I know that he cannot—or he must listen sympathetically and with compassion.

[Mr. Ken Eastham]

There is certainly a case for a minimum wage for home workers. I know that Ministers and Conservative Members are against a minimum wage, as are organisations such as the Confederation of British Industry. The CBI is worried about some of the consequences of 1992. It says, "We defer to the Government." Meanwhile, Conservative Members say, "Remember, we must be competitive." If we must pay poverty wages of the type I have described to remain competitive, how is it possible for countries such as France, Sweden and Germany to have minimum wages yet to have inflation rates half of ours, no financial crises and no balance of trade problems? The argument that to be competitive we must continue to pay poverty wages does not hold water and everybody recognises it as a complete sham.

When the Committee was taking evidence this afternoon, a young woman was asked what would happen if, though she received poverty wages, her employers did not offer her a job. Would she earn even less, was the implication of the question. My view is that companies paying those sorts of wages would have a hard time finding others to do the work for what they are paying, let alone finding people to do it more cheaply. Do Conservative Members really believe that if jobs were taken from poverty workers such as those, masses of people would be willing to work for 20p or 30p an hour?

The Committee was told of a lady making dresses who was receiving 90p per dress for her work. She happened to notice that the same dresses were being sold in the shops for £30. A Conservative Member asked the lady, "Did you see those dresses for sale up-market, the sort of dresses you were making? After all", he said, "they were selling for only £30." His statement almost took the breath away from those women, who said that they could never afford to buy a dress for £30, whether the shop selling them was up-market or down-market.

I hope I have explained how some hon. Members are totally out of touch with reality and do not understand poverty or the suffering of the people about whom I am speaking. There is an overwhelming case for the introduction of a minimum wage and for protection in health and safety matters. We need a form of registration so that we can sort out some of the villains who are carrying on business in such a shady way, exploiting hard-working folk, particularly women.

Mr. Batiste: The hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) is to be congratulated on moving a new clause which gives us an opportunity to explore, in more detail than time normally allows, an interesting and increasing area of activity in the United Kingdom—home working.

I believe that we shall find, as further statistics become available to add to those that were available from the early part of the 1980s, that this has become a growing and increasingly attractive area of activity. So before we look in detail at the Opposition proposal, we must consider whether the negative view of home working which we have heard from the hon. Members for Halifax and for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) is justified on the evidence that is available.

The hon. Member for Blackley referred to three women who gave evidence to the Select Committee this afternoon. One could find any group of three people in any area of activity who could present, honestly and fairly, a view of just about any industry and activity that would make people's hair stand on end. One must ask whether the evidence that was given by those three women was typical of the home working group of employees as a whole and whether it leads us to the conclusion, contained in the new clause, that a special unit of the Health and Safety Executive should be set up.

The best evidence that I have discovered is the 1981 special survey as supplemented by subsequent studies and brought together in the work of Catherine Hakim in an article which was published in 1987 in the *Employment Gazette*. I make no apologies for drawing heavily for statistics on that article, though I would happily look at any reasoned and comprehensive set of statistics that Opposition Members wished to adduce.

Before one considers what solutions one needs to perceived problems, it is important to examine whether those problems exist in the form in which they have been expressed and whether they are typical of an industry at large. The first question to ask in relation to the new clause is what is a home worker? Traditionally, that has caused much difficulty of definition, because it covers potentially a wide range of groups of people.

The hon. Member for Halifax must address her remarks more carefully to the specific group of employees she has in mind because I can see great difficulties in trying to impose the full jurisdiction of the Health and Safety Executive on large numbers of people who, on any reasonable definition of the term "home worker", are self-employed and would deeply resent such an imposition.

What are the general categories of people who are included? Clearly, large numbers of self-employed who work from home come within this category. One could perhaps exclude those who are self-employed, and deal only with those who are in employment. But that would probably not help the hon. Member for Halifax because the definitions of employment related to control by employers would probably exclude a large number of the people at whom she would be addressing her new clause. There is a difficult borderline to be borne in mind there.

Perhaps one could limit the group to those who took work from only one supplier, but again there would still be a large number of people who were self-employed without having any employer of their own with any responsibility for the machinery or safety standards in their homes. Another category, for example, would be the areas of child minding, in which many people are engaged at home.

An increasing number of employees in this home-working category are information technology workers, and as the pace of technology advances a large number of jobs that were hitherto done in offices are often now done at home through computerised systems linked together through the telephone network. Again, one must ask whether they should be brought within the categories covered by the new clause. Another large group of people are in sales and haulage. There are many other examples. I hope that I have explained that a wide category of people come within the definition of home workers.

Mr. Eastham: The hon. Gentleman seems to imply that there could not be blanket protection to embrace all home workers. He surely does not believe that in, say, an engineering factory, all manner of different provisions are needed for the various categories of people who work in the factory, whether they are in the wages department,

operating a centre lathe or pushing a brush. It seems strange that it should be possible to find an umbrella of protective legislation to cover everyone in such a factory, yet the hon. Gentleman implies that the same sort of provision could not be made for all people working at home.

Mr. Batiste: The hon. Gentleman is jumping to conclusions about what I am going to say later. What I am saying at the moment is that, unlike him, I am trying to ascertain the facts as best I can and reach conclusions about dealing with the problems that relate to those facts. He will be aware that the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 imposes certain burdens on employers and statutory duties to ensure health and safety at work. Difficult questions have to be answered if a large proportion of the people in the group that he and the hon. Member for Halifax wish to be covered by the Act are not employees technically. I am trying to point out that one has first to analyse the group that one wants to protect and see whether the protection that one is seeking to invoke would be relevant to that group of people.

The few examples that I have given already show that, far from being confined to a narrow group of people in limited working circumstances, home working is carried out in a wide range of different industries and activities, is growing in scope and can broadly be divided into two groups of people—those who work at home and those who work from home.

An interesting finding of the 1981 survey, which quite contradicts several of the points made by the hon. Members for Halifax and for Blackley, is that of those who work at home, 71 per cent. are women—that confirms what the hon. Member for Halifax said—but of those who work from home, an equal proportion—71 per cent.—are men. I do not know what significance that has one way or another in the context of health and safety at work, but as the hon. Lady said that we should find what a typical home worker is, I felt it important to put the record straight.

The 1981 survey looked at a number of particular features of a typical home worker. First, it looked at whether the typical home worker is someone who is either chronically ill or disabled. The hon. Members for Halifax and Blackley suggested that, typically, this was the situation. However, the survey shows the opposite—that there is no departure from the norm in the pattern of health of home workers as compared with industry at large.

9 pm

The survey goes on to say that a high proportion of those who are home workers are owner-occupiers—something like four fifths—and that a strong element of motivation of those who work from home is the need to get income to help with the costs of home ownership and home buying given the expansion of home ownership. Interestingly, it says that, taking the group as a whole, home workers are better educated than the work force in general. This is a different picture from the one painted thus far.

When one goes on further to see what industries are involved in home working, the picture broadens out extensively from that so far given. The tables in the 1981 survey show that some 229,000 people were employed working at home—the group in which the largest proportion is women—while some 658,000 people were employed as home-based workers—the group with a proportion of 71 per cent. men. An enormous range of industries is covered. Some 50,000 people in the professional-related industries are working at home, and another 40,000 are home-based. As one would expect, large numbers of clerical workers—100,000—are home-based, some 25,000 are in catering and a considerable number are in farming. In processing, making and repairing—the manufacturing side—some 42,000 people work at home and some 47,000 are based at home. Those are just a few examples, which show that, rather than being confined to a manufacturing base, home workers cover a much wider range of industrial and commercial activity than has been suggested so far.

The hours of work and the tenure of work are also quite different from what has been suggested so far. The tenure of work is shorter than for those who are employed full time in the work place, and the hours that each person works are much less. As the survey shows, working at home is the result of choice because one of the often-quoted advantages of home working is the sense of freedom and independence that it gives. The survey found this in an extensive number of interviews of those working at home.

As to earnings, typically they were low on average and they reflected part-time wage rates. The survey does not present any tables of wage rates, but it includes an important point. The survey did not deal with wage rates but stated that if the relatively short working hours of home workers are compared with those who work longer hours there is bound to be a discrepancy. But wage rates are irrelevant to this debate. We are debating not low pay but health and safety and the Health and Safety Executive. The issue of a national minimum wage touches on debates that we have had in Committee and in the House on many occasions, in which, naturally, differences between hon. Members have been apparent.

Mrs. Mahon: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that a heavily pregnant woman having to sit up all night to complete a sweater for which she will be paid only £4·50 could have some effect on her health and that of her unborn child?

Mr. Batiste: Any pregnant woman who works too hard in any environment could put her health and that of her child at risk, but one would expect her to show a measure of responsibility in her work. Typically, hours worked at home are shorter than those worked at a fixed work place. Therefore, the home worker works in a much more relaxed environment, being able to work shorter hours in her own home rather than having to travel to a workplace. I do not think that the hon. Lady's point bears too much examination.

The survey considered how much control was exercised by employers, what work was done in the home and for how many hours. While there was quality control for manufacturing, consultancy or clerical work, little other control was exercised. As the new clause aims to enable health and safety inspectors to inspect work done at home, one would expect clearer evidence of widespread employer involvement, but fewer than half home workers qualified as employees.

Accidents are of more relevance to the new clause. What were the survey's results about accidents to home workers? The survey said:

"The annual rate is very low indeed."

[Mr. Batiste]

The impression has been given that the majority of home workers are disabled people or people suffering from a chronic illness that might predispose them to having accidents without supervision, but that is a false picture of the typical home worker. The home is a relatively dangerous environment, and many accidents happen each year as a result of circumstances at home rather than work done at home. I shall give way to any Opposition Member who can give statistical evidence showing that working at home is not safer than working in a factory.

Mr. Eastham: The hon. Gentleman challenges Opposition Members to give evidence of safety. I remind him that there are insufficient inspectors to visit homes or factories. There are already 129 fewer inspectors than there should be, and we are told that each factory receives one visit every seven years.

Mrs. Mahon: Every 12 years.

Mr. Eastham: I thought that it was seven years. Given its diminished staff, does the hon. Gentleman believe that the Health and Safety Executive can catalogue all hazards and accidents? Who is he trying to kid?

Mr. Batiste: I think that the hon. Gentleman was saying that he has no evidence to present against the evidence in the report from which I have quoted and which he can get from the Library. It suggests that the rate of accidents among home workers is low. That report is based on a substantial test of home workers. It is important in debates such as this to get the best available evidence. I have quoted my sources, and the hon. Members for Blackley and for Halifax are welcome to check them.

The report revealed the positive attitude of home workers to home working. Freedom and flexibility were their hallmarks and home workers expressed great satisfaction at that. Dissatisfaction at home working was low and there was a low level of union membership.

Given the typical profile of the home worker, I see no case for giving statutory rights to factory inspectors to walk into people's homes.

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): I am not sure whether the hon. Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) tried deliberately to confuse the House or whether he was confused. He made a misleading comparison involving the large population who work from home. He tried to compare the population in general, including accountants and journalists, with the group of workers whom my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) wants to protect through the new clause.

I concede that many people who are technically based at home, including those who do accountancy and insurance work, probably do not need the protection of the new clause. It was clear from the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax that that was not its target. The hon. Gentleman made out that, because we have not produced statistics to prove that health and safety inspectors should have a unit to cover at-home work and statistics to demonstrate that people are dying or are seriously injured because of health and safety problems in their homes, our case is not proved. Neither my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax nor my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) made that case. My right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) was responsible in the 1970s for putting health and safety legislation on the statute book. All other workers in industry and commerce have that protection. My hon. Friend the Member for Halifax wants to extend it to those who work from home.

I should like to make it plain to the hon. Member for Elmet, if he needs it brought home to him, that we are talking about people who work from home because of economic necessity. There is no great freedom in running a sewing machine in one of the bedrooms or the living room. People do this work not because they find it intellectually stimulating but because they are skint and the only way they can pay the mortgage or the rent or feed their family properly is by bringing in extra income.

Various groups work from home. We are concerned about the garment industry. As my hon. Friend the Member for Blackley said, Marks and Spencer and other companies sub-contract the work on their lines of fashion through an agent, perhaps to a putative manufacturer, who sub-contracts the work to someone in the home. It is usually called cut, make and trim. The manufacturer may cut and finally trim the garment, but the making up is done in the home, often for a pitifully small price per garment. The point about the difference between what the home workers receive and the price the garments fetch in the high street has been made by my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax.

9.15 pm

It may appear that some great value is being added in the process if the home worker is receiving £5 for a garment that costs £90 when it is on the rack at Harrods. In reality, Harrods may be doing nicely, but four or five people are in the chain between the retail outlet and the home worker. That is where the money is going. The home worker receiving a low price per garment is not getting any benefit. All the way along the chain, no one makes a terrible amount of money, yet everyone combines to oppress the person at the end of the chain—the person manufacturing the garment at home.

We have been given examples of another group of workers, those who do paper work at home, such as stuffing Christmas cards or catalogues into envelopes and sending them out. They too are often poorly paid for their work. We are seeking to target the provisions of new clause 9 to help such groups.

The hon. Member for Elmet does himself and his party no credit by pretending that we seek to put a restrictive blanket on all those who work from home. We see new clause 9 as being helpful to those who work at home from economic necessity. Home workers, unlike workers in many industries, do not have the benefit of trade unionists with particular responsibility for health and safety or someone in the personnel department with expertise in health and safety. The workers we are discussing are often women who are isolated in their homes and have no knowledge of health and safety. Probably they do not even know what risks they are running. It is important to consider the type of work being done at home. As my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax said, home workers often deal with fire hazards. They deal with paper, which is highly flammable, or with material which is easily set alight, and both can cause major problems in the home. Home workers often do not know about that because they do not have the necessary expertise of trade unionists or personnel staff. They do not receive pamphlets from the

Department of Employment or guidance from the Health and Safety Executive. All we seek to do is to give them helpful advice and guidance from the Health and Safety Executive which, we propose, should have a special unit to provide such information.

To listen to the hon. Member for Elmet, one would think that we were dealing with a highly structured part of the economy, that it was marvellous to work at home and that everything was going swimmingly. What is wrong with that view? I must point out to the House that there is an economic argument against such exploitive labour. In the garment industry in particular there is no incentive for restructuring the way in which it conducts its business. If there is always somebody at the end of the line who is prepared to work for 50p per hour or less, there is no economic incentive to restructure that industry in such a way that it will operate on a modern and efficient basis. There is no incentive for anybody to invest in that industry because it can obtain such cheap labour. That is an obstacle to economic improvement and industrial restructuring and efficiency. The person at the end of the line has no choice and has to accept very low wages.

Hon. Members have discussed economic necessity. One reason why the overwhelming majority of low-paid people are women is the lamentable lack of child-care facilities. If there were proper child care in the workplace, women would not have to sit at home day after day, drudging for low wages. That is the reality of people's lives. They have no choice but to do demeaning and ill-paid work. One small thing that the House could do is at least to give them the knowledge that people within the Health and Safety Executive can give them advice on how to carry out work in the home. It is a small point, but it might save lives and put people's minds at rest. I hope that the House will support the new clause.

Mr. Haynes: I was not surprised at the speech by the hon. Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste). He was the "expert" on mining and on the history of Arthur Scargill. He is now the "expert" on what we are discussing this evening. He knows nothing. Solicitors think that they know it all, but the workers know it all. Hon. Members are talking about people who should not have to do what they are doing. I support the new clause so that people will have proper protection. It would not surprise me if Conservative Members have home workers, so I am not surprised that the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues are allowing some protection in that respect.

Hon. Members have been discussing earnings. A statement was made not many days ago by the Secretary of State for Social Security. He said that there is no poverty in this land. The Secretary of State for Social Security and the hon. Member for Elmet should visit some constituencies to find out whether there is any poverty. That is why the people whom Opposition Members represent must do low-paid work in their homes. It is a disgusting state of affairs. At the same time, we receive directives from Europe stating that certain things that we do not like must be put into operation.

I know what happens in this country. The people who employ home workers visit their homes, but they are not concerned about safety. They are concerned about their earnings. They want to see how much profit they have made out of the wicked work that they impose on people just to make a few pence. As has been said, it certainly is the exploitation of women.

My hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) mentioned disabled people. They should represent 3 per cent. of the work forces of many firms. However, some firms are ignoring the law because they are interested in the profit motive. For them, to take on a disabled person would prevent them from making the profits that they need to make. I am proud of a firm in my constituency. The proportion of disabled people in its work force is not 3 per cent. but 3·5 per cent. That firm is Mardon Illingworth. I am proud of what that firm is doing, but I am certainly not proud of what the Government are allowing to happen to people who work in the home.

My hon. Friends have explained the dangers. The hon. Member for Elmet said that Opposition Members' contributions were negative. I consider that the hon. Gentleman's contribution was a load of rubbish. He has been wheeled in by the Conservative party to put up a case against the new clause of my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon), which is in the interests of the people who need cover. I shall tell the House why the Minister will come to the Dispatch Box and say that he will not accept the clause. It is because the clause relates not just to home working, but to the whole of industry, especially the mining industry, where the Government have run down the number of inspectors so that there are no longer enough to carry out the job properly. They have done that wicked thing in the name of reducing public expenditure. They want to cut public expenditure and pour the money instead into the pockets of the people who do not need it.

The employers of home workers are often fly-by-nights. We are talking about the black economy. Some of the people who employ home workers are real crooks when it comes to dealing with finance. They are not paying taxes. If the Government spent more money on inspectors to pick up those bods we might get £1 million or £2 million into the coffers to pass on to those people who really need it, so they do not have to work at home for slave wages. We criticise other nations about slave labour, but that is slave labour. While the Government allow it to continue and do nothing about it, we want proper inspections. That is what the new clause is about and why we will vote for it. I hope that the Minister, on behalf of the Government, will accept it.

Mr. Cryer: If there are the difficulties that the oleaginously patronising contribution from the hon. Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) suggested and a further definition was needed, the Minister could easily say that he would produce a new clause to replace this one in the other place. There would be no problem about doing that. The question is whether there is a political will. If, for example, the designer working at home is placed on a par with the example that I shall give of exploited Asian women earning 30p and less an hour, the designer at home will not have any recourse to that unit of the Health and Safety Executive.

However, the Government are very good at running advertising campaigns, especially with their cronies who have contributed to the Conservative party coffers. They could run one to draw attention to the unit of the Health and Safety Executive and say that if advice was needed about such matters as additives, the use of electricity and the danger of machines, those people who needed it would have the opportunity to obtain it. In other words, it would

[Mr. Cryer]

give workers more choice. Therefore, the designer or the professional, who had a lot of knowledge and was working in adequate surroundings—if he used some Tippex, he would have adequate ventilation—would not bother to obtain advice, but the exploited worker would have the opportunity to seek out information and knowledge. That would be an additional power to those people and, as I say, it would be self-selecting.

The hon. Member for Elmet has no need to patronise the House with his false analogies and fake arguments, which are designed to protect the cowboy as well as the professional to whom he referred.

In my constituency there is probably the biggest greeting card manufacturer in the country. It has decent standards of employment and it recognises unions, which negotiate terms and conditions for its staff. However, it can be undermined by home workers. It is important that, where a company is prepared to invest in a factory and in plant and equipment, it should not be undermined by cowboys who do not invest in anything except a lorry and cardboard boxes or sacks to distribute the material around the various homes and who rely on the most primitive methods of assembly and construction to produce the equivalent merchandise.

I want to mention a case that was reported in my local evening paper, which refutes the case advanced by the hon. Member for Elmet. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that, if there is one cowboy operator, there should be provision to ensure that that operator can be stopped. If only one group of home workers are exploited and are using their children to participate in the work late at night, thus inhibiting their school attendance record, there should be legislation to stop such exploitation. Those cowboy operators should be stopped even if they represent a minority, but from the evidence gathered here today, I suspect that they represent more than a minority.

9.30 pm

I am pleased to say that investigative journalism on the part of the *Bradford Telegraph and Argus* unearthed an example of such exploitation. The headline related to the cost of a Christmas card and the article was about the immediate pre-Christmas period of 1988 when everyone is feeling comfortable and warm-hearted and the spirit of Christmas is at large, but not, apparently, at Astorgreen Ltd., greeting card manufacturers, of Glendale house, Goulbourne street, Keighley. It was producing cards and under-cutting firms such as the one in my constituency and was going round distributing cardboard boxes to be packed with Christmas cards.

The reporters from the local paper visited a number of the families who were doing that work. Some were afraid to be identified for fear of losing that work even though they were paid modest rates, but the article stated:

"But some spoke out, including Nasim Begum, of Compton street who had just received a delivery of 19 boxes.

Through an interpreter, she said she would spend six hours a day packing the boxes of 1,000 cards and hoped to earn about £24 a week."

That is probably the amount that the hon. Member for Elmet gives out in tips to various waiters at the restaurants that he obviously visits extremely regularly and rather too well.

The article continued:

"Her neighbour Mohammed Ghafoar said his wife Khataja Begum was giving up the work, after realising how much she was being paid . . . A local councillor said: 'I know of some children as young as seven who have been working late into the night and afterwards are fit for very little else. It is affecting their school work and home life and they are earning just pennies. Families earn £30 a week packing 17,000 cards.' . . . A man who had worked casually for Astorgreen recruiting new families said that when he worked for them piecework rates offered were as low as £3·25. He said families packing some boxes of 72 cards were being paid 31 pence per box and these boxes were being sold by Astorgreen to wholesalers for £5·70 a box."

That is a massive mark-up.

The entrepreneur—a figure no doubt loved by the Conservatives—who was not exhibiting the spirit of Christmas, but the spirit of the enterprise culture, was asked by the reporter to refute the allegations. The paper states:

"Mr. Locker was given numerous opportunities to answer these allegations but refused to comment. On the first approach Mr. Locker told reporter Andrew Knight: 'I hear you've been out stirring things up. It's Friday, it's getting near Christmas and I am very busy. Go.'

Mr. Knight was shepherded out of the top floor of Astorgreen with Mr. Locker shouting after him to write or telephone for an interview. When phoned he refused to make an appointment. On later visits he covered photographer Ron Patchett's lens with his hand, and turned away reporters, Gerry Crookes and David Ford, empty-handed."

It is quite clear that there is a need for a unit to which home workers can go for advice and help. They need some sort of safety net on which they can depend, and some hand to which they can reach out.

The reporters of a major local paper, which is the only evening paper in the area and is widely respected, were turned aside with venom by that representative of the enterprise culture. That does not say too much about his attitude towards the home workers who were afraid of speaking out simply because of the possibility of losing their pittance.

The new clause may well lack definition. If it needs tidying up, all Opposition Members would be happy to hear the Minister say that he accepts it in principle and will ask one of the parliamentary draftsmen to tackle the problems. Such problems can be solved. When they encounter knotty problems in other matters, the Government rush through legislation. If the Minister is short of a parliamentary draftsman or two, why does he not go to the Department of Social Security, where he could find draftsmen who could weave magic round all sorts of problems? Draftsmen would have no difficulty in providing him with an adequate definition.

I welcome the new clause and I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon), who has done so much work on the issue, has tabled it. If the Minister has a problem with the new clause, he should tell the House that he will wake up the Lords when the time comes and ask them to deal with a new clause to replace it. In the meantime, if anybody in Bradford, South is being exploited in the same way as the people in the case that I quoted, which took place as recently as last Christmas, I hope that they will get in touch with me, as their local Member of Parliament, or any other Opposition Member. We shall certainly take up their case and demonstrate the degree of exploitation that is taking place: part of our battle will be to fight against it.

Ms. Richardson: I merely wish to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) on

instigating what has been such an excellent debate among Opposition Members. I assure her, as I am sure she knows, that her new clause has much official backing because it is very much a part of our policy to help home workers.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) that the speech of the hon. Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) was one of the most patronising that I have heard. Perhaps the hon. Member for Elmet should go to the Department of Employment to see if there is any more up-to-date evidence than that which he produced tonight. I am a member of the Department of Employment's advisory committee on women's employment—I think that that is its full and splendid title. It meets about twice a year and I recall that, certainly more than 12 months, possibly two years ago, we had a meeting at which the Department of Employment produced a splendid piece of research on home working which it had commissioned. Each committee member was given the solid document which had been commissioned by the Department and we had an interesting discussion on it. Everyone was astonished and disturbed by its contents.

I see the Minister looking at the Dispatch Box. I do not expect him to reply. All I am saying is that I am sure that the Department of Employment could tell the hon. Member for Elmet that the sort of case which he is advancing will not help anybody. It certainly will not help those people, mainly women, as my hon. Friends have already pointed out, who work in disastrous conditions and for abysmal money which would not keep anybody. They work in conditions where their health and safety are severely at risk. I hope that the House will solidly support the new clause.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. John Lee): The Government are opposed to new clause 9 for two main reasons.

First, it is for the Health and Safety Executive to decide how to allocate its resources and determine the number of inspectors. The system has always worked well, and we see no reason to undermine it now. For 1988-89, the Government gave the Health and Safety Commission an additional £6·7 million over the previously planned provision. That increase takes account of in-year adjustments, and allows for gross expenditure of £118·3 million. For 1989-90, provision will be enhanced by a further £8·8 million gross.

There is no question of the Government having tried to cut back on the amount made available for health and safety, as the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) suggested earlier. The extra provision has allowed the Health and Safety Executive to increase the number of factory inspectors to 604, with a target of 638 by the end of the year. That is the maximum number that the inspectorate can train and assimilate at one time.

At present, inspectors have powers under section 20 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 to enter any premises, including the houses of home workers, to enforce relevant statutory provisions under the Act.

Secondly, we have no reason to believe that home workers' health and safety is a cause for concern. My Department put in hand an extensive programme of research into the number and circumstances of home workers in 1981. A lengthy and detailed report by Dr. Catherine Hakim, which formed the basis of the balanced contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) and the centrepiece of the research programme, was published in 1987 as Department of Employment research paper No. 60 and entitled "Home-based work in Britain". The search suggested that manufacturing home work, which is generally the aspect that causes concern, was much less extensive than had been thought. About 60,000 workers are thought to be employed in such work out of an estimated 250,000 home workers—that is, people who work at home, as distinct from those who use home as a base or "live on the job".

The research shed light on many key aspects of home working, but did not show any pressing need for action by the Government or any desire for such action on the part of home workers. In regard to health and safety, it found that

> "If anything, the health of home-based workers is somewhat better than the health of the working population as a whole"

and that

> "in fact, the occurrence of accidents and of health problems resulting from work being done at home is very low indeed . . . apart from being extremely rare, accidents are typically of a trivial nature."

In both this debate and the debate in Committee on clause 4 of the Bill, the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) referred to a female home worker who had contracted leukaemia from using an adhesive containing benzine. Employers' general duties under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act cover risks relating to carcinogenic substances such as benzine as well as other risks. In addition, from 1 October 1989, the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988 will impose more detailed controls on the use of toxic substances, and there will be an approved code of practice under the regulations specifically relating to the control of carcinogenic substances. It will specify that

> "carcinogenic substances or processes should not be used or carried on where there is an equivalent but less hazardous substitute."

The regulations and the approved code of practice will apply to home workers as well as other employees, in the same way as other health and safety legislation applies to home workers at present.

Mr. Cryer: Can the Minister give us some idea how the Government could bring that information to the attention of home workers? One of the problems is that they tend to live in isolation and not to talk to other people. The materials are delivered to their homes. Will the Minister, for example, request the Health and Safety Executive to ensure that simple explanatory leaflets are required to be delivered by every employer to home workers so that at least they have some contact with the information?

Mr. Lee: The hon. Gentleman has made a fair point, which I will consider. I know that a good many home workers, such as the substantial number in my constituency who are from ethnic minorities, will not be aware of such provision.

Mrs. Wise: I have a further query on that point. Will the new regulations apply to people who are perhaps working without a regular contract of employment or who are on some sort of commission basis, which is often the case with home workers so that the employer can avoid responsibility? Will the toxic substance regulations apply even in those circumstances?

9.45 pm

Mr. Lee: I think that they will apply to everyone, but I shall have to check that.

As hon. Members will know, representations to Ministers have been made, particularly by the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers, disputing the findings of the research that I mentioned earlier. Especially disputed are the findings about the number of home workers employed in the traditional home working trades, such as clothing manufacture. These have been questioned. We have therefore agreed that officials should look again at the methodology behind the figures. The researcher, who has now left the Department to take up a professorship, has just reported and her comments are being considered and analysed.

At present, home workers who are employees have the protection of section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, which requires employers to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of all their employees. Under section 3 of the Act, employers also have to ensure that persons not in their employ are not exposed to risks from their activities. This includes the work put out to self-employed home workers. Furthermore, section 6 of the Act requires manufacturers and suppliers of articles and substances for use at work to ensure that they are safe so far as is reasonably practicable. In view of the findings of the research about the health and safety of home workers, we think that this protection is sufficient.

Mrs. Mahon: I cannot say that I am surprised that the Minister has seen fit to turn down what would have been a great help to people who are seriously exploited.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) for his contribution. I know that he came straight from the Select Committee after listening to the evidence of the home workers. He made some excellent points, especially about the European workers who are far better thought of by their Governments than our workers are by this Government.

My hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) was right when he said that there is no great freedom in somebody spending hours at a sewing machine. Such people have no choice. They know that they are being exploited and we are trying to get that across to the Government. Obviously our pleas have fallen on deaf ears. My hon. Friend's other relevant point was that Britain's child care arrangements are abysmal.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) certainly knows a lot more about the work force and about working than any clever Tory Government lawyer and I thank him for his contribution. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) made a useful point when he said that if the Minister was in any difficulty he could check on the definition of a home worker. The Bill could be delayed and the new clause could go to the House of Lords. However, we were not even given any hope of that. I was pleased to see my hon. Friend take the chance to expose the Dickensian employer in Bradford who is not only exploiting Asian women but who makes sure that a good dollop of child labour is thrown in.

Mr. Cryer: Does my hon. Friend agree that it would be interesting to see which way the hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) votes, because he is on record in the same paper from which I drew the example as saying that he would take action on this exploitation?

Mrs. Mahon: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention. As we know, many Conservative Members run to their local newspapers and wring their hands hypocritically, saying that they will take up a case, but we never see them in the Division Lobbies. It will be interesting to see whether the hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) is in the Lobby tonight.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) for her support, which I knew we would get.

The hon. Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) showed his staggering ignorance and arrogance in refusing to consider the facts that were put to him. No hon. Member on the Opposition side was deceived by the false analogies and the ridiculous comments that he made when talking about accountants and the growing number of consultants and brokers who are trying to make a fast buck on the Stock Exchange and who have had big computers installed at home. We were talking about the real people who do home work, as he knew well.

I am disappointed that the Minister refused to take the clause seriously. In his opening remarks he said that the Health and Safety Executive had always done things in a certain way. That is not set in tablets of stone. The House is the place where we make and change laws. That was a weak argument.

The Minister said that the number involved was small, at 60,000. I question that. The Minister knows well that many of the people on low rates of pay for home work also receive benefit. I found sadly that many of them, particularly women who are single parents struggling to bring up children alone, do not realise that they could earn more. They are hiding the small pittance that they earn, thinking that they are in breach of social security regulations when their earnings are so low that they are not.

I take the Minister to task about the increase in the budget for the Health and Safety Executive. The Government have it on the cheap. They cut expenditure on the inspectorate by 20 per cent. I understand that they may have started to increase it again. I am open to correction, but I think that the inspectorate can visit each factory only once every 12 years. Yet the Government have increased the number of DSS fraud inspectors by 160 per cent.

The Minister has the opportunity to tackle a growing problem, but I do not think that he will. I am bitterly disappointed at the Government's response, so my hon. Friends and I will vote for the new clause.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 173, Noes 246.

Division No. 206] **[9.52 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Bermingham, Gerald
Allen, Graham	Bidwell, Sydney
Anderson, Donald	Blair, Tony
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Boateng, Paul
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy	Boyes, Roland
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack	Bradley, Keith
Ashton, Joe	Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Buckley, George J.
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*	Caborn, Richard
Barron, Kevin	Callaghan, Jim
Beckett, Margaret	Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*	Canavan, Dennis

Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dixon, Don
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Quin, Ms Joyce
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen Adams.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Latham, Michael
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony

Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Nicholson, Emma (Devon West)
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, Chris (Bath)
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David (Wavensy)
Powell, William (Corby)
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn (Conwy)
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shaw, Sir Michael (Scarb')
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. (Norfolk SW)
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan (Eastwood)
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian (Herts N)
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M (Solihull)
Taylor, Teddy (S'end E)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. (Calder Valley)
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John (Bridlington)
Townsend, Cyril D. (B'heath)
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Walker, Bill (T'side North)
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George (Acton)

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Maclean and
Mr. Tom Sackville.

Question accordingly negatived.

It being after Ten o'clock, further consideration of the Bill stood adjourned.

Ordered, That, at this day's sitting, the Employment Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Bill, as amended (in the Standing Committee), again considered.

New Clause 11

Blacklisting Agencies

'It shall be illegal for an employer to obtain information about a prospective or existing employee from an individual or organisation which has as one of its functions the keeping of records about an individual's trade union or political activities or political views.'—*[Mrs. Fyfe.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

10.5 pm

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

It may help the House if I outline the kind of activity that can get people blacklisted. Let us take Bill Anderson, a Glasgow man who replied to an innocuous-sounding job advertisement, which appeared to have something to do with industrial relations. He received a reply from the Economic League, and it appeared that the job was about setting up an industrial espionage network. He refused to have anything to do with this organisation and ended up with his name on its blacklist.

Then there was the case of Sydney Scroggie, a blind pensioner from Dundee. This man wrote a letter to his local newspaper supporting Edinburgh district council's decision to buy a portrait of Nelson Mandela, and he ended up on the blacklist. Then there was the case of Hugh McMahon, a Member of the European Parliament, who in 1987 made a speech in the European Parliament against the South African Government's evil apartheid system and its secret police. A week later, he found that his name was on the Economic League's register.

Then there was the case of Derek Ogg, an Edinburgh solicitor, of whom Conservative Members might be interested to hear. He was the editor of a magazine aimed at the Edinburgh gay community, and the magazine was on sale in the anarchist bookshop, so he found himself described as an anarchist. That was interesting to him because he was the Conservative candidate in both district and regional elections and had been a chairman of his constituency Young Conservatives group.

Another case was that of Tom Stevenson, who was made redundant when the Caterpillar company closed in 1987. He became the treasurer of the workers' sit-in committee. He became registered by the Economic League as a Communist party supporter, but he had never been involved in any political party of any description.

My final example comes from my area. Hamish Imlach, a well-known folk singer in the west of Scotland, is another alleged Communist party supporter. When asked by "World in Action" why he thought he had been blacklisted and listed as a Communist party supporter, he replied:

"During my performances I do have a go at Mrs. Thatcher and the Conservative Government."

At this rate, millions of us can expect to be on the blacklist, and if not, ask ourselves why not.

At the other end of the country, questions are being asked about TML. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Would hon. Members who are having private conversations have them elsewhere?

Mrs. Fyfe: It is obvious that the after-dinner speakers are present.

Questions are being asked about Trans Marche Link, the consortium building the Channel tunnel. A man called Larry Coleman, a trade unionists from Dover, has applied for work with TML 22 times, and has been turned down each time. He called a meeting of people who had been turned down for such work, and 100 came along. It so happens that the senior industrial relations officer of TML is a former senior employee of the Economic League. It is fair to say that TML denies any connection with the Economic League and that it does any blacklisting. It is interesting, therefore, that two men—the industrial relations officer and another manager at TML—attended an Economic League meeting in December 1987, when TML was recruiting many men. Apparently the two were acting on their own initiative and had no authorisation. Presumably, however, management is not too upset with them as the five companies that comprise TML—Costain Group, Taylor Woodrow, Wimpey, Tarmac and Balfour Beatty—are members of the Economic League. All five contribute large funds to Conservative party funds.

The House might be interested to know who else supports the Economic League. It acknowledges that several hundred companies are members of it. Some of the more famous names that were listed by the Economic League in October 1987—the list may now be out of date

as many companies have stopped supporting the Economic League following adverse publicity—included Allied Lyons, Asda, Bass, Beecham Group, British Telecom, the Building Employers Confederation, and numerous others. Indeed, 44 major construction companies subscribed to a special services group of that organisation. The Engineering Employers Federation is a member of the Economic League, as are other well-known names such as Fisons, Esso Petroleum, General Electric Company, Ford, Glaxo Holdings, Grand Metropolitan, GKN—I am giving all these names as I want them to appear in *Hansard*—Guinness, Hanson, Hill Samuel Group, IBM, ICI, Kleinwort Benson Group, Lucas Industries, Nabisco Group, Nestlé, Nissan, Rank Hovis McDougall, the Rover Group, RTZ Consultants, Scottish and Newcastle Breweries, Shell UK, the stock exchange —that is a surprise—Tate and Lyle, TNT, Trafalgar House, Trusthouse Forte and Vickers. I emphasise that I have picked out some well-known household names, but there are hundreds of others.

Clearly a customer for anything from beer to biscuits or a cup of coffee to a car will have to be assiduous to avoid giving a contribution to that secretive organisation, which millions of people do not know exists.

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow) *rose*——

Mrs. Fyfe: Does the hon. Gentleman mind if I do not give way? I was well known for giving way frequently in Committee, but many hon. Members wish to speak in a short debate. I may give way later, but I should like to press on.

Donations to the Economic League can be large. In 1987, Lloyds Bank gave £5,600, Hawker Siddeley gave £6,700 and National Westminster Bank gave £8,960. It is not as though all those important companies received value for money. Mr. Richard Brett, who is the former north-west director of the Economic League, at a recent public meeting of the anti-blacklisting campaign revealed that of 45,000 personal records held by the Economic League, 35,000 were hopelessly inaccurate and out of date. It would seem that shareholders are not receiving much value for money.

Mr. Summerson *rose*——

Mrs. Fyfe: I have already replied to the hon. Gentleman.

How does the Economic League get its information? Michael Noar, who is director of it, has revealed that it possesses cards on the electoral candidates of all political parties. It employs people to comb through newspapers and periodicals of the Left and Right, but mainly the Left, noting who has written a letter, who has supported who in trade union elections, who has become known as a trade unionist or political activitist and who supports apartheid, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, the Child Poverty Action Group and many other groups regarded as risky in the fevered imagination of this strange organisation. It does not check the accuracy of statements made in its journals. It spies on British citizens. A man called Ned Walsh was employed by it for 27 years to infiltrate pressure groups and trade unions and targeted anti-apartheid groups. He became the minutes secretary at the national executive meetings of the Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs before it became Manufacturing, Science and Finance.

The Economic League even gets people to blacklist themselves. Mr. Noar has frequently said that anyone who believes that the Economic League has a file on them may write in. He does not say that it asks inquirers to give their trade union, political affiliation and a £10 cheque. The league updates the register of persons if that person happens to be on it, and if the league has never heard of him before, it certainly has after that and he is registered.

10.15 pm

It is not as though the league's activities stop there. It does other things that have recently come to light. The leaders of the Economic League have been secretly advising the Prime Minister on anti-union law. Its director general was secretary of a small group of industrial representatives who met members of the Prime Minister's private staff in 1986 to promote harsher anti-trade union laws. The Economic League is now contemplating making up a blacklist of gays for use by life insurance companies and a list of hooligans for football clubs in expectation of the identity card scheme becoming law.

I shall briefly explain why the present law is inadequate. The Economic League, on which I have concentrated, is not the only blacklisting organisation; it is just the best-known and biggest. There are also various employers' federations and networks of personnel officers.

Mr. Summerson: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Fyfe: No.

Mr. Summerson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I suspect that it is a point of frustration. I doubt that it is a point of order, but I shall hear it.

Mr. Summerson: The hon. Lady has not told the House exactly what she is talking about. We want to know what the Economic League is.

Mr. Speaker: That is certainly not a point of order.

Mrs. Fyfe: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well what the Economic League is.

This new clause is required because the Data Protection Act 1984 compels only organisations that hold information on computer to reveal its contents. If an organisation keeps a card index instead, as well as a minimal amount of information fed into a computer, it can stay within the law as presently drafted and thereby pay no heed to the legislation's intent, which was to give British citizens information about themselves. The dreadful thing about all this is that vetting organisations—for the benefit of the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson), that is what the Economic League is—have the power to influence the employment prospects of thousands of people. That power far exceeds that of any Government official, even in wartime.

I should like to quote a couple of people whose views I respect in this matter. John Alderson, former chief constable of Devon and Cornwall police, has said:

"We've seen this in Europe before—unofficial organisations becoming a police force which is unaccountable. It's highly dangerous and quite improper."

Mark Hollingsworth and Richard Norton-Taylor, authors of an excellent book on the subject, write:

"the essence of blacklisting is that people can be deprived of their livelihood, not because of their actions or even intentions, but for their beliefs in many cases suspected, not actual beliefs, even because of the views of friends and relatives."

[Mrs. Fyfe]

Any Conservative Members who doubt a word of that need only read the great detail which I do not have time to give.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Fyfe: I shall not give way to someone who is here on behalf of the Economic League.

The two authors continue:

"In Britain the system is uniquely secretive, and the information recorded without the individual's knowledge."

Mr. Riddick *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is it a point of order?

Mr. Riddick: Yes, it is, Sir. I should like to point out that I am not here on behalf of the Economic League. That is absolute nonsense. The hon. Lady's speech is not related to what appears on the Amendment Paper.

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order.

Mrs. Fyfe: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The authors say:

"In Britain the system is uniquely secretive, and information recorded without the individual's knowledge. The victims are denied any chance to face their accusers."

It is for that reason that I call on hon. Members to end this abuse of our people's civil rights and support the new clause.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): New clause 11 should appeal to any genuine democrats who may have found their way on to the Conservative Benches. I know from the opposition to the Official Secrets Bill that there are a few, although none of the hon. Members who put up such a principled stand are present this evening. New clause 11 also puts to the test the Government's alleged commitment to the lofty virtues of freedom and democracy, to which lip service is so often paid, but which are, in practice, treated with contempt.

The issue is simple, and has been ably stated by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe). It cannot be right in a democracy for a person to be denied employment—in some cases for life—on the basis of information that has been secretly collected and secretly supplied—and which is often inaccurate—by sinister organisations such as the Economic League. There is no need to dwell on the Economic League because my hon. Friend the Member for Maryhill has given some clear and damning evidence about the operations of that organisation, whose incompetence and untruthfulness have been amply demonstrated by many distinguished commentators and, notably, by the television programme "World in Action", one of the few remaining refuges for inquiring journalists in this country today.

However, I want to quote what Mr. Richard Brett, the former regional director of the Economic League—not "one of us" because he is a former Army intelligence officer —said about the league. He described the league's central register as "chaotic", "more fiction than fact" and "highly dangerous and undemocratic". The Economic League and other organisations associated with it are now widely discredited and I am happy to note that many companies are withdrawing their subscriptions. I also hear that the skids are finally under Mr. Michael Noar, the present director, and that could not happen to a nicer person.

Mr. Summerson: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. Can he enlighten the House on a point of information? I have no idea what the Economic League is. Will the hon. Gentleman give the House a thumbnail sketch of it? In doing so, he will do better than his hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe).

Mr. Mullin: It is a sinister, politically motivated organisation. I am offering a brief child's guide to it. It is funded by subscriptions from large companies and it collects intelligence—that is possibly too high a word—on individual employees, which is culled mainly from newspaper cuttings and which, in almost all cases, is unchecked. It then secretly feeds the information it has on its cards to its subscribers, which frequently results in wholly innocent persons losing their employment or not being offered employment. In some cases, I regret to say, it excludes people from employment for many years, and in one or two cases no doubt for life. I will give one example about which I know in a moment. The information used is often wholly inaccurate and that must seem wrong to anyone who is committed to democracy. I would like to think that the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) shared my views on that.

This is not a Left-Right issue, because anyone could be affected by the league's activities. There are people on the hon. Gentleman's side of the political spectrum who have been denied employment on the basis of false information on the list, and I would like to think that the organisation and its activities were deprecated by all who pay lip service to the values of freedom and democracy.

Mr. Wallace: I recall reading the transcript of the Granada television programme that the hon. Gentleman mentioned. Perhaps he will tell the House whether he is satisfied that the Economic League always uses legal and legitimate means to obtain information. Does he have any information to the contrary?

Mr. Mullin: As my hon. Friend the Member for Maryhill said, it has infiltrated. I am not againt a bit of infiltration; I do it myself now and again for a good cause. But it has tapped into the information gathered by MI5 and the security services. It appears also to have contacts among the police. I note with satisfaction that, since the Granada television programme, the sources have dried up and one or two policemen have been prosecuted for passing on information. Any student of the activities of those who guard all that we hold dear will know that the information on their files is a mite inaccurate in any case.

Mr. Riddick: I am aware that the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) do not like the Economic League. How relevant is it to the new clause? Has the hon. Gentleman read new cause 11? It spreads the net far wider than organisations such as the Economic League. For example, if I want to employ a research assistant who had worked in the Conservative party, the new clause would stop me getting advice from the Conservative party on whether the prospective employee was a Conservative or held Conservative views, which would be fairly important when employing a research assistant. Is that the intention of the new clause?

Mr. Mullin: The new clause does absolutely nothing of the sort. As the hon. Gentleman rightly said, it is not merely against the Economic League. It is against several

sinister organisations, of which the Economic League is only the best known, that operate in this country. The new clause does none of the things that the hon. Gentleman mentioned.

Mr. Riddick: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Mullin: I will not give way again. I have given way generously. I was proposing to occupy only a few minutes of the time of the House.

I place on record the experience of one of my constituents, whom I will not name because he recently found employment after many years of unemployment and I would not wish to do anything to jeopardise it. He was a highly qualified welding supervisor who had been in continuous employment and much in demand for many years until one day, working on a contract in Nigeria, on grounds of safety—not for any political reason—he refused to certify welds. He quickly found that his contract was ended, and, from that moment on, that all prospects of employment had ceased. His marriage broke up, he got into debt, and he spent years without work.

He cannot prove that he was blacklisted—it is extremely difficult to do so—but the suddenness with which the event that I described occurred and the fact that he could not obtain any clear reasons for the hundreds of refusals suggest that he probably was.

He heard that, on the Granada television programme, Mr. Michael Noar offered to show anyone what was contained in the Economic League's files if they wrote to him and requested him to do so. My constituent did so, to call Mr. Noar's bluff, and he has met with months of evasion. He had been asked, as my hon. Friends and others have been, for more information, the purpose of which was clearly to add to the league's files and not to provide him with any new information. He has so far not been successful in holding Mr. Noar to the pledge that he gave over a year ago.

That man's life and those of many other people have been blighted by the activities of the Economic League. The new clause is designed to put a stop to that. I look forward to that day, and I hope that the House will accept the new clause.

Mr. Riddick: If I may, Mr. Speaker, I want to raise a point of order on a matter that is important to me. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) suggested that I was speaking on behalf of the Economic League. I was doing nothing of the sort. However, the hon. Lady is sponsored by the Transport and General Workers Union and she did not declare that interest at the beginning of her speech. She was clearly speaking for the Transport and General Workers Union.

Mr. Speaker: It would have been far better if the hon. Gentleman had made a speech about the matter rather than raising it as a point of order.

10.30 pm

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): I make it clear that I speak for my constituents, but I also wear another hat in that I am chairman of the Anti-Apartheid Movement. That is an open and free organisation whose aims I believe are shared by many people in the country, including, if I am to believe her, the Prime Minister and all the Treasury Ministers, although her activities sometimes make me wonder about the veracity of that statement.

The point of the new clause is to stop insidious and secret activities being carried on, with the intent of collecting people's political affiliations for the purpose of denying them employment. Clearly, if anyone wishes to employ someone, he is entitled to check references and to ensure that that person is who he says he is. However, my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) mentioned Ned Walsh. Ned Walsh was a member of what used to be called the Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs, which is now Manufacturing, Science and Finance. He purported to be a loyal trade union member and someone who had the anti-apartheid cause at heart. He was an extremely active member of the Anti-Apartheid Movement. We thought of him as one of our most valuable members. Whenever there was a job to be done, he volunteered. If there was a weekend conference, he would volunteer to work on the stalls selling the material. No matter in which part of the country we required his assistance for the mundane work at conferences and meetings, Ned Walsh was always willing to help out.

However, then we discovered that Ned Walsh's connection with the Anti-Apartheid Movement was not because he believed in its cause, but because he was being secretly employed by the Economic League to find out who were members of the Anti-Apartheid Movement and to pass that information on to the Economic League, which would then file under the members' names the fact that they were political subversives and, therefore, dangerous to employ.

I do not know any hon. Member who would defend that practice or would say that that was something that should be done in a democratic society. If it were not for such activities, I would be happy to offer to the Economic League or any other body that wanted it, for a suitable fee, the entire membership list of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, because we are not a secret organisation. It is because of the threat of political and employment reprisals against our membership that our membership list is not available. If all that was being done was that the names were being sold for a political purpose, that would be bad enough, but what else did Ned Walsh say to the Economic League about the movement's members being unsatisfactory and therefore, for various reasons, should not be employed? That is not the kind of society in which we want to live and it is a practice that should be stopped at all costs.

The Economic League is able to evade any scrutiny of its records. It says that it does not keep computerised records, but its records are all on card files, and, therefore, as I understand it, it escapes the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1984. I do not believe that any hon. Member would defend such attacks on people's basic freedom to belong to open political organisations or that membership of such organisations should be used to prevent people gaining employment.

It is no use the Minister preaching the work ethic or the Prime Minister saying, "Look for a job, don't depend on the state", or the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbitt) saying, "Get on your bike and look for work" when there are organisations secretly compiling false and allegedly damaging material. What is even worse is that employers believe that to be a member of the Anti-Apartheid Movement or similar organisations makes one unfit for employment. There is a disgraceful conspiracy——

Mrs. Wise: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hughes: No, I will not give way, because I am already under pressure for taking too much time. I would be happy to give way on any other occasion.

It is a damning and disgraceful conspiracy that files are collected and that organisations refuse people employment on the ground that they belong to open political organisations. I applaud those companies that have refused to renew their subscriptions or withdrawn from the Economic League, but I condemn outright those organisations that have not done so.

I do not believe that the Government have done enough to end such secrecy and infiltration. If they are not happy about the precise words of new clause 11, they should at least accept it in principle.

Mr. Clelland: For the sake of the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) who has gone off to get an early place in the taxi queue, I should make it clear that the Economic League is an organisation that keeps records about an individual's trade union or political views. Therefore, it falls within the parameters of the new clause. The Economic League is an insidious and subversive organisation and, in common with my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe), I condemn those companies that subscribe to it. Of those companies, I particularly mention Scottish and Newcastle Breweries. It was not slow to approach Labour Members of Parliament, the trade unions and the Labour local authorities recently in its battle against the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report. Some of us have written to that company about its subscription to the Economic League.

I draw the attention of the House to a couple of cases that Robin Thompson and Partners, the solicitors acting on behalf of my union, the Amalgamated Engineering Union, have taken up. The first example relates to Mr. X —I shall not give his name as I do not want to do the Economic League's work for it. Mr. X applied to work as a dumper driver at the site of a new prison at Thamesmead. He was puzzled as to why he had received no job offer after being told that the contractor was desperate for a driver and especially, as a local man, he seemed to be the obvious choice.

On Friday 18 July 1986, Mr. X returned to the site and spoke to a supervisor whom he had met a week earlier. The supervisor was apologetic, but told him that he could not take him on under any circumstances. Mr. X pressed him for a reason and the supervisor reluctantly told him that it was due to his

"trade union activities in the past".

Although the supervisor was evidently sympathetic, he was under clear instructions not to recruit Mr. X under any circumstances.

In 1983 Mr. X applied to work as a steel erector with a company in desperate need of such workers. He had been asked for his national insurance number and his date of birth and had been told to be ready to work on the following Wednesday after his interview. On the Tuesday evening, however, the interviewer telephoned Mr. X to say that the company would not take him on as he was regarded as a "security risk". He would have been working at terminal four at London airport.

On 14 November 1988 he applied to BB and WW Erectors Ltd. for the position of a steel erector. That company was a sub-contractor to Wimpeys and Mr. X was told that the main contractor would not on any account let him start work on the contract at the Woolwich prison site because he was "black listed". Mr. X told the solicitors that that phrase was expressly used by the company to explain its decision.

Mr. X complained to his Member of Parliament, the hon. Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) and to the data protection registrar. He confirmed—as suggested by my hon. Friends—that, although the Economic League held no records on computer, he believed that records were kept in other ways.

As further evidence of the activities of the Economic League Lord Wedderburn, writing in "The Worker and the Law", said that it maintained a:

"'Research (Screening of Labour) Department'"

He said that he had been present when managers had compared notes about information obtained about hiring from the

"local police Red Squad",

whatever that may be. Lord Wedderburn said:

"This is a serious and much ignored problem."

He went on to describe a case where a militant trade unionist gave a false name for fear of being on such a list. He was subsequently discovered and sacked. The employment appeal tribunal decided that although he had been dismissed for trade union activity it was not such activity in that employment but in the past and that, therefore, the industrial tribunal had no jurisdiction to hear the case.

The Industrial Law Journal of June 1987 in an article entitled "Anti-Union Discrimination: Practice Law and Policy" reported:

"The most blatant form of pre-recruitment direct discrimination is the black list. All our construction employer respondents except one admitted to having excluded both known militants and others merely suspected of militant sympathies by virtue of having worked on strike-prone sites. Similar practices are chronicled in engineering, motors, docks, shipping and even the Police and prison services. The key to pre-recruitment discrimination is screening for selection."

Attention has already been drawn to the Economic League's black list following an exposé in an item entitled "Boys on the Black List" in the "World in Action" on Granada television on 16 February 1987.

The solicitors who drew up the report of these events have considerable experience of cases of this sort. They conclude that all that can done is to gather evidence and report the

"result to politicians who may, eventually, have some chance of altering the law."

They add:

"Certainly, under the existing law there is nothing that we can recommend."

The House has a chance tonight to change the law. The practices to which my hon. Friends and I have referred must be outlawed if we are to call ourselves in future a free and civilised society.

Mr. Wallace: I first came across the existence of the Economic League shortly after the Granada television programme had been shown. A constituent drew my attention to the programme, which at the time I had not seen or heard about. He wondered whether the league's activities explained why he had not been able to find employment for a long time. I do not know whether he is on a list. Having been written to, I obtained a copy of the

transcript of the programme. On reading it, I was disturbed by the activities in which the league was involved.

I take the point of the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) that if he wished to employ a research assistant it would not be unreasonable for him to ask Conservative Central Office whether an applicant was a member of the Conservative party. I fully accept that argument. Perhaps the clause is not as well drafted as it should be, but it has given us the opportunity to air legitimate concerns about organisations such as the Economic League. It may be legitimate to ask Conservative Central Office whether a prospective employee of a Conservative Member holds particular political views, but it is an entirely different matter when a society to which someone belongs, or legitimate trade union activities, can be used to stop someone gaining employment. I hope that the majority in a democratic society would regard that as wholly unacceptable.

We like to think that we live in an open and free society in which people can join societies such as the Anti-Apartheid Movement or take part in legitimate trade unionism without suffering any consequences apart from having to give up a great deal of time and, no doubt, a lot of money. Hon. Members on both sides of the House should be concerned that something that an individual does voluntarily causes him to lose out on employment opportunities. The clause may not be the ideal way of dealing with the problem, but I hope that the Minister will accept that there must be something wrong in society when individuals have to give a false name, as the hon. Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Clelland) said, so that they will not be black listed.

I understand that it has been admitted by the Economic League that a vast number of entries are incorrect. The result is that people cannot get jobs, and they do not have any idea why that should be so. A constituent wrote to me on this issue, and the company involved does not feature in the list which was read out by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe). The lady concerned was not cleared for security reasons, and she has no reason to believe that she has done anything to justify that. She says that there is nothing in her personal history to which such a decision can be attributed. The frustration of being in that postion is troubling her greatly. It is difficult to know how to advise a constituent with such a problem. There must be many others who, as a result of the activities of the Economic League, find themselves in equally frustrating positions.

If the clause proves not to be helpful in dealing with the problem, the fact that we have had a debate upon it will be helpful. A list of companies has been read out, and many of the companies are household names. I am sure that many of them have withdrawn from the league as a result of becoming more aware of its activities. It would be extremely useful if more companies took that action. Organisations such as the Economic League would not be supplying information unless there was a demand for it.

Many shareholders of respectable companies should be alert to the organisations to which their companies are subscribing. If demand for information drifted away, the suppliers would not have a market. If that happened, we would have a society in which people could feel free to join legitimate political organisations and express political views—perhaps eccentric ones—without fearing that their future employment would be threatened.

10.45 pm

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): I have had some experience of the Economic League. Far from conforming to the picture that the Opposition have painted, it is an extremely helpful and useful source of data in the investigation of sinister Left-wing organisations. The mere fact that Labour Members and their allies in the media are going bananas about it suggests that it must be doing something right.

As a Westminster city councillor I took a great interest in Left-wing organisations that masqueraded as socially conscious bodies. I wished to investigate the web of corruption in Islington and Camden councils, which I subsequently wrote about in a pamphlet called "Qualgos Just Grow": it became a critical piece of evidence for the Widdicombe committee. The Economic League was able to give me a good deal of very useful help when I was in the process of tracing that network.

Another organisation with sinister Left-wing attributes that I am investigating is the London Food Commission, which is trying to scare the life out of our housewives and to undermine the motives of the food industry. Again I found an excellent databank of journals and magazines, which told me all about the organisation and helped me to bring it to the attention of the House and the British housewife, who has been led up the garden path.

Mrs. Wise *rose*——

Mrs. Gorman: Far from being the underground and sinister organisation depicted by the Left, the Economic League is dedicated to exposing the corruption and the insidious goings-on that Left-wing organisations are getting up to.

Mrs. Wise: The hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) chose not to give way after she had impugned the respectability and academic worth of the London Food Commission, which is doing extremely useful work in alerting people to the dangers and drawbacks of the food that they eat. I am afraid that that is symptomatic of the Conservatives' attitude: anyone who does not agree with them is bound to be sinister.

I have seen the Economic League's entry on a certain job applicant. One of the most "iniquitous" comments on the record was that that person had been a member of the GLC. No doubt that would meet with the approval of Conservative Members, who think that anyone who is not elected to represent the Conservative party must inevitably be sinister, but some of us on the Opposition Benches consider it entirely respectable and desirable to be elected as a Labour representative to serve the public interest. We commend those academics and others who speak out in the public interest regardless of attempts by sinister organisations to blight their future employment prospects.

I commend my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) on her contribution. I believe that this has been a useful airing of a dangerous and long-standing practice which goes back for generations. My grandfather was blacklisted by the Economic League. Some of us have watched it over the years, and we know how detrimental it is to the interests of ordinary people who seek simply to live a decent, law-abiding, respectable life and to earn a living while so doing.

Mr. Riddick: The hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) has made the mistake made by a number of Opposition Members in suggesting that new clause 11 will tackle the problems presented by the Economic League, but will do

[Mr. Riddick]

nothing else. In fact, it is all-embracing. For example, if the shadow Leader of the House or the shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer wanted to take on a research assistant, it would be illegal for them to check with the Labour party to see whether a prospective research assistant was a Trotskyist infiltrator. The new clause is all-embracing and would not do what it sets out to do.

Do the Opposition think that it would be sensible for an employer with many workers from ethnic minority backgrounds not to check to see whether a prospective employee had any connections with, for example, the National Front? It would be perfectly sensible for an employer to make such a check. We have recently seen how an extremist revolutionary Trotskyist cell tried to infiltrate British Telecom. It is sensible for that employer to make reasonable inquiries to discover whether a potential employee had a background that was likely to lead him into disrupting the company.

It is simplistic to think that such a new clause will have the desired effect. It has provided an opportunity for Opposition Members to attack an organisation that they do not like. The new clause is thoroughly counterproductive and I urge my hon. Friends to vote against it.

Mr. Lee: The main purpose of the proposed new clause is to stop employers getting information about prospective or existing employees from organisations which have as one of their functions the collection of information about the trade union, political activities or political views of individuals. It is clearly aimed at preventing employers from using information from organisations such as the Economic League to vet potential employees before offering them a job, or obtaining information from such sources about existing employees. Hon. Members will recall that we had an Adjournment debate about the activities of the Economic League in December.

An indirect effect of the new clause would be to place restrictions on employers' recruitment procedures. The Government's position is that employers must be free to choose how to go about recruiting and selecting new employees, provided that they do not discriminate unlawfully on the basis of race or sex. After all, it is employers who know their own businesses best, and it seems perfectly reasonable that they should be able to choose whom they wish to employ. If they choose to seek information from an independent source about a particular individual, that seems to be a sensible way of ensuring that those selected are suited to the job in question. After all, selection of the wrong person can have a disastrous effect on a business.

I have already stated my view that this clause is aimed at the activities of organisations such as the Economic League. Let me make clear that there is nothing illegal about an organisation setting itself up, as the Economic League has done, and providing a service. Nor is there any reason why employers should not be able to use the services of such organisations. But I emphasise that there is a heavy responsibility on those who compile such information to ensure that it is accurate. Equally, employers who use such information must satisfy themselves about its quality and accuracy.

There is another very important reason why employers should have freedom to recruit who and how they wish and why this new clause should be rejected. Too many restrictions only add to the burdens on employers and make them reluctant to take on new recruits. That can only be bad news for the unemployed because it reduces the number of new employment opportunities.

The Economic League confirms that it is willing to send to a person on request and after proper identification a complete list of all the league's references under his name, and that this should normally be free of charge.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 170, Noes 238.

Division No. 207] **10.54 pm]**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Haynes, Frank
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.

Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen Adams and
Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Maclean
Mr. Michael Fallon.

Question accordingly negatived.

Further consideration of the Bill, as amended, adjourned. *[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

Bill, as amended (in the Standing Committee), to be further considered tomorrow.

Control of Concentrations

11.7 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. Francis Maude): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Document Nos. 5936/88 and 9822/88 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of Trade and Industry on 12th May 1989 on the control of concentrations between undertakings; notes the United Kingdom's general reserve; but supports the Government's intention to continue to contribute constructively to discussions with the Commission and other Member States in order to see whether the outstanding issues can be resolved.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I wish to raise two brief points of order. The first relates to documentation. The explanatory memoranda which were submitted to the Vote Office and the Scrutiny Committee on 10 June 1988 and 31 January 1989 were supplanted by a more recent memorandum dated 12 May 1989.

The Scrutiny Committee was not able to consider that last explanatory memorandum until its meeting today, and it subsequently placed in the Vote Office at about 6 o'clock this evening a summary and response to that explanatory memoranda together with a summary of the evidence given by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry before the Committee last February. I think it important that I put those documentary points to you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

May I also obtain your confirmation that Standing Order 14(1)*(b)* gives some option to the Chair in that if the time for such a debate relative to the importance of the matter appears to be insufficient the debate could be held over at the discretion of the Chair?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I thank the hon. Member for the first point he raised, which is a helpful point of information. He is correct in what he said in making his second point: there is discretion on the part of the Chair.

Mr. Maude: The whole House will be grateful to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) for drawing attention to the further scrutiny which his Committee has been able to give to this document in the course of today.

We now debate a proposal for a regulation for the control of mergers with a European dimension. Certain mergers may already be controlled at the European level under articles 85 and 86 of the treaty of Rome. The question raised by these documents is, therefore, not whether there should be control of mergers at the Community level but, rather, the nature and extent of that control.

The questions essentially are these: could a regulation provide a more efficient and effective mechanism for such control, and what should be the balance between Community and national controls?

The Commission's proposals for a Community merger control regulation require unanimous agreement in the Council of Ministers. We continue to maintain a general reservation on the principle of a regulation. It is important to look at the totality of the proposals. Many important issues remain unresolved, and we shall maintain such a reservation until the proposals as a whole go a good deal further towards meeting our concerns.

Several major issues are still to be resolved on the regulation, and much detailed technical work remains to be done. One major issue outstanding is the level of turnover thresholds which would determine which mergers would fall within the scope of the regulation. There has been much discussion about the most appropriate level for these thresholds. In common with France and Germany, we believe that the regulation should cover only the really big cross-border mergers in the Community. That means that higher thresholds than the Commission has proposed should be enforced.

It also means that if, as Commissioner Brittan has proposed, the thresholds should be reviewed after a transitional period, there should be no automatic, pre-arranged change in the threshold levels. Any review of the threshold levels should have the aim of establishing whether, on the basis of experience, there was a real need to alter the levels, either down or, indeed, up.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): As a member of the former indirectly elected European Parliament, I am far from clear about who takes these decisions on major mergers. Is it one commissioner, or one directorate, or the whole Commission?

Mr. Maude: All proposals that come from the Commission are made by the whole Commission, but they are generally brought to the Commission by a single commissioner. Proposals are usually drawn up by officials in certain directorate generals within the Commission. In the ordinary course of events, a major proposal would not come before the Council of Ministers unless it were approved by the Commission as a whole—not necessarily unanimously.

There is also the question of the criteria by which mergers should be assessed to determine whether, in the words of the draft regulation, they are compatible with the Common Market. We and Germany firmly believe that the criterion must be the effect on competition. Others believe that considerations of industrial policy should be brought into the assessment. We believe that there would be a risk to competition if the criteria were defined as the Commission has proposed. The prime concern must be competition. We are strongly opposed to the Commission using a regulation such as this as a means of promoting an industrial policy of its own. That is not what a regulation for the control of mergers should be about.

Another major concern is the complicated legal question regarding the relationship of the proposed regulation to articles 85 and 86 of the treaty of Rome. We are naturally concerned to clarify the relationship between a regulation and the treaty's competition provisions, because we believe that there should be one community regime, not two. Any solution to the problem of articles 85 and 86 is related to the questions of criteria and procedures.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I am grateful to my hon. Friend. We know in this House, to our cost, or perhaps not to our cost, that some of the larger mergers have political implications. If there is a merger with a potential political implication that is taking place, what political organisation or institution is going to be able to take account of those political implications? In other words, how is democracy going to have any impact on these merger discussions once the Commission itself is involved?

Mr. Maude: I hear what my hon. Friend says.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): It does not now.

Mr. Maude: In a way, the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) is right in what he says from a sedentary position. We seek to insulate the decision on whether a merger should be prevented from taking place, which is essentially a decision about whether shareholders should be allowed to sell their shares to a willing buyer, from the political process. The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry takes a decision only after having advice from the Director General of Fair Trading. He does not have the power to block a merger, unless the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, which is independent, has made an adverse public interest finding. To a considerable extent, even in domestic law the process is insulated, and properly so, from political pressure.

Mr. Marlow: I agree with my hon. Friend and think that that is right and proper. But, despite that, the Government can make a statement on a merger or merger policy or, despite that, a private notice question can be tabled by the Opposition and there will be democratic discussion of it, although I agree with the thrust of what my hon. Friend said. Is there not another danger—that the Commission, when looking at these issues, might for its own political purposes and political reasons decide on a particular outcome for a particular proposal?

Mr. Maude: That is right, which is why it is important that if a regulation is to come into force, which is by no means settled yet, it should set out clearly the criteria that the Commission must apply. It is not a question of whether there should be a merger-control regime within the Community because the Commission has asserted, and the court has upheld, its power to control mergers under articles 85 and 86 of the treaty, which have remained in place since it was signed. If we set up the right merger-control regime, there will be more scrutiny of its decisions and its decision-making will be more transparent than the current method by which it investigates mergers.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does the Minister agree that one of the problems with current domestic scrutiny of mergers and monopolies is that there are no clearly understood criteria by which they are judged when references are made? Sometimes one does not know why a reference was made. Does he agree that the Community's proposal sets out economic or financial standards that make it clear to all those involved in potential mergers and acquisitions whether they will be referred for Commission consideration? Is that not an advantage?

Mr. Maude: It is simply not the case that the regulation provides the certainty that the hon. Gentleman seeks. A company will not know for certain whether a merger will be investigated. Such certainty would not be possible under any merger-control regime. Only when a proposed merger is subject to scrutiny do its full implications begin to emerge and are decisions made. It is not possible—this is a fairly consistent criticism—for there to be an absolute test against which any prospective merger can be measured to know whether it offends against the criteria. I do not accept the hon. and learned Gentleman's criticism that the criteria are uncertain under our system. The factor that most motivates us when deciding whether to refer a merger to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission is its effect on competition. That is not so on all occasions, but in the two years that I have had my responsibilities we have referred only one merger to the MMC on grounds other then competition.

Even the Commission acknowledges that its proposal to resolve problems with articles 85 and 86, which it is linking directly to its proposals for thresholds and criteria, would not be completely immune to challenge in the courts. Everyone agrees that the legal position must be explored further.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): If the Commission is misled by evidence given to it which leads to it making an incorrect decision—this is not a hypothetical example because it appears to have occurred in important mergers —what will happen under the regulation? My hon. Friend the Minister mentioned a court, but I understand that a court would not be relevant to this possibility. If the Commission discovered that information given to it, by which it took its decision, was fraudulent or incorrect, or if those in Brussels had misled it, what will happen? I am sure that this matter will have been considered carefully by people such as myself who have examined the proposed regulation.

Mr. Maude: I suspect that my hon. Friend has in mind something more specific than might have appeared at first sight. I do not know the answer, but I shall endeavour to supply it before the debate concludes.

Also to be resolved is the relationship between any European regulation and the activities of national merger administrations. We are concerned that as far as possible businesses should not be exposed to what has become known as double jeopardy—the need to seek national and Community approval for a merger. In practice, it would probably be impossible to avoid at least some overlap between the Commission and national merger administrations, but it should be kept to a minimum and, broadly speaking, the Commission should have exclusive jurisdiction over those mergers that would fall within the scope of the regulation.

Mr. Cash: Articles 85 and 86 prescribe an abuse of dominant position as the main criterion. Whether or not one chooses a threshold, above or below that line one can still find that the matter can be challenged under those articles anyway. Does my hon. Friend agree that there is a problem irrespective of whether one seeks to avoid double jeopardy?

Mr. Maude: It is precisely that extremely difficult legal angle that needs to be further explored. The Commission has accepted that its proposals do not put the matter entirely beyond scrutiny by the courts. My hon. Friend is a considerable expert and will know the difficulties. Further work must be done.

I am now able to reassure my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) that the regulation as framed would provide for fines to be imposed on a party that either failed to notify or supplied incorrect information.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: I am sorry to be difficult. Who decides on the fine? Is it similar to the anti-dumping regulations—the Commission simply comes to a decision? What happens if there is a complaint and it is not clear whether the Commission has been misled? How does the Commission decide the figure? On what basis is it

[Mr. Teddy Taylor]

calculated? What can the aggrieved party do about it? We have seen a few recent examples when the Commission fixed a figure and did not explain. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade and Industry will be well aware of the position on the fixing of levies with respect to anti-dumping. Does the Commission reveal why it fixed a certain fine? Does it have the power to say that company X is fined a certain amount? That seems to be astonishing for a democratic organisation.

Mr. Maude: My hon. Friend has a considerable thirst for knowledge on this subject and I am able to satisfy it. The Commission would be able to decide on these matters. I cannot set out the exact criterion on which it would decide and the tariff of fines that it would apply. I do not think that that needs to be set out in detail at this stage. It would be open to the Commission by ordinary decision to impose a fine.

We are concerned also to achieve timescales and procedures in the regulation that would be as——

Mr Marlow: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Maude: I should like to make progress.

Mr. Marlow: I should be grateful if my hon. Friend would give way on this point. He has said in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) that individual citizens are in jeopardy because they may receive a fine, perhaps a large one. Will my hon. Friend explain what rights they will have to plead against that levy being imposed on them, how they will be able to appeal and what the legal rights of the citizen will be? We know that in the present circumstances in the United Kingdom there are various procedures which can ensure that justice is available to the citizen who has been arraigned. How would that carry through under the proposals? Was that long enough?

Mr. Maude: It was long enough for me to be able to supply an answer to the previous question. My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin) will be grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) for supplying him with an opportunity to get a great deal more exercise than he would ordinarily have. I can say to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East that the fines applicable would be up to 50,000 ecu for failing to notify or for supplying incorrect or misleading information. Those decisions would not be of a criminal law nature. I will endeavour to satisfy the proper curiosity of my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North on the matter of possible appeals against those fines.

We are concerned to achieve time scales and procedures under this regulation that will be as short and as little cumbersome as is practical, to provide clarity for companies and to achieve a balance between speed and fairness for all the parties involved. In practice, there might be informal approaches to the Commission in advance of notification which might develop, in time, along the lines of the confidential guidance system that operates in the United Kingdom, although there are, as yet, no specific proposals to that end.

One area that the proposals do not address is the barriers—which are more extensive in some member states than in others—to mounting successful contested takeovers. We have made it clear that the proposed merger control regulation should be considered within the wider framework of barriers to takeovers. Such barriers are simply not compatible with the completion of the single market. We are not alone in our concern. That is why the Commission and other member states supported our initiative at the end of last year on the need for action on this front.

In response to our initiative, the Commission has agreed to undertake a study on this subject. We look forward to seeing the results of the study which, I understand, is due to be completed by the summer recess. There will be major implications for some British businesses, but the likely overall benefits for business in the United Kingdom and in the Community as a whole make it important to tackle the barriers. We intend to keep up the pressure on that. I urge the House to support the motion.

11.27 pm

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): I welcome the fact that this debate is taking place. As we all know, there have been recent important negotiations within the European Community Council of Ministers on this subject, so it is right that the House should be having a debate. However, it is a matter of regret that the debate is taking place at a late hour and is also short, because we are discussing an important topic.

Useful background work to the debate has been undertaken by the Select Committee on European Legislation; also, a report on EC merger control has been prepared in another place. It is true that a regulation on EC merger control has been doing the rounds for a long time—since 1973—but it is equally true that the spate of mergers in recent years and the approach of 1992 have given a fresh impetus to those discussions.

The Opposition have been concerned about the merger mania that we have witnessed and also about the Government's seeming complacency when faced with those events. We are concerned about the criteria that the Government apply to evaluating mergers and our worry about the Government's national merger policy makes us worried about their attitude in the negotiations currently taking place in the EC.

I am also far from convinced that the Government are treating the matter with the seriousness that it deserves. I have been informed—I hope that the Minister will be able to contradict me—that at the last Council meeting two weeks ago, when this matter was discussed, the United Kingdom was represented by the No. 2 official in the United Kingdom permanent representation in Brussels, whereas other countries—France and Germany in particular—were represented at ministerial level. If that is true, why was it allowed to happen? Surely, with the number of Ministers at the Department of Trade and Industry, one of them should have been there.

Mr. Maude: Perhaps I can explain that. We have a much better record of attending Councils at ministerial level than most other countries. I was unable to attend the Council meeting, as I ordinarily would to represent the United Kingdom, because I had to be in the House to take part in the Second Reading debate on the Companies Bill.

Ms. Quin: I accept the Minister's explanation, but there are several Ministers within the Department. It appears

that the Government were isolated in the discussions. At least that is the story that appeared in several newspapers the next day, and I have some cuttings with me.

Mr. Maude: The hon. Lady should know by now that she should not believe everything that she reads in the newspapers. It is nonsense—it has been nonsense from the outset—to say that the United Kingdom has been isolated on the issue. We are closely aligned with the German Government's attitude, and we are close to the French Government on most of the outstanding issues. The hon. Lady should take the trouble to find out a bit more about what is going on.

Ms. Quin: Again, it was my understanding that various Commission officials had said that the threshold that the Government favour was much higher than that favoured by any other country. *[Interruption.]* If the Minister says that that is incorrect, I am happy to accept it.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): The hon. Lady's point belies the efforts made by this Government to get some sense from competition policy. The previous Commissioner had an initial limit of 1 billion ecu. We are now at least talking sensible terms for this policy, and I wish that the hon. Lady would give the Government credit for their efforts to get it to that level.

Ms. Quin: The rumours from Brussels suggest that the competition Commissioner, who is after all this Government's appointee, favours a lower threshold than that favoured by the Government.

The Prime Minister, who was at great pains to dismiss the previous Conservative Commissioner because he had gone native in Brussels, now seems to be faced with a similar difficulty, even though this Conservative Commissioner has held his office for only three or four months. Perhaps the Minister would like to deny the rumours that there are differences of view within the Government about the regulation. Obviously, I have no other information than what I have read in the press because I am not party to Cabinet discussions.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it usual for speeches in this House to be based upon facts or upon rumours?

Madam Deputy Speaker: It is usual in this House for any hon. Member to express himself or herself as they wish and for other hon. Members to have the tolerance to listen.

Ms. Quin: We hope that there are no disagreements between one Government Department and another. However, no hon. Member can deny that there have been clear divisions on European policy on the Conservative Benches recently. I am not simply relying on rumours when I make that point.

The rather vague form of words of the motion has been supplemented by an amendment tabled by Conservative Members, which takes a different view about this policy. Perhaps it would be unwise for the Opposition to intrude on private grief. However, we will obviously watch developments to see whether the Government can reach an agreement with Tory Back Benchers on this issue.

As I said earlier, the Labour party has been concerned about the spate of mergers that have occurred in recent years. Our view of what finally emerges as a regulation from Brussels will be coloured by what we judge the practical effects of such a regulation would be on our economy and our future industrial prospects.

Obviously, even if a regulation is not adopted in the near future, the Commission has powers under existing competition articles of the treaty of Rome. We are worried that those competition rules do not seem to have improved the situation and we face a very uneven playing field which seems particularly to disadvantage the United Kingdom.

Mr. Spearing: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Minister skated over the fact that the criteria in Brussels will clearly be different from those currently used by the Government? The Minister may shake his head, but public interest—however that may be defined by this House—is a criterion used in this place. In Brussels the EEC would have to determine that with regard to EEC interests. In that regard, does my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) recall the takeover bid by Feruzzi for Hillsdown, which put at risk the whole of the Commonwealth import of sugar? If that had been conducted in Brussels, that bid might have gone through and had an enormous effect on our Third-world connections.

Ms. Quin: My hon. Friend has made a valid point. I want later to discuss the criteria governing this regulation and the Government's view of those criteria.

When we consider whether mergers should be allowed, we must bear in mind that the Government have said that their main criterion is competition policy. That point was repeated in the minutes of evidence given by the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs and by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to the Select Committee on European Legislation. Competition was mentioned as the main or possibly even the only criterion, but the Secretary of State mentioned other national interests, such as defence. The Minister said that the media were another area in which there might be a special national interest and where special criteria may apply. I was amazed to read that in the evidence to the Select Committee. The Government have sat by complacently watching large sections of our media fall into very few pairs of private hands.

The need to consider other criteria has been stated by others who gave evidence to the European Communities Committee which dealt with this matter in another place. In that Committee, the Law Society of Scotland stated strongly that competition should not be the sole criterion, that other factors should be considered. It referred in particular to the regional dimension:

> "We consider the Commission should be empowered to look at the impact of a merger not only on the economy of the EEC as a whole, but also on a national or even regional economy, such as that of Scotland . . . It has been the experience of Scotland within the United Kingdom that larger enterprises will tend to be controlled from the South East of England with detrimental effects, for example, on professional support services in Scotland. It is possible that this experience will be repeated on a larger scale within the EC single market, depending on the effectiveness or otherwise of the provision for the reduction of regional disparities."

That reference to Scotland could apply equally to the north-west, Wales and other areas. The Government should give greater importance to that.

I also believe that the long-term industrial and economic interests must be taken into account. We are very concerned that at the moment too many managers

[Ms. Quin]

seem to be looking out for potential predators or planning mergers themselves instead of trying to ensure adequate investment for the future well-being and long-term prosperity of their companies.

Finally, I believe that the interest of employees, whose livelihoods may be dramatically affected by mergers, should be considered. Of course, that idea is anathema to a Government who have consistently blocked any such moves within the European Community. None the less, I know that there are pressures from the European Parliament and from elsewhere to take such matters into account.

I remember, for example, that when this proposed regulation was debated in the European Parliament in October, an amendment was passed that has been incorporated into the amended version of the directive under article 17, and which reads:

"Applications to be heard on the part of members of the administrative or management organs and the acknowledged employees' representatives from the undertakings concerned, shall in all cases be granted".

I can imagine the Government's reaction to that article. However, we feel strongly that those who are employed in firms that are the subject of takeovers should be consulted and that their interests should be taken into account.

Many other issues are raised in the proposed regulation which, unfortunately, time does not allow me to discuss in detail. Those include the problems of how well equipped and structured the Commission is to cope with the tasks that it is proposing to carry out and what institutional changes, if any, might be desirable, such as improving the role of the hearing officer. Much time could have been spent—perhaps other hon. Members will do this—analysing the possible conflicts between national and European action on mergers, which is very much a grey area in the proposed regulation, and also the possible legal difficulties over the conflicts between the implementation of articles 85 and 86 of the treaty and whatever is agreed in the new regulation.

The Government's approach to the subject is highly unsatisfactory. Their tactics in the negotiations appear to be in danger, at least, of leading to their isolation, but their approach to the substance appears to fail to address the real problems created by the merger situation that we have seen happening too frequently during the past few years.

Mr. Alex Carlile: I have been listening to the hon. Member with great care. Is the Labour party in favour of or against a European Community concentrations policy?

Ms. Quin: We recognise that, under the existing treaty, there is scope for the European Commission to act in relation to competitions and mergers. We would like to see those existing powers used more sensibly, along the lines that I have suggested.

We want decisions to be made in Europe that will promote the long-term industrial and economic health of our large companies.

Mr. Marlow: By who?

Ms. Quin: By all concerned. We want to see decisions that will help to reduce regional imbalances and that will help employment. Relying simply on competition and on the operation of market forces is not the answer.

11.43 pm

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): This is is a very important regulation, because, basically, the regulation, as amended, would in many cases override the provisions that we now have in law, since it would remove

"the ability of the Secretary of State to allow a merger prohibited by the Commission and it is intended that Member States should not be entitled to prohibit a merger specifically authorised by the Commission on the grounds that it contributed to the achievement of one of the basic objectives of the Treaty."

It is a massive transfer of sovereignty. Instead of elected Ministers, who are answerable to the House, deciding whether mergers should go ahead, non-elected Commissioners will do the job.

We are, therefore, taking a huge decision. Those Commissioners will not be answerable to the House in the same way as Government Ministers. They will not have to give the reasons for decisions. As with all such matters, we are deciding this matter late at night, so that the public will have no idea what is going on. Three big decisions will be made this week. It is crazy but there will be nothing in the papers about this tomorrow and nothing on "Today in Parliament". Instead of our elected Ministers doing the job, we are transferring it to the Commission. The Commission, of course, has the power to tell Ministers that they are wrong and to overturn their decision.

There is no point in talking about this because our views on such matters are wholly irrelevant. They do not matter one bit and I am sure that they will not affect the decisions reached in any way, because all the decisions have been made, except for a couple of minor points.

I have a simple question: will the Government send out some kind of pamphlet to British firms so that they know about the new situation?

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): My hon. Friend has just said that what he and the House say makes no difference to the decisions that will be made in Europe. The Minister has been battling away and arguing strongly from a reasonable, sensible and reasoned basis with his European colleagues. He has consulted the House on two occasions and addressed the European Legislation Committee. He has managed to make major changes to proposals from the Commission. I suggest that my hon. Friend is insulting the Minister by suggesting that there is no point in him going to Europe and doing the hard work that he performs on our behalf.

Mr. Taylor: I am sorry if I gave any impression that I was insulting the Minister. I was insulting the constitutional arrangements whereby, in the majority of cases, admittedly, not in this one, we think—although it is up to the Commission; it can change its mind—matters are decided by majority vote. Therefore, the views of the House are not relevant. The case before us tonight is different, because, we hope, it must be subject to a unanimous decision. In this case we can say no, but the Minister is well aware that most things are decided by majority vote. In that case the views of individual Ministers are not terribly important. However, I am sure that the Minister is working terribly hard and doing all in his power to ensure that the proposals put to us are the right ones.

Mr. Maude: It is important to stress to my hon. Friend that the regulation does not involve a transfer of

sovereignty—that was done when the treaty of Rome was signed. The Commission has competence in competition matters and over mergers and that has been asserted and upheld by the European Court of Justice. My hon. Friend is right to say that the regulation must be agreed unanimously. Therefore, we have considerable influence over its form. If we can negotiate on it and it emerges in a satisfactory form, it will give Ministers more control than at present.

Mr. Taylor: The Minister is well aware that I never quote any figures unless they are Government ones. The quote I read was not written by me, but it was a direct quote, word for word, from the explanatory memorandum from the Government. I am sorry if that quote was incorrect or misleading, but the Minister will be well aware that I was quoting the words in the document before us. I am sorry if that has given the wrong impression, but we are given a lot of papers and, to avoid any misunderstanding, I just wanted to read out what the Government said in that explanatory paper rather than give my impression.

That issue is not important—all I want is an answer to the simple question: will companies be told? Under article 12 in the original paper—I believe that it is unchanged in the revised document—the officials of the Community, the so-called "Community policemen" or whoever, have the power to enter any undertakings

"to examine the books and other business records; to take or demand copies of or extracts from the books and business records; to ask for oral explanations on the spot; to enter any premises, land and means of transport of undertakings."

The Minister may say that that is all part of being European and may be it is, but I believe that many people who run businesses will be unaware that, once the regulations goes through, people appointed by the Commission will be able to walk in, ask for any documents and ask for answers "on the spot"—those are words used in article 12.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): The hon. Gentleman may be giving the impression that there is a new power. The Commission already has similar powers under articles 85 and 86 to walk into companies which it suspects of entering price fixing arrangements, for example, and it has used them.

Mr. Taylor: I am well aware of the powers that are contained in article 85. As the hon. Gentleman has said, if there is a danger of price fixing, the Commission has the powers to which he has referred.

I am suggesting that many people who run companies or businesses and do not follow politics will not be aware of the matters that we are discussing. If they are aware of them, my suggestion is obviously nonsense. I am not talking about those who run ICI, Shell or Unilever. My understanding of article 12 is that it relates to any premises which the Commission considers relevant and not solely to the businesses that are directly concerned.

The Minister must inform businesses of the fines that can be imposed. As he rightly said, a fine of 50,000 ecu —a small sum—can be levied by the Commission upon those who in its opinion supply misleading information, but there are many other penalties. Under the old regulation—I wonder whether it is the new one—

"The Commission may by decision impose on natural or legal persons fines of"

up to 2 million ecu

"where, either intentionally or negligently, they commit a breach of the obligation to notify".

There are those who say, in effect, fair enough, but if the Commission considers that there has been a breach there can be a huge fine.

What about delays in supplying information? The Government are well aware that businesses are being asked constantly for more and more information. The Department of Trade and Industry is always asking them to attend wonderful 1992 conferences, and at the same time they are being asked to complete numerous forms. Running a business is not the same as being a Member of Parliament. Business men have to do things in a hurry if customers want things quickly. However, under article 14, if information is not supplied when it is wanted, there can be a fine of up to 25,000 ecu. That is rather significant. There are fines for not providing information, fines for not providing information on time, and fines for being negligent.

When problems of this sort arise, the normal course for someone in this country is to go to a British court. Some of our courts are funny but basically they are places where we get justice.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Under article 15 there is provision for review by the European Court of Justice. We are told:

"The Court of Justice shall have unlimited jurisdiction within the meaning of Article 172 of the Treaty to review decisions whereby the Commission has fixed a fine".

There is a judical process whereby those who are fined can appeal to the European Court of Justice.

Mr. Taylor: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that I have read the papers and that I am well aware of the provisions within article 13. Given his expert knowledge, I ask him to tell us how much it costs to go to the Court of Justice, what it would cost if something went wrong and the case was lost, and how long the process takes. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman, with his expert knowledge of Euro-matters, will be able to respond. Let us suppose that I am fined for not providing information. I could go to the Court of Justice, but that would cost quite a lot of money and the process would take a long time to complete.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): My hon. Friend will be aware that efforts are being made by the European Court of Justice to create a first tier, where three judges will sit on their own. This will enable matters of law which require quick decisions to be dealt with expeditiously at short notice. All the evidence will be given by affidavit. This will provide us with a quick, cheap and simple operation of Community law.

Mr. Taylor: That is a splendid idea. I, too, have heard about that. I am saying that if someone goes to the European Court of Justice, the process will not be quick, easy and cheap, even if he uses the new tribunal set-up.

We are not talking about small fines. The Commission

"may by decision impose fines not exceeding 10 per cent. of the value of the reorganized assets where the undertakings concerned either intentionally or negligently put into effect a concentration in breach of . . . article 7."

I know that some hon. Members may feel that this is silly stuff, but let them understand that the Commission can enter a business man's premises. It can enter premises that it thinks are related to an organisation. For example, it could enter a public relations company, if it considered that it were a related organisation, and demand answers on

[Mr. Taylor]

the spot. It would have the ability to impose considerable fines up to 1 million ecu. That is the sort of thing that people will worry about.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind), who is a great Europhile, says that business men in such circumstances can go to the new Euro-court and that that will be quick and easy, but I doubt whether that will happen.

I also want to know what will happen when the Commission has the power, once a merger is taking place, to call for it to stop: I think that it is called instructing disinvestment or divestment. That does not happen in this country unless a merger is referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, and the Government do not do that in many cases. There is no question of the exciting implications of the House of Fraser affair being unwound, for instance.

I think that many firms considering mergers would like to know about all this stuff, but they cannot, because we debate it at such ludicrous hours. The Institute of Directors, for example, is very worried about these developments. I hope that the Government will give one pledge: that once the measure has been passed they will publish a little booklet explaining the new arrangements that business men must face. It is frightening for people trying to run a business to be faced with so many new powers and restrictions.

I do not like the suggestion that Commissioners rather than courts will fix fines. The Commissioners are not men of God; they do not possess unlimited powers and unlimited wisdom. We know who they are, how they get where they are and how they act on advice, and it has nasty implications for democracy.

Mr. Dalyell: The hon. Gentleman has just said that we know how Commissioners get where they are. How did Sir Leon Brittan get there?

Mr. Taylor: I would not like to give any advice on that. I have never been asked to be a Commissioner: that may provide some guidance on how to be appointed.

In the old days, people accused of dumping had to say that they were selling at a price lower than that at which they had bought. Nowadays, however, the Commission can fix what it calls "a normal price". Hon. Members may ask, "What is a normal price?". The Commission told a firm in my constituency that it was selling below the normal price, but when the firm asked what was meant by a normal price no explanation was given. Firms are entitled to no information whatever.

This is the kind of thing that used to happen in the old days before there was a Parliament or a democracy: officials would decide fines and would tell people what they could and could not do. They would announce that they were entering the premises. Some of my hon. Friends will say that I am covering old ground, but this is new ground. What we are deciding is within a new framework, a new kind of democracy.

I am sorry about the direction in which the Labour party is going. I used to think that, although we disagreed politically, the Labour party fought for the individual, for liberty and for democracy; that it fought for the people and against the big battalions. Now our democracy is experiencing a dramatic change: the Commission is making decisions, imposing fines and defining normal prices, without having to give a reason. I think that that is wrong, but whether it is right, wrong or—as I am sure my hon. Friend the Minister would argue—does not matter, I think that firms are entitled to know what is going on. I hope, therefore, that when he winds up my hon. Friend will say that he will publish a little booklet explaining how the new European arrangements will affect mergers. I know that most people do not worry about it, but I think that the majority of business men will be shocked, horrified and worried, and that all who care about democracy and freedom would feel sick at what is happening tonight

11.58 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I agree with at least one thing that was said by the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin): it is very regrettable that this important debate, and indeed the long series of European Community debates that we are having, always seem to take place so late at night. They attract an almost predictable cast list. On the one hand, there are the Euroholics, in whom a surfeit of European matters seems to produce a sort of sickness or paranoia, such as that expressed just now by the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor). On the other hand, there are the Europhiles—among whom I may be counted—who feel that the European Community is a much more democratic and useful organisation than it is considered by the hon. Member for Southend, East, and who are prepared to argue for its constructive aspects in the House.

A debate on mergers and monopolies is extremely important. The Government's attitude to the subject may well be a benchmark of their attitude to Europe. Therefore, it was with great interest that I listened to the Minister. I tried to glean from his speech whether he agreed with the former Prime Minister from his party on Europe, with the present Prime Minister or with the Foreign Secretary who, presumably, would like to be the next Prime Minister. Good lawyer that he is, the Minister chose the role of amicus curiae. However, a little later, when he replied to an intervention from one of his hon. Friends, I thought that I detected a slight tendency towards the views on Europe held by the former Prime Minister from his party.

We are considering redrafted proposals and it was right for the Minister to express reservations about some aspects of the proposals. They are not as clear as they ought to be and some features need redrafting and further consideration. One worrying aspect is the reservation in the proposals about the national interest—the question of what a member state can reserve out of the Commission's regime over concentrations, in the national interest. Does that include regional interests and the interests of Commonwealth countries? It is important that the United Kingdom should be able to ensure that the interests of Commonwealth countries, to which we have obligations, should be properly considered in the European context. Their interests should not just disappear among the market of 322 million and the combined interests of 12 member states.

Having expressed those reservations, I now say that the proposals just about get it right. They aim at certain concerns that we should all share. There is the concern that intervention in proposed mergers should be predictable. At the moment it is somewhat difficult to predict when the

Minister will decide that a proposed merger should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. There are not clearly set-out financial criteria which enable one to look at the proposal made by the acquisitive company and say that on financial grounds alone the matter will have to be considered by the Commission.

The European Commission's proposals set certain financial and economic standards. Whether they are right is a matter for debate and further consideration, but the principle of setting clear standards is important. It will mean that a company that wishes to make a major acquisition will be able to look at the size of the proposed new company, set its proposal against the standards laid down by the Commission, and know by rule of thumb whether the matter will have to be considered further or whether it can simply go ahead. The company will know whether it has to justify to the Commission what it is doing or whether it can proceed. That will be useful for large companies.

The Commission is also concerned at the increasing concentration of economic power in fewer hands. That is not quite the same as being concerned solely with competition. As the Minister said earlier, the Government's sole ground for referring bids to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission is competition. The Community can consider concentration not only in fewer hands but concentration in the hands of non-Community nationals. That could be of great importance in dealing with the ownership of newspapers and—what worries me particularly at the moment—the ownership of satellite television channels, where there are great possibilities for the dissemination of information.

It is also useful that the regulating authority should, as proposed by the Commission, consider bids on a wider public interest basis than has ever been applied in the United Kingdom. The public interest basis could take full account of the environmental and safety standards to be set by the new company. We see from the way in which nuclear power generation is distributed unevenly around Europe that it is not possible to set proper safety standards on a purely national basis. If say a company from a country less than 100 miles from the shores of the United Kingdom proposed a merger which involved the construction of nuclear power stations not built to a standard acceptable in the United Kingdom, it would be impossible under present provisions to do anything about it; but under the proposed Community regime it would become possible to consider the Community public interest, including standards on the environment and safety.

The Commission could consider the amount of research and development to be conducted and, of course, the degree of competition within the product market, and prices. Those are commendable public interest considerations which should properly be taken into account by an organisation that is considering whether a merger should take place.

There is an analogy with the anti-trust laws of the United States of America. If the Government really mean their commitment to the 1992 single market, there is a need for an effective Community competition policy to examine mergers and takeovers in a strategically European context. It is illogical to have a single economic market and to leave something as important as mergers and competition to a very limited degree of Commission intervention and mainly to national Government intervention.

Mr. Dalyell: When the hon. and learned Gentleman talks about the environment, might that not be covered in article 20? In the explanatory memorandum we see that member states may take appropriate measures to protect legitimate interests. The hon. and learned Gentleman is a lawyer. I would have thought that the reference to legitimate interests would cover the matters that he has raised. I should like confirmation when the Minister replies. It is a very important point.

Mr. Carlile: I shall leave it to the Minister to answer that question as he is a lawyer more expert in these matters than I. Obtaining the answer will give his hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin) a little more exercise; he looks as though he could do with a good deal more.

There is a logical case for a strategically European context in the policy over mergers and takeovers. While one must recognise the necessity for large companies, capable of competing in world markets, that must not occur at the expense of European consumers. If we have a European manufacturing market, a European production market and a European financial market, we must accept that we also have a European consumer market. If there is to be such a market, matters relating to it should surely be considered at European level—particularly bearing in mind the high degree of democratic and national accountability that exists within the Community.

The Community suggests that the burden of proof should be shifted on to the shoulders of those wanting to create mega-corporations. That seems right to me, and I hope that the Government continue to hold that view if they agree, as I think they do, with this part of the proposals.

Of most concern to me is the Government's underlying attitude. Are we really listening to the Government saying, "Yes, we want to make these proposals better. When we come to 1992"—when, on my understanding, we go from unanimity to majority voting—"we want a more acceptable regime"? If so, I have little criticism of the Minister's approach, except that he is a little grudging in his acceptance of the draft.

However, one is bound to suspect in the light of recent statements by the Prime Minister that the Government give the appearance of accepting the proposals grudgingly but are really exercising a Gaullist objection to the further Community's development. If so, I regret that very much.

12.11 am

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): On the final point made by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), from listening to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor), I do not believe that the Government are making a Gaullist objection to Europe's development.

It is clear that my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East is not against the principles that the directive lays down but has a number of reservations about them. So do I and many of my right hon. and hon. Friends. We must take more interest in discussing these matters. I identify myself with the remark of the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) about how unsatisfactory it is that the House debates them late at night. In years to come, it will be realised that our discussions formed the basis of Council of Ministers' decisions—although fortunately the proposal before the House requires

[Mr. Kenneth Hind]

unanimity—and we may live to regret the lack of interest in them shown by some right hon. and hon. Members, the media and the public.

I support the principle behind the Commission's proposals. If, as we approach 1992, there is no open competition and no ruling on monopolies and mergers, there will be chaos. Much of the directive falls on all fours with the Government's traditional guidelines, which are the Tebbit rules. It all boils down to market share, competition, and the overall interests of the consumer. The directive provides for a turnover basis of £700 million, which is not unreasonable when one considers the size of the Community.

Many right hon. and hon. Members have been involved in mergers and takeovers. Two years ago, I was involved in the attempted takeover by BTR of Pilkington. Strong regional feelings exist in that case. The influence of people who work for that company is important for the region and there is clearly a regional interest that must be protected. I am sure that hon. Members who represent Yorkshire constituencies had similar feelings over the takeover by Nestlé of Rowntree.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) that we must consider the national interest—what he described as "the political interest", and there are other ways of describing it—not simply on the basis of individual sovereign state legislation on monopolies and mergers but in terms of the effect of this type of directive.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): The draft regulation gives all the power to the Commission, which becomes the investigator, prosecutor, judge and policeman. There is no room for national sovereignty in this set-up.

Mr. Hind: The right hon. Gentleman raises the point that I was about to discuss. As a lawyer, it worries me that the Commission is judge and jury in its own court. That is bad, and I hope that the Minister will press for more use of the European Court within the framework of this directive. It is wrong that, when the Commission says, for example, that notice has not been given of a takeover or that the information required has not been given, it can act as policeman and give on-the-spot fines. Such a matter should go before the court, be it passed down, as it were, to individual state courts—the British courts in our case—or to the European Court. Each company—whether it is taken over or it is the predator company—should have to appear before that court and put its case.

I regret this extension of power that we are giving to the Commission, remembering that traditionally we have separated the Executive and judicial functions within our jurisdiction. As a result of this directive, they could be merged. It is a dangerous step which we should avoid at all costs.

I appreciate what the Minister said about articles 85 and 86; those issues will have to be sorted out. If we are to have a policy for the future on monopolies and mergers within the EEC, a directive of this nature is essential. Hon. Members who, like myself, represent north of England constituencies and who share the concern that is felt about Rowntree and Pilkington may agree that perhaps it is a thought that the takeover by Nestlé of Rowntree under this directive would have been referred to the EEC. Surely that represents a step in the right direction.

12.18 am

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): The message that the Government should be getting from this debate is the genuine concern that is felt in all parts of the House about regional interest. From Pilkington, York or, as in my case, Bathgate and what happened to the old Telegraph Condenser Company, it gets to Plessey, then Plessey gets involved and this week we have Towcester. I do not speak for Northamptonshire, but it is a general pattern of worry and there must be an overall view.

Because other hon. Members wish to take part in the debate, I will put the remainder of my speech in the form of questions. First, what is the legal interpretation of article 20 and what do "legitimate interests" cover? Do they cover regional problems, which were well outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin)?

Secondly, on the important question of the threshold levels, do the Government agree with the view that is attributed to Sir Leon Brittan that there should be lower threshold levels? Are they to be lower or not?

Thirdly, a question about double jeopardy. I do not understand what the legal difficulty is. The Government have available to them expert advice. I have had this problem explained to me by David Edward, who was recently appointed by the Foreign Secretary—rightly—to the court of first instance. The Government can go to such expert lawyers and get some kind of ruling. There is an overlap between national aspects and the EEC aspect. We are not playing blind man's buff.

Mr. Spearing: I draw my hon. Friend's attention to the definition of a single market under article 8A, which is an area without internal frontiers. While I sympathise with what my hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) said, if that is the definition of the free movement of capital, how can regional or national interests be taken into account?

Mr. Dalyell: That may be a question for the Court of Justice. The hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) may remember from his Cathcart days Lord Mackenzie Stuart, and other distinguished Scottish jurists who have gone to Europe. I do not think that there is much evidence that they are slower than the United Kingdom courts. He may have such evidence.

Is there a ripple of disatisfaction in governmental circles about the speed with which European Court decisions have been made? I understand that it has acted rather expeditiously, and has been effective. It certainly has a number of distinguished English and Scottish jurists on it.

Fourthly, what about the successfully contended takeover bids? My hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East raised the real concern of the Law Society of Scotland. I know something of the background to this, and it has genuine concerns. If it is concerned about Scotland, the north-west and the north-east of England have equal cause to be concerned. This is linked with the problem of additionality. Again, if there were time, we should have an explanation from the Government of what their policy on additionality is. When the other Commissioner, Bruce Millan, came to my constituency a couple of weeks ago, he

expressed public concern that the British Government were using additionality to help their domestic finances, and using the European fund in a way that was not intended.

I do not want to be dragged into a debate about something that the hon. Member for Southend, East said, but he asked how Commissioners get there. It takes the can to have Sir Leon Brittan, after all the years in the background——

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Eric Forth): Careful!

Mr. Dalyell: I am being careful. I do not need lectures in care from that Minister, particularly after his performance at the Dispatch Box. I will put it tactfully. Sir Leon Brittan rendered the supreme service to his leader of silence—silence about skulduggery. I have checked it, and that is a good parliamentary word. That had a great deal to do with the person in charge. It takes the can for that man, after his performance in front of a Select Committee, to be in charge of such sensitive issues.

12.24 am

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): I shall be brief because time is pressing.

I want to return to the arguments on articles 85 and 86, whether it is better to have a directive and take court action on the basis of those articles. I shall make two points regarding the power of the Commission. Once the Single European Act and all the other measures for which some hon. Members voted come into force, we shall be unable to avoid some form of regulation. I am concerned about the power that the regulation gives the Commission. It will determine whether a merger is within the regulation. It will ask for all the papers on the merger and will be the judge, jury and policeman who polices the arrangements. Our system, which is not perfect and about which I do not want to be too romantic, is different. The Office of Fair Trading acts as a preliminary sieve, court of first instance or magistrates court. If there is a case it is considered by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, which makes recommendations and passes it to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, who makes a decision for which, in theory at least, he is accountable to Parliament. It is not a perfect system, but at least there are some checks and balances and consideration of the powers involved.

If the regulation is passed, two bodies must be established. The Commission should be the prosecutor, but an independent body—it will not like this proposal —outside the Commission, similar to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, should act as judge and determine whether a merger is within the regulation. Some people might say, "We can do that within the Commission. We can have Chinese walls, with someone at one end of the Berlaymont building acting as prosecutor and someone at the other end being the judge." I do not believe that quasi-governmental institutions operate in such a way. Commissioners and civil servants within the Commission may be honourable people, but I do not believe that that can be done. An independent body must act as judge, and an appeal could be made to the court of first instance.

I think that I heard the Minister correctly when he said that he was not too happy with the second limb of the regulation, whereby, even if damage to competition could result from a merger, the Commission could determine whether it is in Europe's interests that it should be allowed. The Commission would be exercising a kind of public interest function. It would determine European industrial strategy, and although there could be a reduction in competition because the merged organisation involves, say, electronics, it could decide that the overriding priority is to allow the merger.

I do not believe that the Commission should take such a decision. It is a decision not about competition but about policy and economics, which should be taken by politicians, taking into account the regional and other considerations. If the second limb of the regulation is passed, the Council of Ministers could determine that a merged organisation that inhibits competition should be allowed because of European regional policy. One can imagine the public relations men, lobbying groups in Brussels and vast amounts of money that could be involved. Such pressure should not be placed on the Commission.

I do not believe that the Commission should be judge and jury or that it should determine the political issue of European industrial strategy. Such decisions should be taken by the Council of Ministers, and the judge in the first instance should be not the Commission but an independent body.

12.28 am

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): We have had an interesting debate, although it has taken place rather late this evening.

The Commission's proposal is a logical extension of articles 85 and 86 and the onset of the single market. There has been some disagreement about the exact criteria that would make the proposal acceptable to the British and other Community Governments. We have been given a sketchy outline of a tenfold increase in the worldwide turnover of a company compared with what would happen under the Commission's proposals and a fivefold increase in the Community turnover of at least two of the companies involved, which is the Government's position. It would be interesting to know the position of the other Governments and whether a feasible compromise which is acceptable to the House of Commons can be reached.

The Minister attacked my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) for referring to press statements and rumours. Unfortunately, because the Council of Ministers meets in secret—the only legislative body outside the Soviet Union to do so—we have to rely on press reports, rumours and leaks, which sometimes come from the Government, to find out the exact position. Perhaps the Minister would like to inform us of the feeling in other countries on the possibility of a reasonable compromise being reached.

I ask the Minister to examine the possibilities of using article 235 in constructing a regional interest. Article 20 of the regulation states that there can be

> "Legitimate interests other than those pursued by this Regulation, provided that such interests are sufficiently defined and protected in domestic law".

There is a possibility of domestic or national interests being defined for the purpose of the regulation. Article 235 could be used to develop the concept of a regional interest, if the Government were so minded. Is that what they would like to achieve?

It is one thing for us to be worried about the lateness of the debate and for us often to be worried about the late

[Mr. Win Griffiths]

stage at which we are consulted on European matters, but a more radical solution is available if we are prepared to review the Community's procedures and give the European Parliament greater power, particularly now that some Conservative Members have left it—it is now a much better place.

I wholeheartedly endorse the point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) about a separate body. We have in the Community a Court of Auditors which does a good independent job examining spending and fraud issues. This is an opportunity to do something similar in respect of monopolies and mergers and control of concentrations.

12.33 am

Mr. Maude: This has been a useful debate. The hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths), who referred to the lateness of the debate, said that it was late in the negotiation process.

Mr. Win Griffiths: I did not say that it was late this time.

Mr. Maude: I am grateful for that correction. We sought to bring this matter forward for debate and scrutiny at a proper time. There is still a great deal to be discussed. I think that the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) would concede that we have done everything that we can to submit the proposal to proper parliamentary scrutiny. I warmly welcome the close attention that right hon. and hon. Members have paid. It has helped the Government as we take the discussions forward.

A number of my hon. Friends and other hon. Members talked about sovereignty, as though there were to be a transfer of sovereignty to the Commission under this measure. That is not the case, because the European Commission, under articles 85 and 86 of the treaty, already has such competence. It exercises it and is legally unimpeachable. If we manage to resolve the outstanding problems in this regulation, there will be an improved procedure.

Under article 18, the Commission would have to be "in close and constant liaison with the competent authorities of the Member States".

There is no such requirement on the Commission under articles 85 and 86. In addition, there would be an advisory committee of member states which would have to be consulted on matters including fines and decisions made by the Commission. The Commission would take the utmost account of the opinion of the decision given by the committee and would inform it of the manner in which its opinion had been taken into account. I hope that that gives some reassurance that, far from giving more power to the Commission, the measure would define the power to be exercised by the Commission and would stress that it had to be exercised in consultation with national authorities, both the competent authorities and the advisory committee.

Ms. Quin *rose*——

Mr. Maude: I will not give way, if the hon. Lady will forgive me, because I have only two minutes left and it has been a lengthy debate. I would like to answer the points that have been raised.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) urged us to publish a pamphlet if we managed to reach a satisfactory agreement. I can undertake that at such a juncture we would certainly propose to issue an explanatory leaflet. He is right that it is important that businesses should be told how these matters operate so that they can make their dispositions accordingly.

My hon. Friend also raised the matter of fines. The European Court of Justice would have the power to review fines upwards, as well as downwards, and would be given unlimited jurisdiction to enforce compliance with the regulation in the ways that I have described. It would, of course, be necessary for the Commission to be properly staffed before taking on these wider responsibilities.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) raised a number of issues. I am delighted to see that he has returned to the Chamber in time to hear the response to them. He mentioned the possibility that under the regulation it would be possible for wider matters to be taken into account than is possible under the national regulations. He referred to matters such as research and development, safety standards and environmental considerations. It is not the case that there is no scope for those matters to be considered under United Kingdom legislation. If a merger is referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, it has a duty to take all the relevant matters into consideration in deciding whether the merger is in the public interest.

The hon. and learned Gentleman also mentioned article 20 and the issue of national interest. The wording of that article is still under discussion and the draft wording includes a consideration of the local markets of a member state and national interests are generally understood to include defence, media and prudential controls in insurance and banking. However, we accept that further consideration and negotiation is needed on that——

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business).*

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Document Nos. 5936/88 and 9822/88 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of Trade and Industry on 12th May 1989 on the control of concentrations between undertakings; notes the United Kingdom's general reserve; but supports the Government's intention to continue to contribute constructively to discussions with the Commission and other Member States in order to see whether the outstanding issues can be resolved.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

SUMMER TIME

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Summer Time Order 1989 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 18th April.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

Question agreed to.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

12.38 am

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): I am pleased to have the opportunity of raising on the Floor of the House tonight the subject of bovine spongiform encephalopathy. It is a matter of great concern to thousands of dairy producers and presents a major potential risk to public health. I am afraid that it also demonstrates the indecision and evasiveness that currently dominate the approach of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to questions of food production and quality control. The fact that this is the first debate on the subject to be held in the House shows the complacency with which the Government are viewing the problem. Even when they unveiled the only substantial step that they have taken so far in investigating the disease, they did so by means of a written answer rather than having the courtesy to make a statement in the House.

It will already be clear that I differ from the Minister on several matters of substance over the way in which MAFF has responded to BSE and the hazards that it presents to human health. Before I refer to them, it will be convenient to describe the disease, because its nature is the only common ground between myself and the Minister.

As its name suggests, BSE is specific to cattle. It is a degenerative disease that effectively destroys the brain. It is incurable, can have an incubation period of several years, and is transmissible and invariably fatal. Death ensues rapidly after the onset of clinical symptoms. It is one of a group of related diseases that affect species as diverse as humans and hamsters. The Southwood report records spongiform encephalopathies in sheep, goats, deer, antelope, mink and mice. Other research has uncovered the equivalent disease in squirrels, ferrets, guinea pigs, chimpanzees, squirrel monkeys and other primates.

I have read a scientific paper which complains of the reluctance of laboratory workers to research into transmissible encephalopathies because of the evidence of transmissibility to humans. Another paper remarks on the extraordinary similarities between the respective diseases that affect different species. The conclusion is that it is probably caused by the same agent manifesting itself slightly differently, as would be expected, from species to species.

In humans, the disease is known as Kuru and Creutzfeldt-Jakob dementia. The bovine form was first identified at MAFF's laboratories in late 1986, and is accepted as having been caused by feeding cattle with the rendered remains of sheep infected with the bovine form known as scrapie. As well as being known to resist high temperatures and normal disinfecting procedures, the causal agent has been shown to have the capacity to cross the species barrier outside the laboratory as well as in it.

That much is known. However, we do not know the nature of the causative agent and precisely how it is transmitted outside the laboratory. Under laboratory conditions, it has been proven to spread through ingestion of infected material, inoculation through abrased skin and intracerebral injection.

The unidentified agent within the host animal gathers a protective coating of proteins specific to that animal, and thereby avoids provoking any immune response. It is therefore unlike normal viral infections, in that it is undetectable until the onset of clinical symptoms of the disease that it causes.

Now to more disputed matters. There is clearly a theoretical risk to humans who handle or consume infected material, although the Government, through their scientific advisers on the Southwood committee, describe the risk as "remote". Which word, I wonder, would the Government have chosen in the early 1980s to describe the possibility of scrapie in sheep crossing the species barrier and occurring as BSE in cattle?

Clearly the chances must have been considered even less than remote, because the Government then moved to lower standards of processing animal remains for animal feed. However, the positions then and now are not entirely analogous. During the early 1980s, when cattle were fed with scrapie-infected animal protein, there was no evidence that cattle could contract a similar disease. In 1989, humans are eating animal products infected with BSE, when it is an undisputed fact that humans can contract a form of transmissible encephalopathy.

Now that the outbreak has occurred, even though the Government regard the risks as remote, they have banned the use of ruminant remains in ruminant rations, made the disease notifiable, introduced a slaughter policy and compensation, banned the sale for human consumption of meat and milk from infected animals, and banned the use of certain bovine organs from baby foods. All that action has been taken to combat a risk that the Government have described as "remote".

We welcome and support those measures. Unfortunately, they do not amount to a coherent and comprehensive policy. They are inadequate, and far too many loopholes exist. The Government's response to the Southwood committee report implied that the problem was fully recognised and that adequate measures were being taken to investigate and control the disease, thereby protecting the public.

In a parliamentary answer to the hon. Member for Bromsgrove (Sir H. Miller) on 27 February, the Minister said that the Government were acting with "extreme prudence". Now that we have had time to look more closely at the issues involved, it is obvious that the Minister's political response to the scientific issues raised by the Southwood report has been wanting. My view is shared by eminent physicians. The public health committee of the British Veterinary Association and the organisation with potentially the most to lose, the National Farmers Union, have all declared their concern at the inadequacy of the Government's actions.

Let me illustrate the point. A distinguished neuropathologist from Charing Cross hospital, Dr. Helen Grant, writing in *The Times,* says of the official assurance in 1987 that BSE posed no risk to humans:

> "This view is highly irresponsible and dangerous. The fact is that there may be a risk to humans: indeed some of us may already be incubating this fatal dementia".

Dr. Grant and Professor William Blackwood, who is also from Charing Cross hospital, again in a letter to *The Times,* this time after Southwood had reported, stated:

> "unless bovine brain is totally banned from food, or is avoided, a new human health hazard hovers over us, potentially far more serious than the various treatable infections we have lately heard so much about. It is the risk of an untreatable dementia."

[Mr. Ron Davies]

The Times' medical correspondent, who is a practising doctor, has written that no one can be sure that the causal agent has

"not already been picked up by people as they enjoyed a piece of marrow or an Irish stew, or ate a meat pie which had contained brains or meat from an infected, but not yet stricken, animal".

He goes on to say:

"recent research has suggested that it is probable that many cases of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease have followed the eating of sheep infected by scrapie".

With regard to the risk of BSE to humans, he states:

"If the disease can be spread in food from sheep to cows, why not through beasts to humans?".

I could cite further expert medical opinion; however, veterinary and farming interests are equally concerned. The public health committee of the British Veterinary Association has called for an increase in the amount of compensation payed on infected animals, and, according to a recent press release,

"believes that there should be restrictions on the movement of offspring as well as compulsory veterinary ante-mortem inspection of all bovines".

The NFU also recently said of Southwood:

"No recommendation was made on compensation terms and the NFU will continue to pursue with MAFF the need for 100 per cent. to ensure total reporting".

In other words, both the NFU and the BVA acknowledge that there is currently a financial incentive which has encouraged submission of infected animals for human consumption.

Compensation levels are clearly a very controversial subject. I am surprised that the Southwood report dealt so cursorily with the issue, apparently believing that 50 per cent. compensation was sufficient. I have heard that that was not its original recommendation, but the Minister denies that he pressured the committee into changing any of the report. When challenged on the "Face the Facts" radio programme at 7.20 pm, the Minister refused to say whether Professor Southwood had recommended to him that the compensation level should be 75 per cent.

I am also very unhappy with the current level of compensation. It is not good enough for the Minister to tell me, as he has done recently, that because it is illegal, farmers are not entering suspect cases for slaughter. He knows that infected animals are being entered into slaughterhouses—Southwood says so. While the farmer can gain financially by not reporting a suspected case, we cannot be satisfied that everything is being done to minimise the risks of infected cases entering the food chain.

That is what is happening now. The Minister told me in a written answer that 63 suspected cases were identified in markets and slaughterhouses in 1988. Forty of those were subsequently confirmed and they were identified by ante-mortem veterinary inspection. Unfortunately, that inspection takes place in only 10 per cent. of British slaughterhouses.

Some 1·6 million bovines were slaughtered last year in slaughterhouses at which there is no such ante-mortem inspection. If the Ministry had implemented the recommendations of the Preston report, which it commissioned, the position would be different. Typically, however, it chose not to act until forced to do so by the European Community. In the meantime, thousands of cattle each week are slaughtered without ante-mortem veterinary inspection, and it is inconceivable that all sufferers of BSE are being weeded out. That is the predominant view among those who deal with BSE in the field. It is well put by the senior National Farmers Union source, who, in *The Sunday Telegraph* of 19 February 1989, is reported as saying:

"It is common knowledge in the industry that infected animals have got into the food chain. The Ministry's approach has been illogical".

I have repeatedly asked the Minister to provide figures for the post-Southwood period relating to inspections and confirmation of BSE at EEC and non-EEC approved slaughterhouses. He has repeatedly refused to provide the information, although he has acknowledged that it is collated by his divisional officers. He asserts that there is no evidence that infected cattle are passing into human food supplies. The plain fact is that he is deliberately refusing to collate the information that would demonstrate whether this is or is not the case. Even if all BSE sufferers were weeded out, people in Britain would still be eating infected material——

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): Why?

Mr. Davies: Because cattle brains carry the infection in high concentrations prior to the onset of clinical signs of the disease.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) asked why. The simple reason is that the Minister refuses to collate that information, because it would force him to acknowledge publicly that BSE-infected cattle are now being consumed by humans in Britain in 1989.

By consistently refusing my demands for the banning of the sale of all those organs that are known to carry the disease, the Minister is ensuring that our citizens go on eating products which are infected with a potentially fatal contagion. Even if his claims that no infected animals are getting through were true—which they are not—people would still be exposed to infection. That applies not just to the consumers of beef products. Those whose work involves the handling of beef products are also at risk. That is especially true of slaughterhouse workers, who frequently handle beef products with little protective clothing and who frequently will have cuts and abrasions into which infection can enter. That is known to be one of the most effective routes for the transfer of transmissible encephalopathies.

In his reply to the hon. Member for Bromsgrove in February, the Minister said that the Health and Safety Executive was considering what further action was necessary to ensure the safety of such occupational groups. Three weeks after that statement by the Minister, the Under-Secretary of State for Employment told me:

"The Health and Safety Executive is not operating separate procedures for monitoring spongiform encephalopathy".—[*Official Report*, 21 March 1989; Vol. 149, c. 555.]

A further two months later, after hundreds, probably thousands, of animals carrying the BSE agent will have passed through slaughterhouses, the Health and Safety Executive has yet to act. If it is not monitoring for CJD —the human form of encephalopathy—it may have no information to act upon. In the light of the conflicting statements from the two Government Departments, perhaps they are confused as to what is expected of them.

In his reply in February to the hon. Member for Bromsgrove, to which I referred, the Minister said:

"the Chief Medical Officer is ensuring mechanisms are in place to detect any change in the pattern of Creuzfeldt-Jakob disease."—[*Official Report*, 27 February 1989; Vol. 148, c. *90*.]

In other words, the chief medical officer would be examining the incidence of CJD in humans to see if there was any evidence of transmission of encephalopathy from cattle to humans.

In a written reply to me in mid-April, the Under-Secretary of State for Health revealed that the chief medical officer was still discussing with the Medical Research Council the most effective way of doing this. To date, nothing has happened. So no action has been taken either to protect groups that may be at risk, or on monitoring such groups for the disease in question. Confusion reigns.

It would help us to know the extent to which the infected animals are being slaughtered at commercial slaughterhouses. If the Government agreed to implement a system of random monitoring of the brains of cull cattle —perhaps 10 per cent. of all cattle slaughtered—they could be examined for this encephalopathy. I have consistently called upon the Minister to do that and he has consistently refused. Having spoken to vets, I know that they would value such monitoring as a way of increasing epidemiological knowledge of the disease and improving our imperfect knowledge of its development.

Random sampling need not be expensive, but it would reveal that animals infected with the disease are unavoidably being slaughtered for human consumption —unavoidably, because, although they are infected, the disease may be at the pre-clinical stage. The reason for the Government's refusal to implement such a policy is, I imagine, that they deny that infected beasts—clinically or sub-clinically infected—are getting through. Until they wake up and face the reality of the situation, as recognised by the majority of people dealing with BSE, they cannot tackle the problem to the necessary extent.

The Government can, however, put an immediate stop to the staggeringly irresponsible practice of exporting meat and bone meal for possible inclusion in dairy rations—the very source of the disease in the first instance. Infected meat is now being exported in its raw state to other countries. The Government's failure to take any action to prevent the possibility of the disease spreading is so grossly irresponsible as to be scarcely credible. Assuming that the meat and bone meal exported is typical of that produced in the United Kingdom, last year nearly 3,000 tonnes of such meal derived from sheep infected with scrapie was exported from these shores. If one adds to that the proportion of meal rendered from cattle carrying the BSE infection, which is known to survive the rendering process, one has an enormous reservoir of infection that the Minister continues to allow to be exported.

The Under-Secretary told me that he has issued no advice to those countries importing that meat and bone meal. He also said that the disease has not yet been discussed in the Council of Ministers. Such complacency and disregard for animal health issues elsewhere than on the Minister's own patch is so blinkered and selfish as to constitute a scandal—a scandal to which I hope our trading partners will wake up before BSE hits them to the extent that it has hit us. If they avoid that fate, it will not be due to any consideration of their interests by the British Government. Therefore, the pattern before us is of the Minister exposing people at home to the hazards of infection and wilfully allowing the export of the source of infection to imperil our trading partners.

I call upon the Government to end now the export of infected material, to raise the compensation level payable on infected cattle in line with the calls of the National Farmers Union and the British Veterinary Association, to ban the sale for human consumption of all cattle brains, spleen and thymus, to introduce random sampling of cull cattle so that we have a greater understanding of the extent of BSE, and, finally, to bring forward for immediate introduction the Minister's 1991 proposals for ante-mortem inspection of all cattle at slaughterhouses.

I cannot believe that the Minister would wilfully imperil the nation's health. If he refuses to take urgent action, that is precisely what he will do.

12.59 am

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Donald Thompson): The hon. Memer for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) has rightly taken a great interest in bovine spongiform encephalopathy since its onset. As my hon. Friends and hon. Members will have gathered from his speech, he has asked many helpful and constructive questions on the matter. I am surprised that tonight he has managed to muddle so much of what has been done so speedily, which has received almost universal approval by those who are concerned directly with BSE. I reject completely the hon. Gentleman's charges of complacency on the part of the Ministry or of my officials.

BSE is a terrible disease and it must be heartbreaking for the farmer to see one of his animals succumb to the distressing and inevitably fatal condition, to say nothing of the financial effect. We have taken BSE extremely seriously. We have implemented a coherent and vigorous programme of measures to contain it, which has been based on the best scientific knowledge available to us. We called together the Southwood committee, and before it had concluded its deliberations we had done much that had been recommended. In addition, we have the Tyrrell committee, to which the hon. Gentleman failed to refer, which is considering many of the issues which he has raised this evening.

Up to 12 May, there had been 4,570 cases of BSE. About 600 new cases are being reported each month. That is the rate which was predicted. The hon. Member for Caerphilly outlined the basis of the disease. As he said, the clinical symptoms are similar to a number of other animal diseases, notably scrapie in sheep. The Southwood committee identified the probable source of infection as the use in cattle feed of material derived from sheep infected with scrapie, which for a variety of reasons posed an increased risk of transmission over recent years. The hon. Gentleman went into those risks.

It is hoped that we have found the correct reason for BSE occurring in animals——

Mr. Ron Davies: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Thompson: I shall not give way.

The cow receives an almost identical ration every day from the same person.

Mr. Davies: The Southwood committee did not say that.

Mr. Thompson: No. I am saying that. With the same ration, there is a build-up in the animal. Human beings eat a variety of rations and no one eats the same ration every day.

Since 1732, Britain has had scrapie. The incidence of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease—CJD—is no higher in Britain than the international average. There is no scrapie in Australia, for example, but the incidence of CJD is no lower there.

As I have said, the Goverment's response has been vigorous. It has been based on three elements. First, we have acted to eliminate the source of infection—the feeding of ruminant protein to ruminants has been prohibited. The ban will be lifted only if a way can be found of treating such material so that the infective agent is destroyed. We know that the agent is unusually resistant, so this will not be an easy task. It is in this important area that there needs to be further research.

Secondly—

Mr. Davies: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Thompson: No. I ask the hon. Gentleman to remember that there was silence in the Chamber when he made his speech.

Secondly, we have acted to block off the route by which transmission to humans might occur, even though this is recognised to involve all sources. Sir John Walton, a neurologist, was a member of the Southwood committee, and he is as eminent a figure as Helen Grant. The committee's report states over and over again that the risk of transmission to humans appears to be a remote possibility. This is ensured through the compulsory slaughter of cattle suspected of being infected. Farmers receive compensation at the rate of 50 per cent. of the value of the animal if post-mortem examination confirms that it was infected, and 100 per cent. if clinical diagnosis cannot be confirmed. I can update the figures that I have given to the hon. Member for Caerphilly. The figures of 30 and 33 have moved to 41 in markets and 58 in slaughterhouses over the past three months.

Southwood says that it has been suggested that because compensation is set at 50 per cent. some farmers are evading the law, and as a result carcases of infected animals are reaching the human food chain. However, the evidence does not support that suggestion. That is Southwood's view; it is nothing to do with the Government. We accepted the report, putting no pressure on Southwood before it and changing not a word after it.

The number of suspected cases being reported is said to have gone up since the compulsory slaughter programme was introduced. I have heard time and time again of the suspicion that some people were getting animals through, but have seen no evidence of it. I have asked the hon. Member for Caerphilly for such evidence on a number of occasions, the most recent being 13 April, but I have not received it.

The meat and milk of infected animals must be removed from the food chain. The carcases of such animals must be disposed of under supervision of the state veterinary service in a way that will prevent the spread of the disease to other species. The Southwood committee saw no need to make recommendations for the changes in our practice which we had already implemented. As a measure of extreme caution we shall prohibit the use of certain bovine offals in baby food, although in practice such materials are not used for that purpose. We have issued guidance about the use of bovine offal in the manufacture of pharmaceutical products.

Finally, but no less important, we have taken steps to improve our knowledge of the diseases. We have set up a scientific committee under Dr. David Tyrrell of the Medical Research Council to make recommendations about research requirements. A thorough research programme is under way into the background of the disease, its transmissibility and the genetic and microbiological aspects.

We have a core of 300 calves, with the equivalent number of control animals, so that we can see how they develop and can reassure ourselves that there is no vertical transmission.

Let me deal with the points that the hon. Gentleman was kind enough to put to me. I have discussed compensation levels and I cannot think that we are being cheated, but I shall be pleased to examine any evidence. As for the risk of BSE-infected animals entering the food chain and the need for random sampling, we hope that Tyrrell will provide a method by which we can obtain samples from the brains of living and dead animals so that we can see what is happening.

The hon. Gentleman asked about lack of veterinary inspection. Many slaughterhouses are inspected by environmental health officers. There seems to have been a movement against EHOs recently by the Labour party, but I have every confidence in them. As for continued exports of meat and bonemeal, we still use them for fertiliser and for feeding chickens and pigs. Other countries are well aware of the position here; they discuss it with us and import such material, probably for those purposes. Southwood recommended that CJD be monitored: that, as the hon. Gentleman said, falls into the province of the chief medical officer.

Safety of slaughterhouse workers is very important, and the Health and Safety Commission is examining how we can best protect them from this and other diseases——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at eight minutes past One o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 18 May 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

ASSOCIATED BRITISH PORTS (No. 2) BILL *(By Order)*

Order for Third Reading read.

To be read the Third time on Tuesday 23 May at Seven o'clock.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (PENALTY FARES) BILL *[Lords]*

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT (PENALTY FARES) BILL *[Lords]*

Orders for consideration read.

To be considered on Thursday 25 May.

HYTHE, KENT, MARINA BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON UNDERGROUND VICTORIA BILL *(By Order)*

WENTWORTH ESTATE BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE SOUTHBANK BILL *(By Order)*

REDBRIDGE LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 25 May.

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

MacBride Principles

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent actions have been undertaken by his Department to challenge the endorsement of the MacBride principles in the United States of America.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Peter Viggers): The Government's approach to achieving fair employment, set out in the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Bill, is clearly much more appropriate than the MacBride principles, which do nothing to create equality or new job opportunities.

We have therefore taken every opportunity to explain our position in the United States. We are convinced that those who study the subject and wish to assist in the creation of job opportunities and equality of opportunity will recognise the Government's determination and the comprehensive nature of our legislation.

Mr. Livingstone: Is the Minister aware that, following the Government's consistent refusal to give the House the full cost of the campaign against the MacBride principles, the American press now estimates that the Government are spending £15 million per year to defeat MacBride, which works out at £10 per head for every man, woman and child in Northern Ireland and if invested in job creation could create 1,500 new jobs per year? Is it not now counterproductive to carry on with the campaign?

Mr. Viggers: The hon. Gentleman's question would be amusing if the subject were not so serious. It is most irresponsible of him to ask such a question when in answer to a written question from him on 22 July 1988 I said:

"Since June 1985 to date the overall cost of assistance to individuals to give evidence has been £86,856."—*[Official Report,* 22 July 1988; Vol. 137, c. *859.]*

Mr. Kilfedder: Is not the truth of the matter that the MacBride principles campaign, which is organised in the United States by people who are in cahoots with the IRA, has effectively denied many jobs in Northern Ireland to Catholics as well as to Protestants? Is the Minister aware that caring people in Northern Ireland, regardless of their political and religious views, thank him for countering this vicious campaign and for doing his best to get jobs for people in Northern Ireland, particularly in the black spots?

Mr. Viggers: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. The way ahead is not to browbeat and hassle companies which provide much-needed employment in Northern Ireland, but to promote further investment in jobs within the much tougher law on fair employment that we are now introducing.

Ms. Short: Does not the Minister understand that the MacBride principles are based on the Sullivan principles, which were devised in the United States to try to get American companies to use their influence to extend equal opportunities in South Africa? The alliance of people in the United States who back the MacBride principles includes the trades unions, the black community and the Irish community. It is a lie to suggest that it is some kind of Noraid fund. *[Interruption.]* It is a simple lie. The object is to put pressure on the British Government to do something about discrimination in Northern Ireland. My view is that the Government acted, however inadequately, largely because of that pressure.

Mr. Viggers: The hon. Lady is quite right when she says that the McBride principles were shaped in America with a view to pressurising American companies. In my experience, though, American companies which employ people in Northern Ireland are very good employers and are fully aware of their responsibilities. If the hon. Lady wants to assist the promotion of jobs and fair employment in Northern Ireland, I recommend that she study very carefully the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Bill which has now emerged from Committee and will shortly be having its Report stage. I assure her that it will go a long way towards promoting fair employment and assisting in the creation of jobs in Northern Ireland.

Mr. McNamara: I am sure that no one in the House would want disinvestment in Northern Ireland nor any curtailment of proper flows of investment. Nevertheless, I am sure that the Minister will agree that investors have a legitimate concern as to the eventual circumstances in which their money is used. Therefore, if an agreed Bill

passes through the House does the Minister agree that its enforcement will be vital and that investors will still have a legitimate interest in examining the performances of the firms in which they have placed their money? Does he believe that the Bill provides adequate means for monitoring that?

Mr. Viggers: The hon. Gentleman's contribution to the Bill in Committee has been extremely helpful. I believe that the Bill which has emerged from Committee will be welcomed by good employers as promoting good personnel practice.

Security

2. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the figures for the total amounts of weapons, ammunition and explosives recovered in the last 12 months in Northern Ireland.

7. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will make a statement on the current security situation.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Ian Stewart): Since 20 April, the Provisional IRA has murdered three people in Northern Ireland and the UVF has claimed responsibility for one other murder. The victims were a taxi driver, a hospital officer in the prison service, a regular solider and a building worker.

The determined and courageous work of the security forces has resulted in 103 people so far this year being charged with serious offences, including 13 with murder and 22 with attempted murder. During 1988 a total of 552 weapons, 105,052 rounds of ammunition and 10,424 lbs of explosives were recovered in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Bowis: Having had a cache of weapons and ammunition found in my constituency, may I express my admiration for the skill and courage of all those involved in locating and capturing such murderous items? Whenever possible, will my hon. Friend draw the facts, statistics and pictures to the attention of people in America and other parts of the world so that they can see how their money is being used to kill and maim men, women and children in Northern Ireland and throughout the United Kingdom?

Mr. Stewart: I entirely endorse what my hon. Friend has said. The House, as well as many people in Northern Ireland and in other parts of the United Kingdom, will be grateful to the security forces who have been so successful in finding substantial hoards of weapons and explosives, but there is much more still to find and any information that anyone can provide to assist the security forces will go a long way to help in the campaign against terrorism. Conversely, anyone who thinks that funds might be used by paramilitaries to acquire explosives, ammunition or weapons should realise the terrible harvest of murder and destruction that they reap.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Is my hon. Friend aware of the revulsion felt by decent people in Britain and Northern Ireland at the statements made by apologists for the IRA such as Mr. Gerry Adams who talk about "mistakes" being made when innocent people or members of the security forces are killed? Does he agree that the best way for the people of Northern Ireland to show their revulsion for such acts and for the apologists in Sinn Fein is to ensure that decent, moderate candidates are elected to represent them in the European Parliament?

Mr. Stewart: I agree with my hon. Friend. I am sure that the great majority of people in Northern Ireland are sickened by the apologies put forward by the IRA and its sympathisers. The murder and wounding of civilians is part and parcel of the IRA campaign. In those circumstances, it is no use members of the IRA offering apologies because they do not give a damn whether civilians are killed—they are worried only about the bad publicity for their politics.

Mr. McCusker: As the Secretary of State has been responsible for security in Northern Ireland for almost four years now, what real comfort or reassurance can we draw from the figures behind the smokescreen that the Minister has just put up?

Mr. Stewart: During my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's distinguished tenure of office, among other things there has been a great improvement in the number of finds of weaponry and explosives in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland. In my experience, which is much shorter than that of my right hon. Friend, the efforts of the security forces in the Province have been absolutely outstanding. But for their remarkable efforts and dedication, a great deal more misery would have been caused by the terrorists.

Mr. Jim Marshall: We are all delighted when arms caches belonging to paramilitaries on whichever side are found, but is the Minister of State aware that the last annual report of the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary referred worryingly to increasing amounts of ammunition, particularly rocket-propelled grenades and Kalashnikovs, falling into the hands of Loyalist paramilitaries? In that context, can the Minister give a categorical assurance that the December 1987 arms shipment to Northern Ireland, whatever its source, was not organised, subsidised or facilitated by South African sources?

Mr. Stewart: I cannot comment in detail on arms shipments that have been delivered for paramilitaries, but the RUC is right to recognises that it is dangerous for such shipments to fall into the hands of people on either side who might use them.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: Is my hon. Friend satisfied that compensation to those whose houses and businesses have been blasted by IRA violence is being paid as promptly as we should expect in view of the fact that those people are trying to keep their businesses together even though the premises have been destroyed?

Mr. Stewart: I accept my hon. Friend's point. We do what we can to ensure that these claims are dealt with properly and without undue delay. Unfortunately, one of the significant and common causes for delay is the difficulty of assembling all the information necessary to assess the claims properly. I appreciate the importance of the matter that my hon. Friend has raised.

Education Groups

3. **Mr. McLeish:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent meetings he has held with education groups.

9. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has received representations recently from education groups.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): During the past three months I have met representatives from a wide range of education groups on such matters as education reform, school development proposals and the public library service.

Mr. McLeish: Is the Minister aware of the overwhelming opposition to the proposals contained in the document "Education Reform in Northern Ireland: The Way Forward"? Will he tell the House whether the proposals are any more or less unpopular than the Government's plan for National Health Service reforms in the Province?

Dr. Mawhinney: I have to tell the hon. Gentleman that his information is very poor. Contrary to what he says, there is broad acceptance of the need to improve standards in schools in Northern Ireland and a wide welcome is being given to greater parental choice and involvement in the education of children.

Mr. McFall: Has the Minister recently met groups campaigning for integrated education? If so, does he believe that the establishment of non-denominational teacher training colleges would greatly assist such aims? If he believes that, why is there no mention of it in the White Paper on education reform in Northern Ireland?

Dr. Mawhinney: I have met those involved in integrated education. This week I officially opened the latest integrated school, in Newcastle. The "Way Forward" document was not about teacher training, as the hon. Gentleman may well know—that matter was dealt with in an earlier report. The situation in Northern Ireland is generally believed not to have changed since that report was issued, but we are seeking to find ways in which teachers may be trained together more effectively, especially in terms of education for mutual understanding.

Mr. Pawsey: Further to that last answer, may I ask what encouragement is being given to the development of more integrated education in the Province? Does my hon. Friend agree that such schools would do much to bridge the sectarian divide?

Dr. Mawhinney: When the draft Order in Council is available, for public consultation—next month, I hope—it will include legislation to permit parents democratically to choose to opt their schools out of existing structures and into an integrated structure. It will also enable us to make money available to help those who want to start new integrated schools, and will lay on the Department of Education a statutory responsibility to foster and encourage the development of integrated education. All of that will be subject to the choice of parents for their own children.

Mr. Ashdown: I warmly congratulate the Minister and the Government on their work with integrated schools, but one issue remains unresolved—that of day one start-up funding, which is to be resolved in forthcoming legislation. Is the Minister aware that two more integrated schools, one in Ballymena and the other in Enniskillen, are being held up because of the lack of resolution on that issue? Will he consider allowing those schools to go ahead with day one start-up funding in advance of legislation, which will be coming in due course anyway?

Dr. Mawhinney: My understanding is that I do not have the ability to meet the right hon. Gentleman's request. We need the legislation so that what he refers to as day one start-up funding can take place. We have recognised the importance of that. That is why we hope, subject to the will of both Houses, to change the legislation so that the change will be possible. It is up to people in Ballymena and Enniskillen to judge as others have done, whether they want to start the process ahead of the legislation. That is a matter for them, not for me. I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his personal words.

Ms. Mowlam: The Minister has told the House that there is a wide welcome for the education reform proposals. Does he agree with a senior official from his Department, Mr. Billy Burnison, who recently stated that the reform proposals will not meet the needs of all pupils in Northern Ireland?

Dr. Mawhinney: The hon. Lady should read the letter which Mr. Burnison subsequently sent to the *Belfast Telegraph*, which gave a more accurate account of what he said than that which was originally recorded.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

4. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects to announce the completion of the review of the operation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

5. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects to make a statement on the outcome of the review of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tom King): I expect to announce the completion of the review of the working of the Intergovernmental Conference under the Anglo-Irish Agreement and to make a statement, following the next meeting of the conference, which will take place shortly.

Mr. Barnes: We have just had local government elections in Northern Ireland and local authorities have very limited powers there. What is happening about moves towards democratic and devolved government throughout the Province, which were aims of the Anglo-Irish Agreement? Will practical steps be taken towards that, inside or outside the agreement?

Mr. King: We have made absolutely clear our interest in trying to encourage elected people in the Province to take greater responsibility for their own affairs. We are seeing whether there is an opportunity for some dialogue to commence. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, my hon. Friend the Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney), is engaged in discussions with a wide cross-section of different interests and bodies to discover where opportunities for progress exist in that respect.

Mr. Corbett: Does the Secretary of State accept that one of the problems about the agreement is that it operates in so-called secrecy? Subject to normal security requirements, will he take steps to open up the process so that interested parties can play some part in the process? Can he tell the House today of his firm proposals to activate the parliamentary tier of the agreement, for which there is wide cross-party support in the House?

Mr. King: The parliamentary tier is not a matter for me—it is a matter for the House. I know that my right hon. Friend the Lord President of the Council is involved in that. It is hoped that it can go forward, and I would welcome that. The hon. Gentleman's comments about the agreement being operated in secrecy were not fair. I have made clear my readiness to brief all political parties in Northern Ireland regularly on proceedings in the conferences. One political party avails itself of that opportunity, but the others do not. After every meeting a communiqué is placed in the Library of the House. I am also very willing to respond to any questions or other queries which may arise about the proceedings. Certain matters concerning security are confidential, but otherwise I endorse what the hon. Gentleman has said.

Sir William Clark: Following the reference to local government elections in Northern Ireland, does my right hon. Friend agree that congratulations are due to Mr. Kennedy, the successful candidate in the North Down local election, who stood as a Conservative?

Mr. King: As the jury is still out and counting, as it were, I do not think that anyone should risk commenting at this stage on the local government elections. I shall not comment until I see the results.

Mr. Latham: Does my right hon. Friend agree that although good relations with the Republic are clearly essential there is nothing in the performance of the Anglo-Irish Agreement so far to suggest that any dramatic new initiatives are called for at this time?

Mr. King: I hope to put before the House a record of the work of the conference over the past three years. The House will then be able to see the steady progress that has been made in developing co-operation where that is useful and beneficial. The House has just heard my right hon. Friend the Minister of State recounting the Garda Siochana's substantial arms finds. Quite apart from the other issues to which we attach importance, that is one obvious area where co-operation has been extremely helpful.

Mr. Flannery: Does the Secretary of State agree with the Irish Government that the dates of the Anglo-Irish Inter-Governmental Conference should be fixed and published in advance, preferably with the agenda, so that ordinary people and organisations from both parts of Ireland, especially the North, have an opportunity to make an input?

Mr. King: I agree with that and I want to see how, within any security considerations, we can move towards that. As the hon. Gentleman knows, recent communiqués have contained information about the next meeting's agenda, or items that would be covered within it. I would be pleased to see people play a bigger part and make some input if they wish to do so.

Mr. Bill Walker: When my right hon. Friend is considering the form and structure of democratic institutions in Northern Ireland, will he make sure that he has read the speech made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland to the Scottish Conservative party in which he said clearly that devolution and the creation of assemblies in any territories within the United Kingdom would be bad for the Union if it was done unilaterally and bad for this unitary Parliament? Will my right hon. Friend bear that in mind in view of the impact that his proposals may have in Scotland?

Mr. King: I shall take note of the points made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. I also have a note of one or two rather unusual suggestions in a speech that my hon. Friend made with which I cannot readily agree.

Mr. McNamara: Is the Secretary of State aware that the Opposition welcome his statement that he hopes to see an opening and widening of the operation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement so that more people can be aware of what is taking place and make an important input into its proceedings, if only through the correspondence columns of the *Belfast Telegraph*, because in that way we could have a real sense of what is being achieved there?

In discussing the further measures to be taken to strengthen the Anglo-Irish Agreement, will steps be taken by both Governments to use the machinery to look at the effects of the Single European Act on both parts of Ireland and the consequent social, industrial and economic problems for them by that Act?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman knows that we have already been giving that matter some considerable attention. We are actively involved in ensuring that everybody in Northern Ireland is aware of the implications of 1992. We have had conferences and discussions with Irish representatives and Ministers so that, where there is scope for co-operation, opportunities can be taken.

Pupil-Teacher Ratios

6. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the current pupil-teacher ratio in all schools; what it was five, 10 and 20 years ago; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The 1988 pupil-teacher ratio is 18·4 to one, which is the lowest on record. The comparable figures for five, 10 and 20 years ago are 18·7, 19·5 and 24·3, respectively.

Mr. Greenway: Is it not clear that there has been remarkable progress under the present Government in the provision of teachers for Northern Ireland? How are the additional teachers being deployed? Are they being deployed to split pupils into smaller groups for teaching, or to widen the curriculum, or both?

Dr. Mawhinney: My hon. Friend will be pleased to know that they are being deployed in both areas. We shall have to give further thought to that deployment as education reform proposals are implemented in the Province.

Mr. William Ross: Is it the Government's intention that integrated schools will enjoy the same pupil-teacher ratio

as the present system of education or a better one? How will it be possible for parents of pupils in Church-owned schools to opt out into the integrated sector?

Mr. Mawhinney: We have not drawn any distinctions, in terms of PTRs, between integrated schools and other types. As to Church-owned schools, the proposals will apply to all schools, which will be subject to the democratic votes of parents.

Women (Pressure Groups)

10. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has met with representatives from pressure groups working on behalf of women.

Mr. Viggers: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State met representatives of the women's information group last year. I had an opportunity recently to discuss employment issues affecting women at a meeting with representatives of the Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland.

Ms. Armstrong: Is the Minister aware that the working women of Northern Ireland have a crying need for the provision of better child care? Northern Ireland fares worse than the United Kingdom in terms of nursery provision and education. What will the Minister do to ensure that the situation in Northern Ireland at least replicates that in the rest of the United Kingdom—even though it makes the poorest provision for such facilities in the whole of Europe?

Mr. Viggers: I sit as a member of the ministerial group on women's issues, which considers such matters. We will of course deal with any specific questions about nursery education or creche facilities that the hon. Lady asks. I assure her that the Civil Service as an employer seeks to set its own standards in equal opportunities, but I take note of the hon. Lady's points.

Mr. Barry Field: Does my hon. Friend agree that there could be no better representation of the interests of the women of Northern Ireland than the photograph in *The Times* today of Mrs. Breige Morgan holding her three-year-old daughter, who was maimed by a bomb in a telegraph pole that was detonated by the IRA, and who cannot have the shrapnel removed from the calf of her leg in case it does permanent damage? Will my hon. Friend join right hon. and hon. Members on this side of the House in condemning such revolting acts of terrorism?

Mr. Viggers: The act of terrorism to which my hon. Friend refers, will, I am sure, disgust the entire House. That photograph will be seen around the world, and will illustrate the impact of terrorism in Northern Ireland.

Government Policy

11. **Mr. Gow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government in order to bring to the Province peace, stability and reconciliation.

Mr. Tom King: We are giving particular emphasis to strengthening the economy, improving the prospects for jobs, encouraging better community relations, and giving additional help to areas of particular need. At the same time we maintain the most determined efforts to defeat terrorism, and to encourage a more constructive approach to political development.

Mr. Gow: Is it not true that the Anglo-Irish Agreement has alienated the majority without reconciling the minority? Will my right hon. Friend follow a policy whereby the Province is governed as closely as may be to the way in which the rest of the United Kingdom is governed?

Mr. King: I hope and know that my hon. Friend will have listened to my original answer, and I trust that he found it entirely acceptable as the policy that we seek to pursue. That is the foundation on which we strive to address the governance of Northern Ireland.

Mr. William Ross: Does the Secretary of State agree that one of the principles of governing Northern Ireland in exactly the same way as the rest of the United Kingdom should be to adopt exactly the same electoral process in the Province as that which is enjoyed by the electorate in the rest of the United Kingdom? Will the right hon. Gentleman also bear in mind that the methods used for identification at polling stations are inadequate, as was proved to be true yesterday, when people apparently turned up with forged medical cards? Would not the solution be a single proper identity card for the entire population?

Mr. King: There are strong arguments in favour of the hon. Gentleman's latter suggestion, provided that one can ensure that it operates in a way that is not itself open to abuse. One of the problems of personation in Northern Ireland is the determined efforts made by people to falsify their identity, even when required to produce proof of it. The authorities take as effective steps as they can against forgery and other activities.

I was surprised by the hon. Gentleman's first point. I cannot believe that anyone seriously argues that it is desirable to return to the old electoral system in Northern Ireland.

Short Brothers

12. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on privatisation of Short Brothers and the implications for defence sales.

Mr. Viggers: Proposals for the acquisition of Short Brothers plc have now been received from Bombardier and GEC-Fokker and they are being carefully assessed. There will be no change in the relationship between the Ministry of Defence as customer and Shorts as contractor consequent upon the sale of the Government's shareholding.

Mr. Colvin: Although Short Brothers is still over-manned, will my hon. Friend congratulate the company on its recent improvement in productivity? Bearing in mind the importance of the Paris air show next month as a shop window for the aerospace industry, can my hon. Friend assure the House that Short Brothers will be able to exhibit at that show knowing who are its new owners?

Mr. Viggers: The Government are seeking urgently to finalise the arrangements for the move of Shorts to the private sector as a single unit, which is our preferred

option, but it is not possible at this point to put a specific timetable on that programme. I agree completely with my hon. Friend that the long-term future of Shorts will lie with those who work there. High productivity and competitiveness will be crucial.

Mr. Jim Marshall: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for calling me twice. May I impress upon the Minister the need to make an urgent decision on the privatisation of Shorts? The Minister will be aware that only some two weeks ago the company—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cryer: I did not know that they made umbrella material into jackets.

Mr. Jim Marshall: I thought that my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) was in the umbrella business.

The Minister will be aware that a couple of weeks ago Shorts made a decision to make 700 people redundant. It seems to the outsider that a decision has already been taken within the company that it would prefer privatisation with Bombardier. Bombardier said some weeks ago that if no decision was announced publicly within two weeks it would assume that a decision had been made. Can the Minister give an absolute guarantee that a statement will be made within the next two weeks so that we can have a full discussion on the privatisation of Shorts, and Shorts can go to the air show in Paris knowing who its new owners will be?

Mr. Viggers: What I can say is that no decision has been made. I give the hon. Gentleman an assurance that we are pursuing the matter with all possible urgency.

13. **Mr. Ashdown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was discussed at the recent meeting with Bombardier's in Canada; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: The visit by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to Bombardier Ltd. in Montreal on 2 May was at the invitation of its chairman and took place during his recent programme of commitments in north America. As to the discussions about the bids received for Shorts from Bombardier and GEC/Fokker, they are commercial and confidential.

Mr. Ashdown: Following the Minister's previous answers, I must press him further. Does he realise that there is now—*[Interruption.]* I long ago learnt to ignore those hooligans masquerading as hon. Members on the Conservative side. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ashdown: Is the Minister aware that there is now a very serious haemorrhaging of the kind of skilled labour on which Shorts depends as a result of the uncertainty now hanging over the company? Some are going to South Africa, some to the United States and some to Canada. It is true to say that Shorts has put forward its proposals for privatisation and Bombardier has accepted them. What is the delay and does the Minister realise that if the dark cloud of uncertainty hanging over Shorts is not cleared away by the time of the Paris air show the consequence will be a loss of orders and an even more substantial loss of skilled manpower?

Mr. Viggers: All those companies which entered into the negotiations for the possible acquistion of Shorts did so on the basis that the discussions would be handled in a confidential manner, and they must be. I reiterate the assurance that I gave in answer to the previous question. We are closely in touch with the company in question and with the other companies which have indicated an interest in making the acquisition. We will pursue the matter with all possible urgency.

Local Government

14. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any plans to change local government structures and powers in Northern Ireland to bring them into line with the rest of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Tom King: No, Sir. We do, however, want to see elected representatives more fully involved in the arrangements for governing Northern Ireland. We have therefore been stressing the need for the constitutional political parties in Northern Ireland to talk together, and with us, about such issues.

Mr. Walker: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply and I am flattered that he does read my speeches. Can my right hon. Friend confirm that when he is considering the aspects of the structure and the merger he will bear in mind the fact that I represent a minority of a minority? I am a Scottish Conservative Member of Parliament and the Scots are a minority in the United Kingdom. Therefore we understand the position of minorities but we do not expect power sharing at local government level or any other level in Scotland because we recognise that the cornerstone of parliamentary democracy is that the majority will prevails.

Mr. King: In the discussions that we are seeking to initiate we make it clear that we do not wish to set out a prearranged formula on any particular basis. As my hon. Friend knows, however, the position in Northern Ireland is very different from that in Scotland in that there is very little power in local government, and I should like to see people in Northern Ireland taking more responsibility for their own administration and government.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

15. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects the review of the operation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement to be completed.

Mr. King: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes).

Mr. Flannery: When the review is completed, instead of just a statement followed by the customary 30 or 45 minutes of questions could we have a debate on the operation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement?

Mr. King: I would certainly welcome that, and I take note of the hon. Gentleman's suggestion. It is, however, a matter for my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, and I shall ensure that he is made aware of the hon. Gentleman's request.

International Fund for Ireland

16. **Mr. McCusker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the work of the International Fund for Ireland.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The international fund is making good progress in fulfilling its objectives of promoting economic and social development in those areas of Ireland north and south which have suffered most in recent years, and of encouraging contact, dialogue and reconciliation. I pay tribute to the board of the fund for the way in which it has approached this important task.

Mr. McCusker: What does it feel like, as a member of a Government who put such a premium on hard work, self-reliance and thrift, to be the recipient of Third world aid from the United States of America?

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman makes an extraordinary point if he is criticising the suggestion that the United States and other contributors to the international fund should make their own contribution to economic and social development in Northern Ireland. I should have thought that, as he represents constituents in Northern Ireland, the hon. Gentleman would welcome the contribution that the fund has made.

Mr. Kilfedder: My hon. Friend's point is that he believes that there are places in Great Britain that would benefit from the international fund. I think that I heard him suggest Brixton.

Mr. Stewart: I did not hear that comment, but any suggestion that the fund's resources are not welcome for desirable purposes in Northern Ireland strikes me as extraordinary.

Plastic Bullets

18. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the recent use of plastic bullets in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ian Stewart: In the first four months of the year the security forces have fired 182 plastic baton rounds. The vast majority of these were fired in north and west Belfast during incidents of serious street disorder. In certain circumstances, particularly during vicious and widespread rioting when lives are put seriously at risk, the use of plastic baton rounds is the most effective way of restoring order.

Mr. Bennett: Will the Minister confirm that there are proposals for a different type of plastic baton round, which appears to be rather more lethal than the present type? Will he make it clear that he has no intention of changing the type now in use, and that real progress could be made if we were able to phase out the use of all plastic bullets?

Mr. Stewart: The use of baton rounds is, I think, likely to remain necessary in Northern Ireland for as long as serious disorder of this kind occurs. Changes have been made in types of baton round in the past to ensure that they performed their task more effectively—that task being to restore order without causing serious damage or injury—and that may happen again in the future. Such bullets should always be used with care and restraint, and, like the hon. Gentleman, I look forward to the time when they are no longer needed.

NHS (Hospital Operations)

21. **Mr. Kilfedder:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action he intends to take to reduce the delay for National Health Service operations.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Richard Needham): The Department of Health and Social Services is currently addressing hospital in-patient waiting lists through the accountability reviews by ensuring that action to reduce waiting times for operations is accorded a high priority.

Mr. Kilfedder: Is the Minister aware that many patients, relatives and general practitioners, particularly in my constituency of North Down, are extremely worried about the delay in some operations? Will he consider the matter again?

Mr. Needham: I assure the hon. Gentleman that we keep the matter under close observation. As he will know, the key indicator is waiting times rather than waiting lists. The waiting lists in Northern Ireland amount to 32 per cent. of in-patients, which is exactly the same percentage as before. Of course, we will continue to watch the position closely which is why in the accountability reviews with the boards we are making certain that all the statistics available are checked to see what we can do to reduce waiting lists as quickly as possible.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 18 May.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. McFall: No doubt the Prime Minister is aware that Guy's hospital is appealing to the public to sponsor cots financially so that the lives of tiny babies who have to undergo heart operations can be saved. Would the Prime Minister care to consider the advice of St. Francis of Assisi —if that great man were alive today to give that advice to grandmothers such as her? Does she think that he would advise that adequate funding is important so that each and every operation is given priority and babies' lives can be saved? Does she agree that that would be better than the begging bowl approach that is adopted now, or does she not care?

The Prime Minister: With regard to cots for tiny children, the hon. Gentleman will be aware that there are many more intensive care units now than there were 10 years ago, many more specialised nurses attending those cots and many more consultant specialists to see that the children get the attention and care that they need. They have far more now than children had 10 years ago, and further progress will continue.

Sir Marcus Fox: Will my right hon. Friend take time today to consider the one-day strikes that are taking place, causing maximum hardship and disruption for the general

public and with minimum cost to the union members involved? Is it not time that we moved towards continental practices where in Germany and Italy—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Sir Marcus Fox: This is very topical. In Germany and Italy strikes are illegal and in France they are unlawful in the public sector.

The Prime Minister: I join my hon. Friend in condemning the strikes. The strikers show no concern whatever for the public whom they are intended to serve.

Mr. Kinnock: Is the Prime Minister aware that, according to *The Daily Telegraph* this morning, support among doctors for her new National Health Service proposals has risen to a new high of 1 per cent? What are her plans to double that support?

The Prime Minister: If the right hon. Gentleman had read other polls he would have noticed that at least 25 per cent. of doctors have shown interest—*[Interruption.]*—in taking their own practice budgets which is very different from the figure he gave. We have indications that many hospitals are showing interest in becoming self-governing hospitals in the Health Service. Under the White Paper the purpose is better service for patients and an opportunity for doctors to choose whether they have their own practice budgets and for hospitals to choose whether they will become self-governing. I am well aware that choice plays no part in Socialist policies.

Mr. McLoughlin: During the course of her busy day, will my right hon. Friend take time to consider why a number of local authorities are spending so much money trying to spread falsehoods about the community charge? Does she agree that the authorities which tend to do that usually turn out to be the high-spending authorities? Does she further agree that under the community charge, high-spending authorities will have high community charges and that that is why they are so concerned about the matter, because for the first time they will be accountable to the people who have to pay the money?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend, and I am pleased that my right hon. Friend's community charge leaflet was fully cleared by their Lordships for distribution and that, at the same time, Greenwich council was caught out in sending out false propaganda and insinuating that if one did not fill in the community charge form, somewhow one would be deprived of one's vote. That was totally wrong. I agree with my hon. Friend that the Labour party does not want the community charge to come in because it will show up which are the high spending, extravagant authorities, which are mainly Labour.

Q2. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 18 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hardy: Will the Prime Minister note that I have received in recent weeks several hundred letters from constituents who are anxious about the NHS, showing that their concern is as much about the Government's apparently dogmatic attempts to destabilise the service as about the inadequacy of resources? Does the right hon. Lady appreciate that many parts of these islands did not give much support to her party at the last general election —*[Interruption.]*—and that it is about time that the 24 million people who did not vote Conservative then, and who will not vote for her next time, had some consideration, and rather more than they have received in recent years?

The Prime Minister: Whether or not they voted Conservative, they have done very much better under this Government than they ever did under Labour, not only in terms of the standard of living but in terms of the standard of health care under the NHS, with far more resources for the Health Service, far more doctors, far more nurses, far more treatment for far more patients and far better treatment than ever before.

Q3. **Mr. Aitken:** To ask the Prime Minister is she will list her official engagements for Thursday 18 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Aitken: Looking ahead from my right hon. Friend's splendidly robust recent statements on EEC matters towards the practical implementation of her words at the forthcoming Madrid summit, may I ask her to say whether she agrees that the most explosive flashpoints on the Madrid agenda are likely to be the Delors report on economic and monetary union and the social charter? Is it her view that the British Government have a legal right to exercise a veto on these misguided proposals, and will she be prepared to use it?

The Prime Minister: I think that my hon. Friend has correctly identified what will be the two main issues at the Madrid summit—the Delors report and the social charter. From all the accounts that I have received about the social charter, it is more like a Socialist charter—*[Interruption.]* —of unnecessary controls and regulations which would tie up industry, which would put many more costs on industry, which would make industry uncompetitive and which would therefore increase unemployment and mean that we could not compete with the rest of the world for the trade that we so sorely need.

As for the Delors report, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has already made our position very clear indeed —that we could not follow that report. Both of those matters require unanimity. I do not believe that we shall be alone in opposing them but that we shall find many other Heads of Government opposed to all or parts of them, and will take a different course from that charted in both of those documents.

Mr. William Ross: Will the Prime Minister take time in the course of her busy day to visit Northern Ireland, where she could observe at first hand, either today or even tomorrow, the tedious and complicated procedure of count which must follow proportional representation elections, a system of election which makes it easy for parties such as Sinn Fein to be elected? Why does she deny to her own constituents in Finchley, who are at least as British as those in Northern Ireland, the opportunity to vote for and elect members of Sinn Fein, the National Front and so on?

The Prime Minister: I am very satisfied with the election system that we have in Great Britain, and hope and believe that it will continue.

Q4. **Mr. Lawrence:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 18 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. and learned Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Lawrence: Will my right hon. Friend welcome recent developments in the Soviet Union, where candidates for the Soviet parliament are no longer imposed upon the electorate by the central party organisation in the Kremlin? *[Interruption.]*

The Prime Minister: Yes, we are very glad to note that the Soviet Union is well ahead of the Labour party, judging from what is happening at Vauxhall in this country.

Ms. Armstrong: Can the Prime Minister explain why she has set her face so strongly against the Lingua programme, when her own Department was fiercely in support of it initially, and when reassurances are given in the programme that it will have no legislative effect on the curriculum or anything else? It will simply offer opportunities for our young people and teachers to be involved in exchange programmes to improve their modern language facilities.

The Prime Minister: We support the teacher part, but not the whole programme as operated from Europe because £160 million—*[Interruption.]* Perhaps Opposition Members would listen before they pass judgment. We do not support the £160 million programme because we could do better for our own pupils and teachers with expenditure of less money. The Labour party used to believe in value for money, but that was long ago.

Q5. **Mr. Goodlad:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 18 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Goodlad: Will my right hon. Friend reinforce her notable victory in Brussels yesterday and ensure that zero-rated VAT for children's clothes, food and books will remain in this country by continuing her robust and successful efforts to prevent unhelpful attempts by the Commission to interfere in our taxation matters?

The Prime Minister: Yes. The continuation of zero rating is a major vindication of the United Kingdom's firm stance on this matter—a stance to which we have always adhered—*[Interruption.]* We have always adhered to it very firmly indeed. I also welcome the fact that the Commission's latest ideas appear to involve the continuation of those rates. We need to study the small print of the Commission's communication very carefully because we believe that there are some conditional factors, and that they propose some requirements for tax approximation, which we do not believe are at all necessary or, indeed, advisable.

Mr. Leighton: Did the Prime Minister say on Tuesday that the United Kingdom is paying £2 billion net to the Common Market for which we get no tangible return? Why on earth should we do that?

The Prime Minister: Because, as the hon. Gentleman is aware, that is the net contribution that falls to us this year for being in Europe, receiving all the inward investment that we obtain as members of the EC, being able to negotiate on trade as part of the European Community, and gaining all the other benefits which flow from that. Had it not been for the negotiation which took place at Fontainebleau, when we gained a good deal of rebate, we would not pay a £2 billion net contribution, but about £3·5 billion.

Q6. **Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 18 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Miss Nicholson: In her busy day, has my right hon. Friend had a chance to see that the Greenwich borough council has had to withdraw 85,000 copies of the *Greenwich Times* because it contained a misleading and factually incorrect statement—*[Interruption.]* The paper incorrectly stated that those who did not put their names down for the community charge would lose their democratic right to vote. Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is hypocritical and abominable for a council that has constantly bombarded the Government with charges of promoting inaccurate material to the public to then be guilty of doing so itself?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend. I have seen that Greenwich council has withdrawn its false statement that failure to pay the charge may deprive people of their right to vote. This will be interesting, because Greenwich council ratepayers will have to pay the costs of Greenwich, which fought the Government over an accurate leaflet that we wished to distribute.

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 18 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Dame Jill Knight: When considering the most recent pronouncements by the doctors, is it not relevant to recall that they have opposed every reform to the Health Service that has been mooted in the past 40 years? Does my right hon. Friend recall that in June 1955, when the Government wished to stop the spread of drug addiction and sought to ban the use and manufacture of heroin in Britain, the British Medical Association behaved in exactly the same way as it is behaving today—worrying patients and sending furious letters to Members of Parliament?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend says, it is true that the BMA has tended to oppose many of the major reforms of the Health Service; many of us remember the limited list, for instance.

I remember that there were some clinical reasons for the particular case that my hon. Friend mentioned, but that matter was successfully resolved. I must point out that, although the BMA has opposed reforms, usually it has eventually operated them and they have tended to become part of the unchangeable traditions of the National Health Service. We look forward to receiving the same sort of co-operation once the reforms are in practice, when we are sure that the BMA will welcome them and say that it does not know how it could ever have done without them.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Will the Leader of the House state the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): Yes, Sir. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 24 MAY—Motion for the spring Adjournment.

Remaining stages of the National Maritime Museum Bill *[Lords]*, the Civil Aviation (Air Navigation Charges) Bill *[Lords]* and the Atomic Energy Bill *[Lords]*.

Motion on the Financial Provisions (Northern Ireland) Order.

TUESDAY 23 MAY—Opposition day (11th allotted day). Until 7 o'clock there will be a debate entitled "The necessary regeneration of the inner cities".

Motions relating to community charges and rating and valuation regulations. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at 7 o'clock.

WEDNESDAY 24 MAY—Remaining stages of the Dock Work Bill.

Motion to take note of EC document on gaseous emissions. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

THURSDAY 25 MAY—Remaining stages of the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Bill.

FRIDAY 26 MAY—Adjournment motions.

[Debate on Tuesday 23 May: Community Charges (Administration and Enforcement) Regulations 1989 (SI 1989 No. 438); Valuation and Community Charge Tribunals (Transfer of Jurisdiction) Regulations (SI 1989 No. 440); Valuation and Community Charge Tribunals Regulations 1989 (SI 1989 No. 439); Valuation for Rating (Plant and Machinery) Regulations (SI 1989 No. 441); Personal Community Charge (Exemptions) Order 1989 (SI 1989 No. 442); Personal Community Charge (Students) Regulations 1989 (SI 1989 No. 443).

Wednesday 24 May: Relevant European Community Document, Un-numbered: Small cars: gaseous emissions. Relevant report of European Legislation Committee: HC 15-xxii (1988-89) para 2.]

Mr. Dobson: I thank the Leader of the House for his statement.

I must protest at the Government's intention to rush and push a number of regulations on the poll tax in the ludicrously short time of an hour and a half on Tuesday. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman could pass on to his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment a reminder that he has ended up in court in the past as a result of rushing through a considerable number of regulations—[HON. MEMBERS: "Costs!"] If that gumboil, the Minister for Local Government, want to intervene, I remind him that he had no statutory authority to issue the leaflet that he is talking about.

Following the publication of the report of the Select Committee on Televising the Proceedings of the House, when can we expect to debate that report in the House and to get on with endorsing it and putting the experiment into operation?

Will the Leader of the House tell us when we are likely to have the long-promised debate on the Government's proposal to substitute student loans for student grants?

When, too, are we likely to have the long-promised debate on care in the community and the publication of the Government's response to the Griffiths report, which was published more than 14 months ago?

In view of the remarkable events around the world, from the middle east to China, when are we likely to have either a general debate on foreign affairs or one targeted on a specific part of the globe?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) has asked me five questions about the business of next week.

I am slightly surprised that the hon. Gentleman wants a longer debate on the community charge regulations. I thought that the Opposition might have had enough of that subject for the moment. However, I am happy to have discussions through the usual channels to see whether it is possible to reach some arrangements.

The hon. Gentleman is right to say that we should have a debate on the report of the Select Committee on televising the House, which was published yesterday. I am hoping to arrange a debate very soon after Whitsun so that the House can decide whether it wishes to go ahead with the experiment. The report was from a large Select Committee of the House, representing points of view from all parties, and apart from one member it was unanimous in its recommendations, especially those dealing with the rules of coverage.

As I have said on a number of occasions, the best time for a debate on top-up loans for students will be once the discussions between ny right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science and the financial institutions are concluded. Those discussions are making good progress and I shall, of course, keep the hon. Gentleman's request well in mind.

I recognise that there is much interest in the Griffiths and Wagner reports. We are working on our proposals, which we shall bring forward in the near future. There will be no undue delay, but it is essential that we reach the right answers in that important area. The time for any further debate is when we have announced our proposals.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the question of a foreign affairs debate is important. My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) recently raised that matter with me. I am aware, therefore, of the general interest in all parts of the House. The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that at this time in the Session, demands on time on the Floor of the House are heavy, but I shall look for a suitable opportunity when time permits.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The House knows that I am always reluctant to curtail business questions, but today we have a statement following business questions, a privilege motion and then a debate in which there is enormous interest from hon. Members wishing to participate. I shall, therefore, have to limit business questions and stop at four o'clock. Many hon. Members will be called provided that they ask brief questions.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): Although for many years there has been a majority in the House in favour of abortion law reform, it has always been frustrated by a

minority. Has my right hon. Friend anything to say about giving time for the House to discuss that position, which is not understood and, indeed, is resented by the public?

Will he give time for a discussion on the proposal of the Select Committee on Procedure? Is it not high time that that matter was resolved?

Mr. Wakeham: I know that my right hon. Friend is deeply concerned about the matter and that he has consistently sought to exert pressure in that respect. My hon. Friend knows well that there are two considerations. He has, among others, made suggestions about what the Government might do about it, and we have said that we would look at those suggestions. We recognise that it would be a substantial change from previous practice, but we said that we would consider it.

On the question of the proposals for private Members' time and the changes recommended by the report of the Select Committee on Procedure, I am studying that report and I hope to find an opportunity for the House to deal with the matter in the not too distant future.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): I appreciate the right hon. Gentleman's explanation about pressures on time, but could he please try to find time to debate health warnings on tobacco products, irrespective of decisions made in Europe? Does he agree that it is extremely serious that, in the past two years, cigarette smoking, particularly among women, has increased, bearing in mind the attendant consequence of lung cancer? Therefore, I beg the Leader of the House to find time time to debate this serious issue.

Mr. Wakeham: We had a debate not long ago on some aspects of this subject, but I recognise its importance. I cannot promise a debate on it in the near future, but I recognise its importance and I shall certainly bear it in mind.

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): In considering the litany of subjects put forward by the Opposition for which Opposition days are available, will my right hon. Friend consider giving time to reports of Select Committees and, in particular, the report of the Environment Select Committee on ancient monuments and historic buildings, which has suddenly assumed topical importance? Will he also consider a debate on the report on toxic waste, which has been reinforced by a report in the other place and about which there is a great deal of public concern at the moment?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to remind me that there are a number of Select Committee reports. He has mentioned the report of one such Committee, of which he was the distinguished Chairman. He asks me to consider those for debate and I wish that I could be more hopeful about finding time for such a debate in the near future. My hon. Friend has, however, raised an important subject, and I shall certainly bear it in mind.

Mr. Gerald Bowden (Dulwich): In view of the widespread concern about the arts and the heritage, as evidenced by the current public concern about the Rose theatre site and the Roman baths in the City of London, will my right hon. Friend give consideration to an early debate or an annual arts debate so that we can discuss such matters and ensure that such sites are preserved for future generations?

Mr. Wakeham: It is certainly right that from time to time we should have debates on the arts and related subjects. At the moment, I do not see time for such a debate but I will bear the request in mind.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Will the Leader of the House find time for a debate before the end of June when the Lord Chancellor makes up his mind on the Green Papers? There have now been two debates in the other place. Surely it would seem slightly strange if the Lord Chancellor gave his reasons without this House ever having said a word on the subject.

Mr. Wakeham: I know that the hon. Gentleman would like a debate on that subject and I wish that I could find time for it. We had a partial debate on the subject late at night, which was not satisfactory. The consultation period closed on 2 May and there have been about 2,000 responses. The Lord Chancellor is, of course, awaiting the response of the senior judiciary, for whom a limited extension to 30 May was granted for exceptional reasons. I wish that I could find time for a debate, but I do not believe that I shall be able to do so in the immediate future.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): The Leader of the House will be aware of the savage cuts that are currently planned in agricultural research. In particular, he may be aware of the concern in my area regarding the future of Rosewarne. I have heard news today that Ministers are still refusing to accept any reasonable package to save that centre. Will the right hon. Gentleman consider trying to find time for the House to debate that important issue before the final decisions are taken?

Mr. Wakeham: I think that the hon. Gentleman's question shows a slightly unbalanced assessment of what my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is seeking to achieve in the changes to the way in which support for research is funded from public funds. Nevertheless, the hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity next Thursday to question my right hon. Friend on this subject. I recognise that a debate would be more satisfactory, but the hon. Gentleman might try his luck in getting an Adjournment debate as it seems a suitable subject for one.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, after making inquiries of the Library, I find that the social charter document that was issued in press release form yesterday will not be available to hon. Members or even to the Government for seven days because it has not yet been translated and facilities are not available to translate it? Does my right hon. Friend regard that as a disgraceful way of carrying on? When the document is available, could we not find some way to debate the matter as soon as possible and to dispose of it in that way?

Mr. Wakeham: I am not in a position to comment on the first part of my hon. Friend's question, but I recognise the concern that he expresses and I shall look into the matter. I recognise also that many hon. Members would like to take part in a debate on that subject. I cannot promise a debate in the immediate future, but it seems to me that my hon. Friend, with his ingenuity, may manage to introduce the subject into today's debate if he is fortunate enough to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The Leader of the House obviously knows about the report on televising Parliament. There has been a lot of scathing press criticism about the fact that it will be severely restricted. Apparently, only the head and shoulders of hon. Members will be shown on the television screen. Will there be exceptions, in certain circumstances? For instance, could we have a "three" shot of the SDP? If the Leader of the SDP crosses the Floor of the House, will the cameras be allowed to follow him? And what about the member of the mujaheddin, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath)? Will he be shown when the Prime Minister is answering Questions on the Common Market?

Mr. Wakeham: I think that the hon. Gentleman should read the report over the weekend study it in detail and decide his tactics accordingly. Perhaps I may give him some rough guidance. If he stays in order, he will be on television. If he is out of order, he will probably not be on television.

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): I thank my right hon. Friend for his reply to my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) a short while ago, but may I point out that those courses of action were outlined to us in February and no noticeable progress seems to have been made. When does my right hon. Friend expect to be able to respond to us one way or the other?

Mr. Wakeham: I think that my hon. Friend needs to be fair. If the Government decide to do something in their legislative programme, there is a proper time for announcing it. That time is not now—and it is not next week, either. The matter will be announced at the proper time. As for the private Member's Bill procedure and the report from the Select Committee on Procedure, my hon. Friend knows that the original report that it submitted, which we did not debate in the House, went back to the Select Committee. The Committee had a second look at it and came up with suggestions which I believe are better than the original ones. I hope to bring them before the House before too long. However, I do not believe that it would be right to change the rules in the middle of the Session. Even if the House were to approve the rules, I should have thought that the rule changes would most conveniently be brought into operation at the beginning of the next Session.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): May I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 847 on the illegal ivory trade and the African elephant?

[That this House welcomes the report of the Environmental Investigation Agency into the plight of the African elephant; deplores the illegal killing of 70,000 elephants per year to boost the ivory trade, 80 per cent. of which is illegal; welcomes the decision of the Government of Tanzania to apply to have the African elephant registered as an endangered species under the 1973 Washington Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora; calls on Her Majesty's Government to support this application and resolutely to prevent illegal ivory trade through Hong Kong.]

Does the Leader of the House agree that it is obscene that these wonderful creatures should be slaughtered in such numbers to provide jewellery, ivory carvings and piano keys? Will he ask his Cabinet colleagues to ban the import of all worked and raw ivory? If he will not do that, may we please have an early debate on the trade in endangered species and on animal conservation generally? I have asked the Leader of the House for such a debate.

Mr. Wakeham: And I recognise the hon. Gentleman's knowledge and concern about these issues. One of his hon. Friends asked me a question about this last week and I arranged for a Foreign Office Minister to write to him. A long letter was sent setting out a number of the issues and objectives that the Government are seeking to achieve. The best thing that I can do is to arrange for the hon. Gentleman to receive a copy of that letter, which I shall do. The Government fully understand and share the concern about the plight of the African elephant. We shall consider carefully any proposal to ban trade in African ivory in the light of the scientific evidence available and in consultation with our European partners. Hong Kong is also a party to the convention on international trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora and prohibits the import of ivory in all its forms, except from an approved source and subject to the issue of a licence by the Hong Kong Government. However, I shall certainly bear in mind the hon. Gentleman's request for a debate.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): So as to avoid continually getting out of step with the European Community, should we not have machinery whereby we co-operate with Members of the European Parliament in the British interest? When will my right hon. Friend forward proposals to that effect?

Mr. Wakeham: I think that proposals of that kind are for the House rather than for me. I recognise that there is some dissatisfaction, which I share, about the way in which European matters are dealt with in the House, Through discussion with the Scrutiny Committee and the Procedure Committee, to which I gave evidence yesterday, I am actively seeking to find ways to improve the situation. I should welcome co-operation with Members of the European Parliament in any way that is acceptable to the House, but I am not sure whether a formal arrangement would be the best way forward.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): As the electoral registration figures for 1989 are at last available in the Library by constituency, and show an alarming decline in certain constituencies, can we have a debate about the state of the electoral register and the impact of the poll tax upon it to test the legality of the poll tax legislation and whether it is in conflict with the 1275 Statute of Westminster and the Representation of the People Act 1983?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman has some responsibilities in this matter, If he continues to refer to the community charge as a poll tax, it is not surprising that some people will be misled, I should have thought that some of his friends in Greenwich might also have something to answer for.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): Given the choice of subject for the first debate in this week's supply day, can my right hon. Friend throw any light on the reason why next Tuesday the House will not have the opportunity to discuss the costs to Greenwich ratepayers of lying on the rates and squandering money on party political propaganda?

Mr. Wakeham: I have not seen the motion that the Opposition intend to table, or the amendment that the Government might table to that motion. Whether my hon. Friend's point would be in order is not a matter for me. It is a matter for you, Mr. Speaker. My hon. Friend had better wait and see what the motion says.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): The Leader of the House will remember that I have asked on a number of occasions for a debate in Government time on the issues arising from the publication of "The Satanic Verses". As Moslems from all over Britain and from overseas will be meeting in London a week on Saturday to protest about the book, and as I doubt whether the Government will arrange a debate for next week, does not the Leader of the House think it timely for the Prime Minister to urge Mr. Salman Rushdie to instruct his publishers worldwide to stop further or new printing of the book so that the offence which has been caused and recognised throughout the House will cease?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not know whether that arises on the business for next week, and I very much doubt whether the hon. Gentleman's solution is right. Some of the disgraceful statements which have come out of Iran have caused a great deal of concern throughout the world and should be condemned by all civilised people.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): Is my right hon. Friend, like me, amazed at the apathy and ignorance of most Members of Parliament about the work of the Council of Europe? I repeat again that we have a social charter, also in document. The transfrontier television satellite broadcasting formula has just been accepted by 12 nations. Today in London a debate on drugs has been promoted by the Council of Europe. The House seems totally unaware that there is a world outside this place. Is it not time for a debate on the work of the other institutions in Europe apart from the European Parliament?

Mr. Wakeham: Whatever the level of ignorance in these matters, I can tell my hon. Friend that his timely and occasional reminders to the House of the importance of the western European treaties and arrangements are helpful. Ignorance is being lessened day by day. I wish that I could promise an early debate, but I am afraid that I cannot.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Will the Leader of the House give us a little rough guidance about his thoughts on television? What did he mean by referring to whether the House

"wishes to go ahead with the experiment"?

Does he think that there is an option not to go ahead because he has so sanitised the proposals? Should we not go ahead—warts, Bexley, Bolsover and all?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman should perhaps have a discussion with his hon. Friends about that. The House passed a motion authorising the setting up of a Select Committee to draw up plans for an experiment. The report will come before the House for debate and the House will decide whether it wants to go ahead with the experiment that we recommend. If the hon. Gentleman reads the report from cover to cover—I know that he takes these matters very seriously—he will see that with the exception of my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale), who had some very interesting views which did not find much support in Committee, the Committee was unanimous in believing that the rules of coverage should be fairly tight, at least to start with. We believe that the rules are not very dissimilar from the unwritten rules in the House of Lords, but think that it was right to set out rules of coverage. It is an experiment. If the House goes ahead with it, we shall see whether we have got it right or whether there should be any changes.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): As the debates on association football have rightly been postponed, will my right hon. Friend consider a debate on rugby union football? That would give the Government an opportunity to explain to the House why, when the England XV last Saturday went to Romania—a country whose regime is vilified in all parts of the House—there were no protests. Yet when a few individuals might receive invitations to go to South Africa three junior Ministers sent off blackmail threats and letters to the respective rugby unions about the dire consequences which could occur. Are we a free country or are we not?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not know that I go along with my hon. Friend. At the moment I am concerning myself mostly with Association football and with the Bill which is in another place. I hope that that Bill will make progress in the not too distant future and will come to this House. That is enough for me to be going on with.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): May I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 850 about opting-out proposals for four Bradford hospitals, including two important hospitals, Bradford Royal infirmary and St. Luke's?

[That this House condemns the proposal for the opting-out of Bradford Royal Infirmary, St. Luke's, Lynfield Mount and Woodlands hospitals drawn up under the sponsorship of unelected bureaucrats Mark Baker and Eduard Kane; believes that these hospitals provide highly important services and that these two bureaucrats, in proposing and endorsing these proposals, are betraying the trust placed in senior administrators by consultants, general practitioners, patients and people who work in the interest of the National Health Service; further believes they are behaving like puppets of the Tory Government; notes that no ballot has been held amongst either consultants, doctors, patients or National Health Service staff of any category nor amongst the taxpayers who finance the National Health Service; and roundly condemns the anti-democratic and harmful nature of these proposals.]

May I draw the right hon. Gentleman's attention to the fact that no ballot was held among doctors, consultants, patients, nurses, porters or anyone else working in the National Health Service? The opting-out proposals were masterminded by two self-seeking, unelected bureaucrats. May we have a debate on that sort of thing, because if a ballot had been held on this issue there would have been a mighty defeat for any proposal worked out among any section of the National Health Service for any group of patients?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman is not usually a man who gets rattled, but he seems to be rattled about the support for the Government's proposals for self-governing hospitals. Such hospitals will give patients more choice and produce a better quality service. Staff and local

[Mr. Wakeham]

communities will have an opportunity to express their views on individual proposals before any formal applications are made. In the meantime, the Government greatly welcome the indication of support from all over the country.

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): Many of us are receiving letters from constituents in support of the RSPCA scheme for a dog registration system. Will my right hon. Friend consider having a debate on this matter, if not next week, then as soon as possible, so that we can have a full discussion on a subject that is of interest to people outside?

Mr. Wakeham: I appreciate the concern and I have written a number of letters on the subject, but I do not see an early opportunity for a debate in the House. I am sorry to disappoint my hon. Friend.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): My business question is urgent and it relates to every hon. Member. I want to know when we are to have the debate on Members' pensions, because for one thing the widows are getting a raw deal. A report in the press says that the Government are seriously considering cutting their contribution by 50 per cent. That ain't on—we shall make sure of that. And we want a debate during the day, not one hidden away in the early hours of the morning.

Mr. Wakeham: It is nice to see a young man thinking about his pension. This is an important subject and the hon. Gentleman asked me about a debate. Over the next week or so, I propose to meet the trustees of the pension fund to discuss various matters of concern and then decide how best to have a debate. We shall arrange a debate as soon as we can after that.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the fundamental principle of a nuclear deterrent is to deter, which is based on the courage and determination of a future Prime Minister to use the nuclear weapon if necessary and the courage and determination to say so in advance? Can we have a debate on nuclear issues so that the confusion in the country about the Opposition's policy can be shown?

Mr. Wakeham: I have already said that I hope to be able to arrange for a debate on the Army in the not too distant future. I think that that will give my hon. Friend the opportunity to make his points.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Adjournment Debates

Mr. Speaker: I remind hon. Members that on the motion for the Adjournment of the House on Friday, 26 May up to eight Members may raise with Ministers subjects of their own choice. Applications should reach my office by 10 pm on Monday next. A ballot will be held on Tuesday morning and the result made known as soon as possible thereafter.

Roads (White Paper)

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Statement. Mr. Channon.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I do not take points of order until after statements, but is it in connection with papers not available for this statement?

Mr. Robert Hughes: I am sorry to press a point of order at this stage. May I explain? The letter board is swamped with letters from the Department of Transport to every hon. Member from England, which I assume contain previews of the statement about to be made by the Secretary of State for Transport. We have all asked in the past for advance information, and that might be what the letters contain.

My point of order is this. Written question 221 to the Secretary of State for Scotland is a planted question which is clearly intended to be a parallel statement to that being made today. No provisions are being made to inform Scottish Members of what is happening. In the interests of fairness, the Department of Transport should not abuse its position in this way. At the same time, the Secretary of State should not denigrate Scottish Members. If no statement about Scotland is to be made in this House, we should be treated properly and in the same way.

Mr. Speaker: I have no knowledge of letters on the letter board, but all hon. Members should be treated equally in the House.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No. I am going to call the Minister to proceed.

4.2 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Paul Channon): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to announce the Government's plans to improve the motorway and trunk road network.

The sustained and unprecedented economic growth of recent years has stimulated the demand for transport to levels which are well above all forecasts.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): This is gagging the House.

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman cannot contain himself, I shall, with the greatest reluctance, ask him to leave.

Mr. Faulds: This is gagging the House. I will withdraw.

Mr. Channon: We must maintain the economy's progress. We must also get business moving so that we are ready to seize the major opportunities presented by 1992 and the opening of the Channel tunnel in 1993.

The Government are determined to see the railways play their part. British Rail, assisted by record levels of investment, is carrying many more passengers. Rail freight can expect to benefit substantially from the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. A large number of Conservative Members have documents relating to this debate—*[Interruption.]* Furthermore, it is said in a letter given to hon. Members of this House that copies of the White Paper would be available. When I went to the Vote Office, it was not available. Why have Conservative Members had details which were not given to Labour Members?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I understand that all hon. Members with English constituencies have received, or are in the process of receiving—[HON. MEMBERS: "Not true."] That is my information.

Mr. Channon: I have tried to help hon. Members with English constituencies by making the information available. If that has gone wrong, I apologise, but I think that the overwhelming majority of hon. Members on both sides of the House with English constituencies have received the information.

Mr. Cohen: It is an absolute disgrace.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. There are 38 hon. Members seeking to take part in a subsequent debate. Points of order on this matter, for which I have no responsibility, will simply delay us. Mrs. Dunwoody.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker. Under normal circumstances I would never dream of doing anything to hold up the business of the House, but in this case there appears to be a difference between English Members who are Conservative and those who are not.

Mr. Channon: I can assure the hon. Lady that that is not the case and, if she checks, I am sure that she will find that she has the information.

Rail freight can expect to benefit substantially from the Channel tunnel. We shall continue to provide grants for rail freight facilities where they help to keep lorries off unsuitable routes. But rail's share of traffic is less than a tenth of that on the roads. For many inter-urban road movements, rail services do not offer a realistic alternative. So while rail is important, it can meet only a small part of the increased demand for transport outside the major city centres.

In framing future roads policy, I have borne in mind the effect that roads can have on the sensitive landscape of this country. We will be taking all reasonable steps to minimise any adverse impact of road schemes on their surroundings. The House will also appreciate that taking traffic away from unsuitable roads will help the environment and improve the quality of life of many individuals and communities.

New roads are safer roads; and I expect that improvements to the road network will make a major contribution to my target of reducing road casualties by one third by the end of the century.

I am publishing today, in the White Paper "Roads for Prosperity", our plans for roads.

The inter-urban motorway and trunk road network, with which the White Paper deals, provides the core of the country's road system. It carries some 30 per cent. of all traffic and 40 per cent. of heavy goods vehicles. We have reviewed traffic trends and produced new forecasts. Those are set out in the White Paper. They project substantially faster growth than previously estimated. In the light of the new forecasts, the Government have concluded both that our main efforts to provide additional transport capacity in support of growth and prosperity must be directed towards widening existing roads and building new ones, and that a step change in the programme is essential.

Accordingly, I can inform the House that the road programme will be more than doubled, from over £5 billion to over £12 billion. That includes substantial improvement of most existing motorways and many major trunk roads. Some new motorways are proposed. All the schemes are listed in the White Paper.

The expansion of the programme concentrates on the need to keep Britain's goods moving. Improving major routes for through traffic will bring widespread benefits to the regions and the inner cities by providing better links throughout the country.

Rapid progress is essential. An additional £27 million is being made available from the reserve this year for immediate work by consultants on preparing the new programme. Motorway widening will be a key element of our plans, and will provide the scope for early relief of congestion. I have already taken steps to speed up our internal road planning procedures. But I can reassure individuals and others affected by specific schemes that their rights will continue to be protected.

The Government are determined to provide a modern transport infrastructure for a modern Britain, and this White Paper will make a major contribution.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): We welcome the Government's acceptance of the fact that the economic and social cost to the nation of chronic congestion is such that urgent action in the form of a doubling of present road expenditure is needed. Is it not a damning indictment of 10 years of the present Government's complacency and inactivity that such radical action is now needed? Does it not show that 10 years of Tory transport policy has been a failure?—*[Interruption.]* I am used to the yobs on the Conservative Benches, Mr. Speaker. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House to calm down.

Mr. Prescott: Will the Secretary of State for Transport confirm that the unprecedented growth in the economy and in car ownership to which he refers is not unique to Britain under Mrs. Thatcher, but is a long-term trend in society that has been witnessed in virtually every other European country in the last 25 years? Those countries planned for it with road improvements and by making greater investment in public transport.

Britain is unique in the Government's failure to help relieve road congestion by promoting rail travel and other forms of public transport on the scale of other European countries. Is it not the case that deregulation, privatisation and the cutting of financial support in the public sector undermines public transport and forces more people on to the roads? Does the right hon. Gentleman acknowledge that the background to the White Paper is inadequate spending on road maintenance, so that every class of road in Britain is now in a worse state of repair than 10 years ago? Even on the basis of the programmes outlined in the 1985 and 1987 White Papers, the Government have failed

[Mr. Prescott]

to meet their own targets, and instead of the backlog of motorway maintenance work reducing this year, it has increased.

Will the Secretary of State confirm that, on average, the Government spend less in real terms each year on our national road network than Labour did when in office, despite a 40 per cent. increase in road traffic? The record shows that Government expenditure on roads is nowhere near as high as the Secretary of State would have us believe —*[Interruption.]* The Secretary of State keeps mumbling, as he does during Question Time. I assure him that I obtained from the Library comparative figures showing the real expenditure levels, and I can show them to the right hon. Gentleman if he wants—instead of him telling the House how good is the Government's record.

Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm also that, in the last 10 years, Government revenue from all forms of taxation has more than doubled to £15 billion, so Britain's transport system is more heavily taxed than that of any other European country—and less of that taxation is spent on transport than in any other European Country?

In those circumstances, does the Secretary of State agree that the imposition of tolls is unacceptable and provides no solution to the problems that exist but is merely a further tax on the travelling public of this country? Does he accept that the White Paper fails to fit into the wider transport context? Is there not a danger that the Government, in responding to public concern about the growing transport crisis, have come up with panic measures—*[Laughter.]* Any plan that proposes, as the White Paper does, doubling of expenditure that cannot possibly be undertaken until after the next general elction is only a paper plan and offers no solution to current problems. The only definite expenditure is the £25 million that will be paid to the planners to provide yet more plans ready for the next general election. That is what the White Paper is really about.

Does the Secretary of State accept that 10-lane super-highways speeding traffic into the cities are useless if chronic congestion means that it cannot move in the cities when it arrives there? What effect will the White Paper's plans have on the environment, especially in respect of vehicle emissions? Road traffic alone accounts for more than one third of all harmful atmospheric emissions and is the fastest growing source of greenhouse gases. There is no mention of that in the White Paper, despite the Prime Minister's alleged concern about the greenhouse effect.

We agree that extending Britain's inadequate road network is part of the solution, but does the Secretary of State not accept that we cannot go on for ever building new roads and adding extra lanes to motorways in a vain attempt to keep pace with demand? Does he not accept that in some places building new roads simply generates greater congestion? The White Paper estimates that road traffic will increase by between 83 per cent. and 142 per cent. in the next 30 years. Does he not accept that it would not be possible, even if it were desirable, to keep expanding the network to meet such demands?

This White Paper has all the reflections of Tory policy. It has a good title, it is a glossy brochure, it promises jam tomorrow for the super-jams of today, and it commits no expenditure between now and 1992 to deal with the programme. It is a sham and will do nothing to relieve the congestion problem.

An Hon. Member: Answer that.

Mr. Channon: I shall try to answer, rather more briefly than the hon. Gentleman put his questions; and I shall answer all the questions.

At one moment, according to the hon. Gentleman, this was a panic measure, at another it was a paper plan and at yet another it was part of the solution. It was rather difficult to discover whether the hon. Gentleman was in favour of it. I rather regret including in the plan, as a gesture to him, two proposals in Hull. If he thinks that it is a paper plan, we can quite easily withdraw them, it that is what he wants.

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for confirming what my right hon. and hon. Friends have been saying for a long time about the unprecedented growth in the British economy, which leads us to need more transport infrastructure. I am also grateful to him for pointing out that this will be needed for some years ahead since clearly he is expecting, as we are, the continuation in office of a Conservative Government.

To hear the hon. Member talk, one might imagine that we were not investing anything in railways or public transport. I have taken the precaution, since he says he has as well, of looking at exactly what was spent in real terms by the Labour Government on both public transport and the roads. The House might be interested to learn that, at 1987-88 prices, investment by British Rail in the railways in 1978-79 was £425 million. The figure is now £654 million —50 per cent. up—and increasing. Capital expenditure on national roads in England was £668 million and it is now £1,052 million—again, a 50 per cent. increase. So much for the nonsense of what the hon. Member has said.

Mr. Prescott: I will write with the figures.

Mr. Channon: I shall look forward to the hon. Member's letter with my usual anticipation.

The hon. Member is right to point to some of the defects in our system. He talks about maintenance, among other things, but fails to point out that, in their last four years in office, the Labour Government cut the road programme by 40 per cent. That is the measure of the sincerity of the Labour party and shows why we are the only people likely to put forward a programme to improve Britain's infrastructure.

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): Is my right hon. Friend aware that he is to be congratulated on persuading the Treasury to give priority to the roads programme on such a massive scale? Will he accept that it must be right, as he suggests, to expand capacity on motorways by widening existing routes rather than building new routes? None the less, it is important to improve the environment by moving traffic away from towns and having more bypasses. In that context I wish to make an explicit request, which is that the map of the road through Worthing should in no way prejudge the issue of having a bypass rather than going through Worthing, which is the impression that the map creates.

Mr. Channon: I can assure my right hon. Friend that the last thing I wish to do is to mar the happiness of the day

and offend him by announcing a bypass through his constituency, the route of which he does not like. That I certainly am not planning to do today.

I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his kind remarks. He is quite right to draw the attention of the House to the fact that it is a great help to widen the motorways, because it can be done more quickly, and it is environmentally better, since we do not have to build so many new roads, which is what causes so much heartache and difficulty.

I hope my right hon. Friend will be pleased to see that there is to be some improvement of the A27 and that he will welcome that. I agree that we have to improve all the trunk roads as well as motorways, and to do so in a way that is environmentally sensitive. I will bear very much in mind what he says.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Clearly I shall not be able to call all the hon. Members who wish to be called, because of the pressure on the next debate. I will allow questions on this matter—of which I imagine we shall hear more in the future—to run until 4.45; then we really shall have to move on.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): Has the Secretary of State seen the Public Accounts Committee report on road planning, which is published today and which shows the inadequacy of some road planning methods? Do the right hon. Gentleman's current proposals take that into account?

Routes to the north-west will become even more important following the introduction of the Channel tunnel. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, according to my reading of the report, large parts of the M6 are not due to be widened? Can he tell us when the whole of the M6 will be updated to meet the demands of the increased traffic that will be essential if the Channel tunnel is to bring advantages to the north-west?

Mr. Channon: I assure the right hon. Gentleman that I have seen the preliminary account of the views of the Public Accounts Committee. I am sure that he will agree, however, that it would be improper for me to reply today to the serious points on which the Committee has rightly focused, as they require careful study. I think that, by chance rather than by design, the right hon. Gentleman will recognise that some attempt has been made to deal with at least some of the difficulties that have arisen in the past within a few hours of his Committee's drawing attention to them.

The right hon. Gentleman made particular mention of the M6. Let me point out to him that expenditure of some £700 million, no less, is proposed for the M6, with widening of the stretches between the M1 and junction 4 of the M42 and between junctions 11 and 20, with some other smaller improvements. If he has any other specific point in mind I should be delighted to take it up, but I must point out that the M6 is to receive a massive improvement. I think that that will be welcomed by many hon. Members.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): Although there will be a warm welcome throughout the country for the marvellous news that my right hon. Friend has brought us this afternoon, there will be utter consternation in the north-east tonight when it is noticed that the map in the White Paper does not include a blue road from the national motorway box to the north-east. That means that the north-east is now the only region—the only set of conurbations—in the country that is cut off from a national motorway system. The statement that consideration will be given to future motorway status will, I think, be welcome, but will my right hon. Friend give us an undertaking now that that consideration will be positive?

Mr. Channon: I cannot announce that it will be positive before we have studied the matter. My hon. Friend will be aware, however, of the considerable improvements to the A1 between London and the Scottish border, including stretches of the A1(M), on which more than £400 million is to be spent. He will also be aware of the study that has been announced in the White Paper, which shows that we shall consider the points that he has in mind. This will be a major route corridor study dealing with the stretch from Stamford to the central A1 south of Doncaster and the portion south of Darlington—and so it goes on. We shall consider carefully what my hon. Friend has said. I certainly do not rule out roads of motorway or near-motorway standard, and we shall investigate the possibility of full motorway status from London to Tyneside.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): I welcome the Secretary of State's announcement of increased expenditure on infrastructure. Does he not agree, however, that more attention should be given to investment in the railways, and that cost-benefit analysis criteria should be used instead of the present one-off capital return on investment?

Does my hon. Friend accept that, given the proposals in his White Paper to widen the M25 to an eight-lane motorway, an investigation should be mounted to see whether a high-speed rail link could be run on the western side of the M25 to link Heathrow and Gatwick airports to the Channel tunnel, as well as the rest of the country?

Mr. Channon: I have had a little difficulty with high-speed rail links in other parts of the south-east recently, so I am not overwhelmingly enthusiastic to leap into that straight away without a moment's thought. I point out to the hon. Gentleman that British Rail is investing about £4 billion over the next five years. One can argue whether that should be more or less, but it is a substantial sum. There is massive reconstruction and investment in British Rail at present. I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman's criterion for how the two things should be compared would work out in favour of railways. The results of the two investment criteria are much the same, although the criteria are different.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Oh.

Mr. Channon: I know that my hon. Friend does not entirely agree with that point. I am working on him, and I hope to convince him in the end.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): As my right hon. Friend points out in his statement, the growth of road traffic has been larger than originally expected, or officially projected. He is to be warmly congratulated on responding in a vigorous, imaginative and sensitive way to this colossal problem. This is thinking on the scale that we need. Will he concede—I am sure he will—that traffic growth on the railways is also far greater than the projections, and that even his idea of one tenth of traffic being on the railways

[Mr. David Howell]

may be invalidated by events? Does he agree that we should be thinking not only of the magnificent step change in road investment but also of a step change in railway investment, if necessary reinforced by capital from the private sector, if we are to join the gigantic, integrated, high-speed rail network and the high-speed freight movement throughout Europe that will dominate the 1990s and the beginning of the next millenium?

Mr. Channon: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend, particularly because of his experience in dealing with transport problems. I hope that he will find that some of the schemes proposed this afternoon will benefit his constituents in Guildford. I agree about the importance of rail infrastructure and rail investment. I have given the House the figures that we have in mind. All sorts of other possibilities open up. One thing that is fundamentally important to all parts of the House is that we should be satisfied—certainly we have to be satisfied within the course of this year—with what British Rail proposes to do to meet the needs of constituencies north of London when the tunnel opens. I know that hon. Members in all parts of the House are concerned about that.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): What concerns me about the White Paper is the lack of emphasis on safety measures. In regard to the A46-A47 link road, the major road that will link Nottingham to Peterborough through Leicester, the Secretary of State should note that the local authority has said many times that it does not have the resources to meet the safety objections raised by local residents. What assurances can the Minister give the House about expenditure by the Government on safety measures, as opposed to merely building more roads?

Mr. Channon: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has mentioned safety. An important spin-off of the White Paper will be the effect on safety. I estimate that about 16 per cent. of the expenditure will have direct safety consequences. With more motorways and trunk roads, built to better standards, it is likely that the number of accidents will come down. As we all know, motorways are the safest roads in the country, and trunk roads are infinitely safer than roads in the middle of towns and cities. The programme will have beneficial effects for road safety. I am determined to meet our target. That will help us. On the point that the hon. Gentleman raised about one road, I had better write to him, but I am anxious that safety should be enhanced.

Mr. Adley: My right hon. Friend is an intelligent and well-educated man. Will he therefore accept the logic that, when he says in his statement that rail's share of traffic is less than one tenth of that on the roads, that does not need to be examined too far for one to understand why? The more we put into roads while neglecting the railways, the more the discrepancy will grow. Can he explain why British Rail cannot meet his Department's grotesquely overrated criteria simply to electrify the line between Ashford and Hastings for Channel tunnel traffic, yet he can stand up and propose to drive a motorway from the Channel tunnel to Southampton without any justification in financial terms as against the costs of rail?

Which of the following two courses has my right hon. Friend taken? Has he said, "We can get another £7 billion for transport infrastructure. Shall we see if that money is better spent on roads v. rail?", or has he simply said, "Here is £7 billion. We will have roads, roads, roads, boys. Let us do what the Department of Transport always does."

Mr. Channon: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his preliminary remarks, which were right. Most unusually, he was inaccurate in his later remarks. British Rail is planning to invest £4 billion in the railways over the next five years, of which over £1 billion is earmarked for Network SouthEast. By the end of the decade, BR will have renewed over 85 per cent. of its diesel passenger trains and electrified 60 per cent. of InterCity and about 30 per cent. of the total route mileage, the biggest rail renewal programme since the transfer from steam to diesel.

My hon. Friend asks about new railway lines. That is major investment, which we look at on its merits to see if an investment case is made out. I assure my hon. Friend—he knows this well—that no British Rail investment case has yet been turned down during the lifetime of this Government. Indeed, 30 major investment projects have been approved by Ministers since the Government objectives were first set in October 1983.

I assure my hon. Friend that I am extremely anxious to expand the railways as well as the road system to meet the needs of Britain's transport infrastructure. British Rail is at present expanding, not contracting. I am certain that it will go on expanding and not contracting, and I should like to have more discussions with my hon. Friend about that very point.

Mr. Robert Hughes: How much money is to be spent in Scotland on the roads? Is money being made available for the A96 north of Aberdeen, between Aberdeen and Inverness, which is an extremely dangerous road? What steps has the right hon. Gentleman taken to bring to fruition the electrification of the east coast main line between London and Aberdeen by having the Edinburgh to Aberdeen line electrified? Will he confirm that he has made information available to his counterparts in England, whereas Scots Members have no information whatever? Will he answer those questions and not rely on Ministers at the Scottish Office to do so?

Mr. Channon: The hon. Member and I are old acquaintances. He would be surprised if I had an encyclopaedic knowledge of Scottish roads, as he knows perfectly well that I am not responsible for them. I have done my best to be helpful to English Members. If that was wrong, I shall never do it again—*[Interruption.]* I have done my best to help them in the past.

My answer to the hon. Gentleman's question about Scottish roads expenditure is that, as he knows, there is an automatic formula by which Scotland gets a proportion of the roads expenditure in England; I believe that 10 eighty-fifths is the normal proportion for Scotland. *[Interruption.]* That was worked out long ago, and not by me. My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) has a question down on the subject, showing that attention has been drawn to the matter.

My answer to the hon. Gentleman's question about the electrification of the line from London to Aberdeen is that, if an investment proposal was put forward by British Rail, I would look at it. The hon. Gentleman will welcome the news that, under the present plans for the electrification of the east coast main line, the journey to Aberdeen will be about 20 minutes shorter.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): I warmly congratulate my right hon. Friend on his White Paper and especially on his announcement of new trunk road improvements in East Sussex. There is a proposal in the White Paper that there should be a study of an east-west strategic route between Kent and Hampshire. I recognise that national and regional requirements may have given rise to the need for such a study, as there is already some anxiety about the precise location of this route. May we have an assurance that East Sussex will be involved in that study, so that local interests may be looked after?

Mr. Channon: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his opening remarks. He will know that the studies listed in the White Paper are investigations into possible needs for additional capacity. They may or may not lead to proposals for schemes, which would need to be considered before they were put in the programme. Were they to result in schemes to be put in the programme, the rights of everyone affected would be taken into account in that there would be full public consultation and public inquiries. East Sussex and any other county council that was affected would have its views taken into account. I hope that my hon. Friend feels reassured by that answer.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Will the Secretary of State give a pledge that the central London road assessment study, which threatens areas such as Leyton, Walthamstow and Hackney Marshes will be scrapped? What faith can we have that those roads will be environmentally sound, when roads such as the M11 link road, which is to go through my constituency, has been denied a tunnel by the Department? Will he put up the money for that to go in a tunnel? Is not the plan for a country which is not green but motorway grey?

Mr. Channon: I am not sure that I quite understood the last part of the hon. Gentleman's question. He made a brief intervention on the question of the M11 last week, every word of which I read with considerable interest and care. I am not announcing any decision on the assessment studies this afternoon; that will come later on. As the House understands, the general thrust of the White Paper relates largely to roads between cities, not conditions inside London, which we will have other opportunities to debate. I have somehow become aware of what the hon. Gentleman thinks about our road schemes.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Will my right hon. Friend accept that anyone with an ounce of objectivity must congratulate him on winning this amount of money from the Treasury and providing such a forthright statement to the House? Anyone who does not think that should have been elected as the deputy Leader of the Opposition, but that is another matter. Will my right hon. Friend consider the position in the south-west, not just—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is great pressure on time.

Sir Peter Emery: Jealousy will get people nowhere. Will the Secretary of State look at the roads to the south-west, where he will see that there is no blue motorway from Andover, from east to west? Will he look particularly at the improvements proposed to ensure that dual carriageways, not single carriageways, will be built? Single carriageways are being scheduled and opened, but they are out of date before they are opened and, in the long run, will cost the country much more money.

Mr. Channon: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he says about the scale of expenditure. The amount and timing of the expenditure will be a matter for decision in the public expenditure survey, in the usual way. My hon. Friend makes a good point about the south-west. I hope that he will be pleased about the upgrading of the A30 from Honiton to Ironbridge, and with the Wilmington bypass on the A35. I am sure that he will also have seen that we are assessing the needs of the route of the A38 from Exeter to Plymouth, which might have some effect in the south-west. I shall bear in mind what he says. One effect of the programme will be that the number of single carriageways will be considerably reduced as a proportion of the total road programme, because there will be many changes from single to dual carriageways. I think that I can meet my hon. Friend's points almost in their entirety.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): Why has not the Secretary of State taken the opportunity to accept the case for a second east-west link, trans-Pennine motorway to link the industrial areas of Lancashire and Yorkshire? Would not the natural place for that be an eastwards extension of the M65 to link with the M62 and M1?

Mr. Channon: No doubt the hon. Gentleman has not yet had time to read table 2 of the White Paper, but when he gets round to doing so, he will see that we propose to do exactly that. We propose to study a major trans-Pennine route corridor, and

"Provision of additional capacity between south Lancashire and Yorkshire"

I think that he will find that satisfactory. There are problems with the national parks, and I welcome his views on that point.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): We will soon get rid of them.

Mr. Channon: If that is the hon. Gentleman's view, I will take it into account.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): My right hon. Friend will be congratulated by many people in my constituency tonight, because there are no fewer than four improvement schemes for the Ryedale area in the White Paper. That entirely reflects the thriving economy in the greater York area and the need for these roads. Will my right hon. Friend think again about the A19 between York and Thirsk, which needs to be dual carriageway?

Mr. Channon: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who I hoped and believed might conceivably be pleased. He will see that some of the A19—Norton to Parkway—will become a dual three-lane road. I note what he says about the single carriageway bypasses of Shipton by Beningbrough and Thormanby, which we shall look at with his points in mind.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): May I suggest that, when the Minister produces a statement, before announcing it he puts it in the Vote Office rather than causing chaos in the Lobby? That the Minister should produce statements in writing for Members before announcing them is a handy development, for which he certainly has my support.

What action will the right hon. Gentleman take to ensure that environmental damage from these road proposals is minimised? People are apprehensive about that. For example, does he recognise the enormous costs

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

involved in tunnelling the proposed Aire valley road at Shipley, which will amount to £90 million? I hope that he is prepared to spend that sort of money.

Will the Secretary of State be prepared to make more generous grants for railway sidings—the statement appears to contain only one comment by way of an aside on that? Will he provide such grants to encourage traffic on rail when the sidings are installed? Will he also consider railway developments such as the cross—Bradford rail link and not concentrate too much merely on roads?

Mr. Channon: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for saying that I tried to tell Members roughly how their constituencies would be affected by the White Paper before making this announcement. I shall bear in mind any improvements that might be made in the system that we have adopted.

Of course, we are looking at all sorts of rail studies. The hon. Gentleman will be especially pleased that we are examining section 8 grants to see whether they can be improved.

There is always a difficult balance to be struck in environmental matters. As we are widening roads more than in the past, there will be less effect on the environment, because fewer roads will have to be built. The hon. Gentleman is right about the environment; we shall carefully look into it, and difficult cost judgments will have to be made.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): My right hon. Friend will not be surprised that I thank him not only on behalf of the south-west but on behalf of my constituents for his announcement about an Avonmouth relief road, which was campaigned for by my predecessor, by my predecessor's predecessor—and by his predecessor, Martin Maclaren. My right hon. Friend has sensibly not given the date of construction. Will he give me some sign of when I must start camping on his doorstep in order to get the Avonmouth relief road started?

Mr. Channon: First, I congratulate my hon. Friend, who is right to say that he and his predecessors have actively campaigned for this road, which I am glad to have been able to announce today.

As for the exact timing, the House will see in paragraph 32 that we shall have a full roads report later in the year which will set out the complete and detailed road programme with supporting information. That will be the moment to start camping: I look forward to seeing my hon. Friend then.

Mr. Tony Banks: To me, the White Paper represents motorway madness par excellence. I would have been prepared to cheer the right hon. Gentleman if he had announced a doubling of investment in the railways, which is what the people of this country clearly want. They do not want this amount spent on roads.

I have looked through the document as quickly as possible. Where is the big private sector investment to come from? Or is this just a great big transfer of cash from the taxpayer to the British Road Federation lobby, as represented here by Conservative Members?

The only thing that distinguishes this from other White Papers is that, despite all the blank spaces, there are no pictures of grinning Ministers in it. Could it be that the right hon. Gentleman's photo has been vetoed on the grounds that he will not be in his position much longer?

Mr. Channon: We have very nearly doubled investment in the railways, and I hope that when that happens the hon. Gentleman will send me a present——

Mr. Tony Banks: I will lead the cheering.

Mr. Channon: Well, I look forward to that.

We are on our way to doubling investment in the railways, compared with what the Labour party spent when in office.

The hon. Gentleman complains about improvements to the motorways. I think that he will find that most Members in all parts of the House recognise that, if their constituencies are to flourish, they must have better transport links. Those who represent seats in the north and the midlands would be surprised at what the hon. Gentleman said.

Mr. Henry Bellingham: (Norfolk, North-West): Is the Secretary of State aware that this White Paper will be met with jubilation in Norfolk, particularly in west Norfolk? The Minister has selected two strategic routes into Norfolk —the A11 and the A47—to underpin Norfolk's economic prosperity and assure its competitive position for 1992.

Mr. Channon: I am grateful. I am well aware of the importance of dualling the A11 to Norwich. What we have done for the railways and roads in the King's Lynn area will make my hon. Friend's constituents feel that we are responsive to his pressures and to the need to help Norfolk.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, East): Are we right to think that, in part, the widening of motorways is to facilitate the introduction of toll charges? On the Airedale route, will the right hon. Gentleman assure the House that he and his ministerial colleagues are keeping an open mind on all the route options, including the tunnel? Does the right hon. Gentleman understand that the vast majority of citizens of Bradford are waiting to hear an announcement from him that he will find the modest amount of money needed to electrify the railway line between Bradford and Leeds?

Mr. Channon: That is for another day. However, as I have told other hon. Members, we look at any investment programme that is proposed. There would be no question of tolling any motorway unless primary legislation were put before the House and passed. What I have announced today is a massive expansion of the Government's motorway and trunk road programme, which will help Yorkshire and many other parts of the country. I hope that, on reflection, the hon. Gentleman will feel that it will help his city, too.

Mr. Alan Amos (Hexham): Will my right hon. Friend accept the thanks of the north-eastern region for the improvements to the A1, the A69 and the A19? Will he also accept the thanks of the north-eastern region for the fact that the construction of that massive programme will involve more raw materials and skilled labour, both of which the north-east has in abundance?

Mr. Channon: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. As I have already said, the programme will provide the basis

for a comprehensive review of the A1 route, including the investigation of the possibility of it having full motorway status from London to Tyneside.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I call Mr. Prescott.

Mr. Prescott *rose*——

Hon. Members: No!

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Prescott: Will the Secretary of State tell us how many of the 2,700 miles of new and improved road will be completed and how much of the new £7 billion of expenditure will be spent in the two years before the general election?

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman must contain himslf with patience, because, as I told the House—and it is said clearly in the White Paper—I shall publish the details and the timings later this year. The hon. Gentleman will look forward to receiving them.

Hon. Members: On a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am still on my feet.

Hon. Members: On a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: I can anticipate the points of order. I say to the whole House that I can fully understand the desire to ask questions about the statement, but 38 right hon. and hon. Members wish to participate in the subsequent debate. It is a very difficult balance for the Chair to strike. I am not responsible for the timing of statements. I have to say to the whole House that, of course, as is my usual practice, I shall bear in mind those hon. Members who have not been called today.

Hon. Members: On a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: I hope that it is not on this matter, because I am not prepared to be challenged and I cannot say any more than I have.

Hon. Members: On a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. MacKay.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Naturally, I would in no way wish to challenge your decision. You have acknowledged that this is an important statement, but said that there is an important debate afterwards in which a large number of hon. Members on both sides of the House wish to catch your eye. I would just point out that far more Conservative Members have been in attendance during questions on the statement—on a ratio of at least 3:1—than Labour Members, because they were not interested. I suggest that in future, when there are three times as many hon. Members present on this side of the House as on the other, you reflect that fact in those hon. Members whom you call.

Hon. Members: On a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: I will take Mr. Robert Hughes.

Mr. Robert Hughes: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am grateful to you for taking this point of order. I commend entirely the initiative taken by the Secretary of State in seeking to inform hon. Members in the way he has done. I hope that that will be encouragement to other Ministers to do the same.

I draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, to the fact that written question 221 from the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) which the Secretary of State said he hoped would be answered, has not been answered by a Scottish Minister. I checked two minutes ago with the Library, and the written answers to questions from the Scottish Office had not arrived. As the Secretary of State will know, and I think most people will confirm, I am certainly not a Scottish nationalist and I do not play the Scottish card in any sense, but I feel that the Leader of the House, who is present, should make a statement and assure the House that the Secretary of State for Scotland will come to the House on Monday and make a statement. It is intolerable that a Minister should come to the House to make a statement on English roads and should plant a question on the Order Paper—with the funny little tree mark on it—which will allow the Secretary of State for Scotland to have a press conference in Edinburgh, but which will deny Scottish Members of Parliament the opportunity to question him directly.

Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must say to hon. Members that they are doing a disservice to their colleagues by persisting in raising points of order. I anticipate that it is because hon. Members—*[Interruption.]* Order. It is because hon. Members have not been called on the statement. I am sorry, and I shall bear them in mind in the future.

Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR MONDAY 12 JUNE

Members successful in the ballot were:

Ms. Joyce Quin
Mr. Harry Barnes
Mr. John McFall

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I will put together the two motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the Teachers' Superannuation (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 666) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Road Traffic (Carriage of Explosives) Regulations 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 615) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

Points of Order

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I hope that this is not, in any way, a delaying tactic.

Mr. Brown: I simply want to ask you, Mr. Speaker, whether it is fair for one Opposition hon. Member representing Humberside to be called twice when other Conservative Members representing Humberside were not called at all.

Mr. Speaker: It is the usual practice, and has been for many years, for the Front-Bench spokesmen to be called briefly at the end of a statement if they so wish.

Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do hope that this is not an attempt to delay a debate.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): The law and order party. This is sheer organised hooliganism.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The House knows how many hon. Members wanted to participate in questions on the statement. We now have a privilege motion. That is a serious matter which rarely occurs. It is a debatable motion and I hope that business will not be delayed.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I will take the point of order from the hon. Gentleman, but I must tell the House that I am concerned—I hope that I am wrong—that this appears to be an attempt to delay getting on to an important debate.

Mr. McLoughlin: This is an attempt not to delay, but to protect Back Benchers, about whom you often speak, Mr. Speaker. Will you reflect, Mr. Speaker, on the way in which Members were called this afternoon? Are you aware that in business questions——

Mr. Cryer: The hon. Gentleman is challenging the Chair.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind hon. Members that we are in the House of Commons.

Mr. Cryer: Exactly.

Mr. McLoughlin: Are you aware, Mr. Speaker, that during business questions you called two Opposition Members without calling anyone from the Conservative Benches?

Mr. Speaker: Yes, I am aware because mistakenly I called two Members from the Government Benches.

Mr. Cecil Franks (Barrow and Furness): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. While I do not wish to challenge in any way your decision to bring the questions on the statement to an end, I ask you to bear in mind the fact that, although you called hon. Members from both sides of the House who represent many regions, you did not call one Member representing the north-west, which figures quite prominently in the statement.

Mr. Speaker: If I did not, I am sorry.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon it is obvious that there has been a great deal more interest in the statement on the Conservative Benches than on the Opposition Benches. In future, will you bear in mind the number of people sitting on the Conservative Benches, who rise to catch your eye, when dealing with similar statements, which are of a constituency rather than a party political nature? After all, the Labour party policy document published today has but 20 lines on the subject of roads—nothing more.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Very sensible.

Mr. Speaker: I always bear such matters in mind.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. No, I am hearing no more points of order. Ms. Clare Short.

Privilege

4.53 pm

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): I wish to call attention to the complaint by Mr. Anthony Dagnan that he has received adverse treatment in his employment with Birmingham city council as a consequence of acting as the agent for a petition against the Birmingham City Council (No. 2) Bill.

I beg to move,

That the matter of the complaint be referred to the Committee of Privileges.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that people often consider that the issue of parliamentary privilege concerns the rights of Members, who are generally seen as a privileged group, and that it rarely evokes much public sympathy. This case concerns the democratic rights of an ordinary citizen. I believe that it is extremely important for Parliament to take seriously a complaint of pressure being exerted on an individual who seeks to exercise his democratic right to petition Parliament against a private Bill.

The individual concerned is Mr. Anthony Paul Dagnan, who has worked for about 18 years for the treasury department of Birmingham city council. He enjoys motor racing and was originally pleased when Birmingham city council decided to take powers to organise a road race in the centre of the city. But then, in common with many others in Birmingham, he became increasingly concerned at the way in which the road race was run. He was concerned about the costs to the city council and that many of them were not included in the road race accounts. He was also concerned at the way in which the legal requirement in the existing Bill—that it should break even in five years or the council's powers to run the race would lapse—was got around by finding £1 million and claiming that the race promotes the city so well that it is worth £1 million from the people of the city. Many of us disagree.

When the city council decided to put a further Bill to the House that would extend the road race to four days and remove many of the previous constraints which protected people to some extent from a further waste of money, Mr. Dagnan, in common with many people in Birmingham, felt that that was wrong. He therefore set out to discover what he could do about it, and he found that individuals have the right to petition the House of Commons against a private Bill.

Mr. Dagnan sought to petition as an individual, but strangely enough he was not allowed to do so as individual citizens are not allowed to petition against their city council because, necessarily, the city council represents them. I believe that that is a Jesuitical argument. Mr. Dagnan also persuaded his union branch—the Birmingham city branch of the National and Local Government Officers Association—that it should petition. He offered to represent his union. Mr. Dagnan appeared before the Committee and I am told that he was an impressive witness. In common with many of my constituents, he has no resources——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Lady will not go into the merits of the case. She is making a submission that this matter should be sent to the Committee of Privileges.

Ms. Short: I will not go into the merits of the case as I hope to do so on another occasion.

Mr. Dagnan had to pay his own fares to come to the House and take time off work. As an aside, I believe that the House should look into the costs to private individuals who seek to petition the House. Some may be represented by lawyers who are paid great fees, but other individuals have to pay their own fares to get here.

Mr. Dagnan took time off work and paid his fares to get to the House because he believes that the Bill is wrong, that it is bad for the citizens of Birmingham and bad for the interests of council workers. I stress that he has no personal interest in the case. He is acting against the Bill as a citizen because he believes that that is the right thing to do. As a result of his actions, however, he has been called in and told that he cannot continue the job that he has performed and enjoyed for so many years. He has been offered alternative employment which he does not consider acceptable. I must make it clear that it is not alleged that he has in any way abused his position or used any information that came to him as part of his job. He used only information that is publicly available in Birmingham. As a result of his difficulties, Mr. Dagnan wrote to me asking me to raise the issue as a matter of privilege and I am pleased to do so.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) has misled the Birmingham press by suggesting that this is simply a ploy to delay the progress of the road race Bill. I understand, however, that referring this matter to the Committee of Privileges will in no way delay that Bill. This is not a ploy—it concerns the rights of citizens to petition the House of Commons. That is a serious matter for Mr. Dagnan and for others who may wish to exercise their right. The hon. Member for Northfield had the cheek to say that there are no other arguments against the Bill, but he spent an hour promoting that Bill and thus prevented me from speaking. That race affects my constituents because it takes place in my constituency.

I believe that we should all be proud of people such as Paul Dagnan, an ordinary citizen determined to exercise his democratic right for what he considers to be fair and not out of any self interest. We need more people like Mr. Dagnan. Too many people feel absolutely powerless in this so-called democracy to exert their rights and stand up for what they believe is right.

I have already said that there is no ulterior motive in respect of the road race Bill, which we shall debate on another occasion. This is very much a matter of the little man, the ordinary citizen, against the system. I have sought to bring Mr. Dagnan's views before the House of Commons. He has been pressurised to leave a job that he enjoys and is good at because he has exercised his democratic right. That is a serious matter. I hope, therefore, that the House will agree that Mr. Dagnan's complaint should be referred to the Committee of Privileges both to protect Mr. Dagnan, who ought not to be punished for having done this, and to protect others coming after him who ought to have a similar right.

5 pm

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): I first heard of your statement yesterday afternoon, Mr. Speaker, from a third-hand source. I was not present in the Chamber, so I was not too clear about what was said at that time. Together with a few city officials, I expressed my

[Mr. Roger King]

indignation about what was taking place. I may have misunderstood what happened in the Chamber. I was reported as saying that this was a time-wasting ploy by opponents of the Bill.

I have attended the Committee stage of the Bill on a number of occasions. The petitioners' presentation of their case against the Bill has been extremely good. They have argued their case effectively, and I have no doubt that the Committee will bear that in mind. My comment was directed at what I thought was an attempt to delay the Bill. Having looked at *Hansard*, I now understand that you, Mr. Speaker, made a statement as a result of which the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) has moved her motion, as she is perfectly entitled to do. I apologise if anyone has misunderstood the motives behind my statement.

Mr. Dagnan has been employed by Birmingham city council for 18 years as an auditor clerk. He is now employed as an auditor. At the moment he has been granted unpaid leave of absence to act as an agent for petitioners against the Birmingham City Council (No. 2) Bill. Until this morning, when the Committee stage of the Bill was completed, he could be seen actively pursuing that interest, speaking on behalf of his union—NALGO—of which he is an official.

Ms. Short: Is the hon. Gentleman absolutely certain that Mr. Dagnan has been given unpaid leave of absence? I do not think that he got that degree of co-operation.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the House should confine itself to whether the matter ought to be referred to the Committee of Privileges.

Mr. King: Exactly, Mr. Speaker. My information is that Birmingham city council has allowed Mr. Dagnan time to appear before the Committee. I stand to be corrected if that is not the case.

The problems that the hon. Member for Ladywood has mentioned are far more complicated and extend over a greater period of time than she suggested. It is not just a question of concerning ourselves with any pressure that council officials and political leaders of the city of Birmingham have placed on any party seeking to object to the Bill. The matter that has concerned the council over a fairly long period is the right of a city official, in his capacity as an auditor within the treasurer's department, to challenge the city accounts with the benefit of obviously sensitive information. There is no evidence that Mr. Dagnan has used information in that way, but it has placed him under some strain in his dealings with various departments of the city council—the engineer's department, in particular, where the co-operation to which he is entitled as an auditor has been less than forthcoming due to the fear that information given to him might be transferred to other people. I stress that it is a fear, but it is a real concern.

When the matter was originally discussed in February this year, it was made abundantly clear to Mr. Dagnan that the problem, as the city thought, was that if he persisted in challenging the city's accounts and wished to take part in petitioning against the Birmingham City Council (No. 2) Bill he would be in a privileged position in having access to sensitive financial information and it would be very difficult for the council to make that information available to other petitioners. During the discussions which took place over a certain period it was suggested that in view of Mr. Dagnan's desire to take part in petitioning against the Bill he might agree to move to another part of the treasurer's department on the same salary scale.

City officials have said that on only one occasion did the subject of the Birmingham City Council (No. 2) Bill arise during discussions with Mr. Dagnan. He has not been placed under any pressure whatever. The council strongly refutes all the allegations made by the hon. Member for Ladywood. However, the council feels that the best course of action, if it is the wish of the House, is that the matter should be discussed and that evidence should be presented to the Committee of Privileges so that the truth will come out. There are no skeletons in the cupboard. The council believes that it has a very strong case. It has sought at no stage to victimise Mr. Dagnan. It has sought only to point out to him the sensitivity of his present position and his present actions and the need to protect the city and its ratepayers. The city will not oppose the hon. Lady's motion, if it is the wish of the House that the matter should be referred to the Committee of Privileges. We look forward to a very thorough investigation and to the eventual upholding of the city's views.

5.6 pm

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): As one of the members of the Committee considering the Birmingham City Council (No. 2) Bill, I should like to put on record the fact that Mr. Paul Dagnan conducted himself in an exemplary fashion throughout his evidence. Although he had the opportunity to prolong the case, had he so wished, he was extremely brief and eloquent and —regardless of the merits of his argument, which is a matter for the Committee to decide later—made a major impression on the members of the Commitee.

5.7 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): We have heard a very serious allegation by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) on behalf of one of her constituents, and I consider that you, Mr. Speaker, were wholly right to give this debate precedence over the business of the House set down today. However, with an eye to the important debate that is to follow and mindful of the time already taken up in discussing next week's business and the Government's plans to improve the road system, I will be brief.

The privileges of this House are its defensive ramparts, which enable it to go about its business free from external threat, internal disorder and such other pressures irrelevant to the merits of the case. As "Erskine May" puts it, they are

"rights which are absolutely necessary for the due execution of its powers".

In recognition of the importance to the House of information provided by witnesses and petitioners, that protection may be extended in certain cases to those other than Members and Officers. Again "Erskine May" makes it clear that

"Petitioners are considered as under the protection of the High Court of Parliament and conduct calculated to deter them from preferring or presenting petitions may be treated as a breach of privilege".

I have to say that I have found some difficulty in identifying a relevant precedent for this motion, at least in this century. Perhaps the most likely contender is the case of Mr. W. A. Grimshaw, who complained to the Select Committee on Nationalised Industries in 1975 that he had been made redundant by the National Coal Board after giving evidence to the Committee critical of his employers. Although not a precise parallel, this case has relevance in that in both cases there is an allegation of victimisation by an employer arising from the actions of an individual in relation to the business of this House. What that case—which, incidentally, resulted in a finding by the Committee of Privileges that no breach of privilege had, in fact, occurred—demonstrates is that the Committee, if set up as a result of this debate, will have to determine three things: whether the individual concerned was moved by his employers because he had petitioned against the Bill; whether that move was to his detriment; and, if so, whether those events amounted to a breach of privilege. The Committee will therefore need to inquire closely into the events which have taken place, and then act in a quasi-judicial capacity to recommend to the House whether a breach has in fact taken place and, if so, what action the House should take.

We have had a useful, short debate and I am left in no doubt that if the hon. Lady considers it right to press her motion the House should support her in resolving to constitute a Committee of Privileges to carry out whatever inquiries seem to be needed and to make recommendations to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the matter of the complaint be referred to the Committee of Privileges.

Developments in the European Community

5.10 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of the White Paper, Developments in the European Community July-December 1988 (Cm. 641).

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition. In view of the large number of right hon. and hon. Members who wish to participate in the debate, I intend to limit speeches to 10 minutes between 7 o'clock and 9 o'clock. I hope that right hon. and hon. Members on both Front Benches and others who may be called before that time will bear in mind the pressure to speak in this important debate.

Mrs. Chalker: It is right that this debate comes just two months after the publication of the White Paper. It is an understatement to say that there is very widespread interest in European issues at present. The debate is an important opportunity to look forward, and to reflect on the second six months of 1988.

My main purpose is to cover the elements of Community policy in the period under review—the White Paper, Cm. 641. The key themes for discussion in the weeks leading up to the Madrid European Council closely reflect the themes of the six-month review. We also have before us the first special report of the Select Committee on European Legislation of last year.

In 1988 we secured two major achievements. The first was a substantial reform of Community finances and the CAP in February. The second was real progress towards the completion of the single market programme.

The groundwork had been laid by previous Conservative Governments. In the 1960s Conservatives had the vision to see that Britain's future was as a member of the Community. Both in opposition and in government we worked to find a way to make a successful application. In the early 1970s those efforts proved successful.

In the 1980s the Government have pursued Britain's interests in the Community through a tough and realistic analysis of the options and opportunities. Our aim has been, and it continues to be, to ensure that the 1992 campaign, as *The Economist* put it on 6 May:

"does to red tape and government controls, what Harry Houdini did to chains, straps and manacles".

In contrast to that excellent record, the Opposition have got failure down to a fine art. They failed to negotiate a single penny of refunds for Britain when they were in power. They have failed to devise a credible European policy—in fact they have changed their mind about membership five times at least—and while they are still arguing about which part of the 1960s baggage to dump the Community is striding confidently into the 1990s. It is small wonder that even the Socialist parties in Europe do not take Labour seriously. After all, it was the Labour leader who called the single market

"an abdication of responsibility".

Labour chose an anti-marketeer as the leader of its MEPs in Strasbourg. He has admitted that many of their economic policies would be illegal under the treaty of

[Mrs. Chalker]

Rome. Labour, if ever again in office, would face a stark choice: to abandon its economic policies or face expulsion from the Community.

By contrast, I have read with great interest some of the clearly expressed views of my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine). He makes a cogent case for commitment to Europe. Let me make it clear beyond anyone's contradiction that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the whole Government have long held that same commitment. But those of us who are involved in the day-to-day work believe that we must adopt a twin-track policy, declaring our commitment and, at the same time, following a common sense approach. That is how we can best serve Britain's interests, and we intend to do that.

I and, I suspect, a good number in this House part company with my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley in his advocacy of a second chamber of the European Parliament. On the other hand, I share the concern of many right hon. and hon. Members who clearly agree with his view that the current arrangements for scrutinising European Community legislation in Westminster have not proved satisfactory.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): The right hon. Lady said that the Labour party has to make a choice, but do not we all have to make a choice? Either we have democratic parliamentary self-government or we can have the treaty of Rome, but we cannot have both. Hon. Members from all parts of the House have to make that choice. The right hon. Lady has to make that choice.

Mrs. Chalker: The House has made that choice, and I understand that recently the Labour party has also made that choice. I am very worried that the hon. Gentleman may be out of kilter with his Front Bench, but that is not for the House to worry about, as it is a matter for him and for the Labour Front Bench.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Is the right hon. Lady aware that the Labour party has not discussed membership of the European Community for a number of years? A committee has made those decisions, and the matter still has to be discussed at the Labour party conference. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) will be called to speak this afternoon and will put a somewhat different case from that which has been developed by others.

No one should think that all Conservative Members are united on the question of the European Community. They are also divided because the nation is divided and we shall have to work out a solution that is satisfactory to the people. That discussion will continue for some considerable time.

Mrs. Chalker: Sometimes I think that the Labour party will never change. It is still the same dinosaur, the head not knowing what the tail is feeling. However, let me return to scrutiny.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mrs. Chalker: I should have thought that my hon. Friend would want me to talk about scrutiny.

Mr. Budgen: No doubt my right hon. Friend will move on to that in a moment.

My right hon. Friend dismissed the suggestion of my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) rather too quickly. Does she agree that, if not in the next few weeks, at some time in future, we are about to test the constitutional check on the Community of the European Court? At present that is a political court. It does not judge narrow laws by narrow criteria; it applies political tests of policy. Is it not true that there is no need for a senate, because the EEC has something approaching a supreme court which fulfils more or less that function? When the British Government come to test the effect of the Community, as they are bound to do in future disputes, we shall find out how legal or political that court is.

Mrs. Chalker: I look forward to reading and hearing the results of cases taken to the European Court of Justice. On many occasions when we have had cause to raise with the Commission or with the European Court of Justice the rules that we have followed, they have been found to be absolutely legal and legitimate. I am sure that that will be the case in future.

Mr. Budgen: What about the tobacco directive?

Mrs. Chalker: I shall come to tobacco later, as my hon. Friend is obviously seized by the issue.

I return to what I believe to be the House's real anxiety about scrutiny. I recognise it, and some hon. Members will remember that I referred to it in some detail in a debate in March. I know that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House has been working hard on this issue to try to help hon. Members to resolve matters so that we get a situation that is much more consistent with the views expressed by hon. Members.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Before the right hon. Lady leaves that matter, will she confirm that the problem is not just one of scrutiny, because when she and other Ministers to go Brussels the decisions that they reach are reached under prerogative powers? That is to say that there is no obligation, requirement or precedent for the House of Commons to give judgment on treaty making. Every law, whether on smoking, workers' rights or health, is made under prerogative. That is the problem. The question is not only whether we are told what the Government will do, but how that ancient constitutional question which reopens controversies of the 17th century is to be dealt with so that hon. Members can control Ministers using Crown powers to make in secret laws that apply in this country.

Mrs. Chalker: I have heard the right hon. Gentleman on this issue on a number of occasions, and I have also heard some of his hon. Friends and some of mine speaking about it. It is right that the Leader of the House, in co-operation with the Scrutiny Committee, and the Procedure Committee, should be discussing these issues. It is not for me to say how we should resolve matters in the best interests of the necessary scrutiny that the House should undertake. It is right that the efforts being made by the Leader of the House should be strongly supported.

Mr. Leighton *rose*——

Mrs. Chalker: I shall not give way again. We were asked to be brief and I have allowed about five interventions in the first 12 minutes. Now I want to get on with the debate.

Mr. Leighton: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. the Minister has made it quite clear that she is not giving way.

Mr. Leighton: *On a point of order. Would it not help* the debate if we could get a clear answer to an important constitutional point? My right hon. Friend——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order; it is a point for debate.

Mrs. Chalker: I should like to return to the issue of scrutiny because it is important. The volume of work in Brussels has meant constant work for all of us, not least for the House. Single market measures have added to an already heavy legislative load. In 1988 we had a record number of debates on EC matters—39 debates on 109 documents. This year the pace has continued and, as hon. Members know only too well, we have had eight debates on 13 documents in the last fortnight.

I am aware that hon. Members consider these late-night debates to be a growing burden on the House. As most hon. Members know, my right hon. Friend the Lord President is looking at that matter because we want to improve the present system of EC legislation scrutiny. I look forward to hearing the comments of hon. Members on new ways of carrying out the scrutiny process.

In 1988 we saw excellent progress towards building the type of single market that is wanted by all the people of Europe. It is built on free market principles of encouraging enterprise, developing consumer choice and seeking higher growth. That is how we shall achieve greater prosperity for all in Britain and in the Community.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I am very pleased to hear that our right hon. Friend the Leader of the House is considering giving better powers of scrutiny to the House in some way or other. Could my right hon. Friend share with us at this early stage some of the ideas that are running through her mind so that we can get our minds working on similar lines?

Mrs. Chalker: I would be foolish in the extreme to share secrets with my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) because they would no longer remain secret. Views and ideas should be forwarded via the Leader of the House to the Scrutiny Committee and the Procedure Committee. I hope that my hon. Friend will do that.

I should like to continue on the topic of the single market because that has been responsible for the main part of our work in the second half of last year and certainly forms a large part of the scrutiny that I have described. The treaty of Rome has always been a charter for economic liberalism. These policies are working well in the United Kingdom and now our partners want them to work throughout the European Community.

Last year we agreed nearly 100 single market measures. Fifty-four were achieved under the Greek presidency in the period under review in our debate. That means that we have agreed nearly half of the total from the Commission's White Paper. In short, there can be no turning back—a fact well recognised by the Heads of Government at the Hanover summit. The measures that we have agreed are opening markets and encouraging enterprise. Exchange controls will be abolished for most member states by 1990. Britain did it in 1979 and other partners are now following suit. Nine years later we and the Commission have had to persuade the remainder to do likewise. This step will bring considerable benefits to consumers, traders and the business community.

In 1988 we provided for the phasing out of lorry quotas. We abolished restrictions on non-life insurance and on the right of professionals to practise Communitywide. We adopted rules that will force liberalisation in public purchasing which accounts for no less than 15 per cent. of Community GDP. We adopted numerous constructive measures in the fields of financial services standards and food law. That is how committed Europeans work in practice, steadily advancing the ideals that they believe in.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): My right hon. Friend has said something that is most worrying. Who has told her that there is liberalisation in non-life insurance? That is not the case. I have carefully read the directive on insurance companies. It is proposed that in six countries there will be an element of liberality on what are called large risks, which means that we might be able to insure the Eiffel Tower if the French would consider it. There is also what is called the "cunul" rule which was put in by the Commission. It says that if one state considers that it can offer the same service it has power not to let other states in. The Minister has said that liberalisation will come about and, of course, it would be wonderful if that were to happen, but I am afraid that whoever told her that there will be complete liberality on non-life insurance was talking a load of rubbish.

Mrs. Chalker: I do not like to say this to my hon. Friend, but I am afraid I must tell him that he has not got it quite right. I shall ask the expert on the subject, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, specifically to address that point in his winding-up speech because it obviously worries my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor).

Before my hon. Friend asked that question I was telling the House that we have been working steadily to advance the ideals in which we believe. But there are some genuine market needs that require other decisions. Competition policy must be enforced. We must tackle trade-distorting state aids. British policy has given a clear lead here. About one eightieth of our GDP goes in subsidies. Per employee, we give less subsidy than any other member state, and quite right too. The French, Germans and Italians all spend far too much. That distorts competition and damages Europe's ability to compete in the wider world.

The year 1988 was much more than a watershed in the single market. Its achievements were made possible only by the hard-fought deal that we secured at the Brussels European Council in February 1988. By the end of the year, we had clear evidence that those reforms were working. Agricultural expenditure was being brought firmly under control and intervention stocks were falling rapidly. The result is that agricultural spending is expected to be below the agreed ceiling in 1989. The February 1988 deal is bearing fruit.

As I said in our debate in March, many other things must be done as well. The problem of fraud is a serious budget challenge which requires serious action. That is why Britain took the initiative to put fraud high up the Community agenda. Our efforts have been instrumental in ensuring proper discussion of the annual report of the

[Mrs. Chalker]

Court of Auditors by the Council of Economic and Finance Ministers. Such reports are helping to highlight the nature of fraud and the possible counter measures. Anti-fraud measures are now being built into agricultural regulations and into regulations governing payment of own resources.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Before my right hon. Friend leaves the question of fraud, will she tell us whether she believes that fraud should be controlled by the Commission—which is not the case at the moment—or whether it should continue to be controlled by the nation states involved?

Mrs. Chalker: We must work out a way in which nation states are involved as well as the Commission. If one nation state is accusing another, we require the involvement of the Commission to resolve the problem. The Court of Auditors, which is already working so well, can help greatly to detect and deter fraud. That is what we are all about.

In the second half of 1988, Britain also secured a good deal from the structural funds. The United Kingdom has received more money from the European social fund than anyone else—both this year and last—totalling more than £400 million each year. We have also had particular success in obtaining funds from the European regional development fund for projects in Scotland, with more than £70 million for the Highlands and Islands integrated operation and more than £230 million for Strathclyde. We are now working hard on programmes for areas such as Merseyside, Manchester, Salford, Trafford, Tyne and Wear and Birmingham.

Although the 1992 process is going well, we must be alert to the risks to that process. In particular, we must fight any revival of the negative view in Europe that encourages the function of Governments to be one of interference and over-regulation. The success of the single market is based on deregulation, and so it must continue. However, there are some people in Europe, including some Opposition Members, who believe that the process requires new or detailed harmonised social legislation involving great grand schemes of social engineering. That leads to proposals such as that expounded by Commissioner Papandreou which would override differing national needs and practices. There is no case for Communitywide legislation requiring compulsory forms of worker participation. Such matters are best left to the market.

Of course, we want European action in some areas of social legislation. As the White Paper makes clear, last December we adopted an important framework regulation on health and safety at work. That must now be followed up with more detailed directives.

However, we must be selective. We shall fight hard against unnecessary social engineering. We see no need for the type of wide-ranging social charter that the Commission is now proposing. That would stifle the growth that will provide lasting jobs for Europe's unemployed. We shall therefore oppose it.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): It is very important that we do not take a negative attitude on Europe. Will my right hon. Friend therefore confirm that no one, unless motivated by political malice, could accuse us of being negative about Europe if we argue for a genuinely free single market in which consumers are given the maximum opportunity to choose from competing systems of practice? That freedom of choice will be denied if Brussels insists on harmonising too many of those competing practices.

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend has expressed a philosophy which I share with him.

I do not want there to be any doubt about what I am saying. There is a social dimension to Europe. It should involve the provision of training and retraining, the creation of new employment and securing further reductions in unemployment. However, that should come about as a result of deregulation and economic liberalisation. It should not occur as the result of forced decisions such as those we have heard mooted among some members of the Community. The social dimension must not involve the creation of new regulations which will hamper business.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): I warmly welcome this part of the new twin-track foreign policy. I now understand that we are going to fight against the social charter and social engineering in Europe. Will my right hon. Friend give us chapter and verse about the legal basis on which we will veto or challenge and block, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister assured us that she would at Question Time this afternoon, the rest of the Community's apparent enthusiasm for the social charter? If we are going to exercise a veto, what is the legal basis for that action?

Mrs. Chalker: I will give my hon. Friend some information. Now that Commissioner Papandreou has spelt out her ideas and intentions in some detail, we have discovered that she wants a solemn declaration. That is not a proposal for legislation as such. Any solemn declaration requires consensus. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister spelt out our view very clearly earlier this afternoon.

We shall have to see how the Commission follows up that view. At the moment, we simply have newspaper reports of plans which would give us great doubts and cause us to fight such proposals were they to come forward in the form of a directive.

There is definitely a social dimension, as I have just explained. But the proposed charter would take us in one direction only; it would create unemployment, not more jobs. That is why it is so clearly unacceptable to the Government.

Mr. Benn: The Minister spoke earlier about scrutiny by the House of Commons. Now she is talking about scrutiny by Ministers. Tory Back Benchers have questioned whether the Government are impotent to stop a charter because they have signed the Single European Act.

Mrs. Chalker: No.

Mr. Benn: Oh, yes. It is easy to repeat the rhetoric of Bruges. However, that rhetoric has no constitutional foundation, given the Single European Act. I shall be grateful if the Minister will tell us whether the British Government, let alone Members of Parliament, have any power to stop the charter if it emerges as an almost unanimously agreed directive.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West) *rose*——

Mrs. Chalker: I have already explained that the idea of the social charter is that it is a solemn declaration. It is not in directive form. If it came forward as a directive, it would state whether it was subject to qualified majority voting or to unanimity. When we know the details, we will be able to decide exactly what we should do. I am not prepared to answer hypothetical questions when there are no directives relating to the solemn declaration outlined by Commissioner Papandreou.

Equally, I see no need for the Community to be involved in detailed areas of domestic policy such as classroom education.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Let me help my right hon. Friend. If she has not seen the charter, my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) has a copy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order. This is a short debate and continuous interruptions prolong speeches.

Mrs. Chalker: As I said, we see no need for the Community to be involved in detailed areas of domestic policy such as classroom education or any of the other matters on which some commissioners seek to intervene. Decisions on such issues belong to national competence. That is in accordance with the treaty of Rome, and so it should remain.

On 17 April we had the publication of the Delors committee report on economic and monetary co-operation. That has also excited considerable interest. The committee was charged by all Heads of Government at the Hanover European Council in June 1988

"with the task of studying and proposing concrete stages leading towards economic and monetary union".

The Committee produced a thorough analysis. The report makes abundantly clear that economic and monetary union would take a very long time and require substantial treaty amendment. On the basis of the report, even the most ardent proponents would not claim that EMU was possible until well into next century, but it is not on the current agenda.

Many aspects of monetary co-operation are already on the agenda. Some have been there for many years. We can and should discuss them now. They include the financial aspects of completion of the single market such as capital liberalisation and improved economic and monetary co-operation.

In addition, we support other practical measures including the wider use of the privately traded ecu, and its use where appropriate in intervention; and increased holdings of EC currencies in foreign exchange reserves.

That is a substantial programme of technical measures. The Community should now concentrate on such practical steps, on which the United Kingdom already has a fine record. Britain has led the way in abolishing capital controls. We led the way in issuing Treasury bills denominated and payable in ecu. We hold ecu and a variety of EC currencies in the reserves.

So the Government will press for a procedure for working out, in the Council of Economic and Finance Ministers and the monetary committee, how best to ensure that more of the right practical steps of co-operation are taken.

Let me say a brief word about the extra dimension of the EC's relating with its neighbours and trading partners. The Community must look beyond Europe, as we have always done. There must be no fortress Europe. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said some time ago:

"the expansion of the world economy requires us to continue the process of removing barriers to trade. It would be a betrayal if, while breaking down constraints on trade within Europe, the Community were to erect greater external protection. We must ensure that our approach to world trade is consistent with the liberalisation we preach at home".

That message was well accepted by the whole Community. As the European Council said at Rhodes,

"the single market will not close in on itself".

The current GATT round gives the Community the chance to prove that it means what it says. In Britain, the Government intend to ensure that the reality reflects the rhetoric. The Uruguay round is crucial to the future of the world trading system. If it does not succeed, we shall all suffer.

The forthcoming European elections will give us a chance to hear what the people of Europe have to say on all those issues. They will also allow us to campaign on our European ideals and commitment. Our critics complain that we have joined the Community, but will not play by the rules. That is a travesty. Britain sticks to the rules and we work hard for British interests. Where we do not like the rules we seek to change them.

The Labour party plays only for its own electoral interests. That is why its approach to Europe is so different from the Government's. Our approach to Europe has an enormous advantage. It will be supported by the British people, as it always has been when Britain has a key role to play in the world. Every time that the British people have had to choose between success and failure over the last 10 years, they have chosen success.

I commend the motion to the House.

5.54 pm

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): I beg to move, as an amendment to the Question, at the end to add:

'regrets that the condition of the British economy after 10 years of this Government leaves this country grosaly ill-prepared for the challenge of the Single European Market; notes that Britain trails behind its main competitors in major social areas and that, in the light of the Single European Act enacted on a whipped vote and on a guillotine timetable set by the Government headed by the present Prime Minister, the level of accountability on decision-making to the House is totally inadequate; and calls for an approach to the European Community which is based on co-operation on policies for growth, environmental and regional protection, the valued contribution of women, and the central rôle of a high standard social agenda.'.

It is interesting that this debate, so long delayed, was opened by the Minister of State. There were repeated rumours this week that the Foreign Secretary would open it. In view of the renewed interest in the subject in the country, and particularly in the Conservative party, one would have thought that the Foreign Secretary might have graced us with his presence this evening. The Foreign Secretary chose to make a major speech this week at the CBI dinner and he was interviewed from the radio car for the Radio 4 "Today" programme this morning. The only place that has not been graced with his presence as chief spokesman for the Government on this important matter is the House.

The Minister of State is assisted today not by her usual sidekick, the Paymaster General, who is also the chairman of the Tory party but is clearly being protected from his own troops this evening, but by another Postman Pat from

[Mr. George Robertson]

the Department of Trade and Industry. In view of the importance of the issue, the House has been short-changed.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher) *rose*——

Mr. Robertson: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman. He has had a fair amount of air time this week on the radio in the family feud that has broken out inside the Conservative party, which we might come to at an appropriate time.

The Minister of State said that there is a new Conservative party policy on Europe. It is defined as being twin-track.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): Since the hon. Gentleman's words are on the record, should it not also be on the record how few Opposition Members are present?

Mr. Robertson: That was not even clever. It betokens the Government's embarrassment at their divisions that that is the sort of level to which the debate can drop.

A twin-track approach has been well on display this week in the Conservative party. It means facing both ways at the same time. There have been two sets of early-day motions, two sets of letters to *The Times*, two sets of books being deployed, with two distinct and wildly contradictory views being put over.

The Government are in a hopeless mess. The federalists are at the throats of the nationalists. The maximatists are chewing up the minimalists. The free traders are against the regulators. Sovereignty obsessives are against the European union visionaries.

The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) and Lord Cockfield, Lord Plumb and the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine)—the last three of whom used to be in the magic circle, in which the Minister of State still is, however tenuously—are now arraigned against this upside-down Britannia.

The Prime Minister, who signed the Single European Act with its commitments to European union and majority voting, increased powers for the European Parliament, who rushed it through the House of Commons with the aid of a whipped vote and a guillotine, then forgot that she had done it all. They said of Ronald Reagan in the case of Irangate, "Guilty but asleep". Is it amnesia or hypocrisy that afflicts the Prime Minister?

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Gentleman has gone through a farrago of falsehoods. Let us try to get some of the facts right. Can I just put one correction to him? There is but one EDM from the Conservative party on the Order Paper this week, and it starts off with the words "supports the Prime Minister".

Mr. Robertson: It is nice to see the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) in the House and taking time off from running his fairground. I know that the Prime Minister will be personally reassured that he and his hon. and right hon. Friends who signed that early-day motion were actually supporting her.

The Prime Minister signed the Single European Act three years ago with her eyes wide open. It is sheer brass neck theatrically to denounce now the fact that we are being out-voted, which was the very consequence of her signature. The Prime Minister is legendary as the mistress of detail. No item is too small to escape her omnipotent gaze, so her bleating now about what is coming on to the European agenda is bogus and wholly incredible. She supervised the reduction in Westminster's powers of decision. She supervised the workings of faceless networks of the national civil servants who really determine European law. It is the Prime Minister who suppresses information, and it is she who keeps the doors closed on the meetings of the Council of Ministers at which decisions are ultimately made. The Prime Minister has worked hard to keep Parliament in the dark about the actions taken by her Ministers in our name.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. Francis Maude): Did the hon. Gentleman support the Single European Act?

Mr. Robertson: That demonstrates the cleverness of the Minister at the Dispatch Box. I say to the hon. Gentleman, who comes new to these debates, that I stood at this Dispatch Box to oppose the Single European Act on behalf of my party. My right hon. and hon. Friends and I warned the Prime Minister and her right hon. and hon. Friends about what they were letting us in for. We warned her about the likely consequences of the majority voting increase. I voted in the Lobbies against the Single European Act. That is on the record—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo), who makes so much noise, can confirm the voting record for himself. When that decision was made and the treaty was signed, we made clear the reality that we would all have to live with. I take exception——

Mr. Teddy Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Robertson: I wish that the hon. Gentleman would exercise some patience.

The Prime Minister forced the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office to sign the document on her behalf, and she forced it through the House with inadequate debate—yet she now tells the world that she did not realise what she was getting signed. That is what the issue is all about.

Mr. Taylor: Am I wholly wrong in saying only 10 of the hon. Gentleman's right hon. and hon. Friends voted against the Bill's Third Reading? I believe that some of them are present in the Chamber now.

Mr. Robertson: That is complete nonsense. The hon. Gentleman can split hairs, and I cannot remember the precise time of day at which that Division took place.

Mr. Taylor: I will find that out for the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Robertson: We all say farewell to the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) as he leaves the Chamber. No doubt he will return, and we shall see whether he has his calculator with him.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Whatever may have been the numbers voting on the Bill's Third Reading, does my hon. Friend recall that the final guillotined Committee and Third Reading stages took place very late at night? Does he recall also that in the programme "On the Record" broadcast last Sunday, the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), who has a particular record on these matters, stated that the Prime Minister signed the Single European Act—although it was really signed by the

Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office—with great reluctance? Does my hon. Friend recall also that, when the Prime Minister returned from the Stuttgart summit on other matters concerning European union, she could not cite any mandate for the Stuttgart arrangement—and I believe that there was no mandate for the Single European Act either?

Mr. Robertson: My hon. Friend, whose credentials can never be questioned, makes a significant point in respect of the guillotined debates.

Mr. Michael Knowles (Nottingham, East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) claims that there was no mandate for the Single European Act, which was the subject of the hon. Gentleman's question to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is a point of debate, not a point of order.

Mr. Robertson: My hon. Friend made a significant point, particularly in view of the Minister's comments about the inadequacy of the scrutiny given by the House to European legislation and of her promise that more would be done. Right hon. and hon. Members who sat through previous European debates recall only too well that those promises have been made before. We can only hope that the Select Committee on Procedure will take on board the serious points made by right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House.

I can cite one piece of evidence illustrating the Government's culpability. It may stagger right hon. and hon. Members and the public to know that the last oral statement to the House on the Foreign Affairs Council of Ministers—which is the most senior of all councils and is now so important that it is called the General Affairs Council—was made on 17 December 1986. It is two and one half years since the Prime Minister or the Foreign Secretary reported to the House on a meeting of the Council of Ministers, which is an astonishing record for a Prime Minister who dares to attack the Brussels bureaucracy. For the Prime Minister to posture as the last barrier in the way of a European super-state is breathtaking and sheer nerve. It will not convince many of the British people, who throughout history have despised counterfeit posturing and double standards in their leaders.

The Prime Minister has now served up the embers of the typically genteel Tory disagreement about what kind of future there should be for Europe, but it has been transformed into a blazing war which, like the aged leadership in Beijing, she watches helplessly, not knowing how to control it.

Last September in Bruges, the Prime Minister spoke of a European super-state and that concept, along with the "Socialists and standardisers" among her Right-wing fellow leaders, is still her chief target. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup described that as

"an abuse—an attempt to mislead the public on the nature of the European Community."

He might well do so, because a pamphlet published by Tory central office entitled "50 Questions and Answers on the European Community" posed the question:

"Isn't Britain becoming part of a United States of Europe?"

The answer given is:

"No. The Prime Minister has made the Conservative position quite clear. Progress toward completion of the Single Market by 1992 is NOT synonymous with progress towards a so-called 'United States of Europe' or a surrender of our independence, sovereignty or national identity."

So what is all the claptrap that we hear about a European super-state?

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): Although many right hon. and hon. Members welcome the Labour party's conversion to the European cause, can the hon. Gentleman say whether Labour now welcomes the Single European Act and all its consequences, as well as common taxation harmonised in Brussels and not fixed in this country?

Mr. Robertson: The answer to the hon. Gentleman's first question is no, but we shall have to live with it. The answer to his second question is also no.

To cover up the economic weakness brought upon this country by her Government and the consequent vulnerability of our industry and commerce within the single European market place, and to divert attention from the social backwardness of our country as we face the challenges of real competition from our partners in the continent, this dishonest bogey of the Brussels super-state has been erected.

"Socialism by the back door" they call what most Conservatives in West Germany, the continent's most successful economy, regard as simple prerequisites for an effective single market. So-called Socialist and standardising bureaucrats are abused, although this central office pamphlet points out that there are fewer officials working in the European Commission than are employed by one borough council or even in the Tory-run Scottish Office in Edinburgh.

At a time of maximum challenge for Europe, with the single market looming before us, with Japanese and American competition looming over us, with opportunities for co-operation in science and technology and in environmental protection, when all these matters are there to be solved, with immense prizes or penalties for the people of this country, the Prime Minister's obsessive interest is in suppressing dissent in her Cabinet about the European monetary system, obstructing the creation of what the Foreign Secretary on Tuesday night at the CBI dinner called

"a level playing-field for Communitywide competition",

with the "high level of protection" that is mentioned in the Single European Act, and imposing from above, from No. 10 Downing street——

Mr. Teddy Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Robertson: Perhaps the hon. Member for Southend, East would just wait—opposing from above and from No. 10 a blinkered, limited big-business vision of Europe on Tory MEP candidates, Members of the House and, of course, her tired and browned-off colleagues within the Council of Ministers.

I give way for the last time to the hon. Member for Southend, East.

Mr. Taylor: In view of what the hon. Gentleman said about this dramatic battle which the Labour party put up against this frightful Single European Act, which is undermining our democracy and which has caused all these troubles, how can he explain the fact that, on 10 July 1986, on this great vote on this historic occasion, there

[Mr. Taylor]

were around 20 Members of the Labour party present to vote against it? If it is so important, how was it that the Labour party on that occasion, as on so many others, treated such a vital issue with such contempt—as they are doing today, with a handful of its supporters here discussing the situation?

Mr. Robertson: The hon. Member, before he struggled out of the Chamber, told us that it was 10 Labour Members. It is now 20, so that is double what he said. Even when he was living on the precipice in Glasgow, Cathcart he could recognise that as a slight error of judgment.

If the hon. Member for Southend, East had been present during all the hours for which we debated the Single European Act and all the divisions that we had, if he had been able to deliver any of the promised rebellions from his colleagues—all the ones who are making the noise now—perhaps the decision would have been remarkably different. If he had waited for a few more minutes in the Chamber he would have heard my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) say that the key votes at that time were not on Third Reading but at an earlier stage, because the hon. Member for Southend, East did a deal with the Leader of the House on the timing of that debate so that it took place at a far later hour than anybody could possibly have envisaged.

Mrs. Chalker: We have heard quite a lot from the hon. Gentleman about the absence of scrutiny, badly timed debates and inadequate control of technical legislation, and we hear quite a lot about 10 pm debates. We now have a debate in prime time on the Floor of the House, and what happens? Opposition Members are not here, and those of them who do turn up go on bickering about voting history. It does not augur well for the Labour party in Europe.

Mr. Robertson: The bickering about voting records is coming from the right hon. Lady's side of the House. If all her hon. Friends were here to support her this evening, I would be extremely surprised, because it is not the usual situation at all.

At the heart of the family squabble that has broken out in the Prime Minister's party is the Prime Minister's style in the Community. It is a flamboyant but notably unproductive style. It gets her noticed, but it rarely produces the goods for Britain. It produces fireworks and reactions from others but it alienates our friends and isolates our country. Britain is continually sidelined, marginalised and out-manoeuvred. That, we are to believe, is the mark of a patriot—the best European of all, as she proclaims in today's *Daily Mail*. But the real test is there and can be measured.

The reverberations of the Bruges speech may well be ringing round Europe, but how is this country faring, for instance, in the committees that will determine the technical standards that will apply in the single European market of 1992? There are two major standardising committees: one is CEN—the European Committee for Standardisation—and the other is CENELEC—the European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardisation. There are 73 chairmanships and secretariats in the control of the Federal Republic of Germany, with only 47 in the hands of Britain. No wonder Mr. John Banham, the director general of the CBI, said this:

"Britain is not putting enough resources behind the present negotiations in Brussels over standards, and this would be a very expensive mistake when we find we have to comply with German or French standards in the new trading environment of 1992."

This is more of an acid test of the British Community policy than anything we heard about in the Minister's speech this evening, and we fail that test by a mile. As the right hon. Member for Henley so eloquently put it in his book published last weekend—no doubt we shall hear from him if he catches your eye later this evening, Mr. Deputy Speaker:

"Every hostile speech provokes at best despair, at worst contempt. The French and the Germans, at every sign of British aloofness, draw closer together."

That says it all—and that is somebody who is in the know and was once part of the charmed magic circle.

All the time, our economic position makes our bargaining position weaker and weaker. Our inflation rate is still higher than that of our competitors and is rising. Our interest rates are among the highest and they are not falling. Our trade deficit, especially with our Community partners, has now reached historic and crippling proportions.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford) *rose*——

Mr. Robertson: No, I have given way enough. Hon. Members have a right to speak later in the debate. I am not giving way.

In 1980 our trade in manufactured goods with Europe was roughly in balance.

Mr. Cash: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Robertson: In normal circumstances I would do so, but it would be unfair to the hon. Gentleman's hon. Friends who wish to speak later in the debate.

In 1980, our trade in manufactured goods with Europe was roughly in balance. Today it is in deficit by over £14 billion. In 1980, our manufacturing deficit with West Germany was £550 million, even then not a good figure, but in 1988 it had risen to £8 billion. Our deficit with France has doubled in eight years. Our deficit with Italy has increased by eight times in those eight years. Only with Greece and Ireland do we achieve a surplus. Yet the Prime Minister had the audacity, in a letter to me two weeks ago, to say:

"In manufactured goods, the import/export ratio has been doing rather better vis-à-vis the rest of the EC than with the rest of the world."

If one can produce these statistics in relation to the Community, that says a lot about the rest of the world.

This is a vivid example of how politicians can use, abuse and devalue statistics. This is the real indictment of this Government's policy in the Community. It has left Britain's economy pitifully weak to face the challenge of the European market and has kept us so socially backward that our opportunities will be all the more limited. That is why the partisan, dogmatic and self-defeating attitude to the social dimension so debilitates Britain's future.

Mr. Butterfill *rose*——

Mr. Robertson: No, I am not giving way again.

In addition to the crippling interest rates and the rising tide of imports, our level of investment in manufacturing

is lower than it was in 1979 when this Government came to power. Our training-in-skills record is appalling and we invest only 10 per cent. of what West Germany does in this field. Our investment in non-military research and development as a percentage of gross national product is the lowest of all advanced European industrialised countries.

The percentage of our population who are receiving higher education is lower than the equivalent percentage in Germany, France, Belgium, Denmark and the Netherlands, and our industries—open to the world as they are—stand acutely and uniquely vulnerable to takeovers, asset stripping and being swallowed up. But yesterday, without even a sight of the Commission's proposed social charter—an outline of a social charter—Ministers were pushed out into the street to condemn it out of hand, despite the fact that that document derives from one of the conclusions reached at the Rhodes summit and subscribed to by the Prime Minister. That conclusion stated that the

"European Council awaits such proposals as the Commission might consider useful to submit having drawn inspiration from the Social Charter of the Council of Europe."

The social charter is a binding instrument passed by the Council of Europe and voted for by the United Kingdom Government. It was presented yesterday by Madame Papandreou, voted for by all but one of the Commissioners—and described by the Prime Minister today as a Socialist charter.

The European Community has an economic and social committee made up of representatives from industry and the trade unions, as well as a good many independent people—academics and others—who were appointed by their individual Governments to sit and consider such matters. The social charter was put to that committee on 22 February, and only 22 out of 165 people voted against what the Prime Minister has today described as a Socialist charter.

On Monday this week, the Secretary of State for Health was sent to Brussels to be humiliated and out-voted by 11 to one on a simple, sensible protective scheme for cancer warnings on cigarette packets. Having experienced such humiliation—as a member of the Cabinet—the Secretary of State would have opened his *Daily Mail* today with fascinated interest to read the Prime Minister's comment to Sir David English that the scheme was

"This tobacco thing, the thing on the packet, it is not worth making a song and dance about . . . On its own it is not worth fighting about."

Now the Secretary of State for Health knows why he was sent out there: to be humiliated over something that was "not worth fighting about".

Mr. Budgen *rose*——

Mr. Robertson: No, let me finish my catalogue of the Government's humiliations.

Next Monday the Secretary of State for Education will be sent to try to veto the Lingua project, a sensible plan to encourage more language teaching in schools and more exchanges of young people. That programme has no legislative consequences for this country, but we know that it is deeply desirable, and the Department of Education and Science was positively enthusiastic when it was originally floated here. We are also about to sabotage the Commission's plan on health and safety, despite the strong support that the Secretary of State had given it. Now we want to veto its plan to allow pensioners to share travel concessions in individual countries.

Mr. Budgen *rose*——

Mr. Robertson: I shall give way very briefly.

Mr. Budgen: I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman shares my view of the European Court. Does he regard it as a political court? The Prime Minister must regard it as one. There is a great issue of principle involved in what constitutes a measure directed towards improving the internal market. If the Prime Minister is not prepared to authorise the testing of that principle in the court, it is plain that she has no real faith in the court and regards it as a political rather than a legal organisation.

Mr. Robertson: Reading the interview in today's *Daily Mail*, I wondered why the Prime Minister signed the Single European Act in the first place, and also whether she fully understands what she signed even now. Sir David English understood the point that the hon. Gentleman has made, but it is clear from the answer that she gave him that the Prime Minister does not understand the technicalities of what she let herself in for when she signed the Act, or gave authority for the signature. Paragraph 3 of article 100A states:

"The Commission, in its proposals envisaged in paragraph 1 concerning health, safety, environmental protection and consumer protection, will take as a base a high level of protection."

I do not know whether the Prime Minister managed to convince herself, in the amazingly flamboyant interview in the *Daily Mail* which takes up the front page as well as two inside pages, but it is clear from the paper's editorial that she did not persuade Sir David English. The editorial, placed next to the interview, says:

"We admire her spirit. But we wonder about her tactics . . . When she approved with such a magisterial flourish her Government's signature to the Single European Act in 1986, did she fully realise the implications of what she was doing?".

Sir David may have got his knighthood, but I doubt that he will get the peerage for which he was probably aiming when he devoted three pages of his paper to the matter.

Mr. Cash *rose*——

Mr. Robertson: No, I have gone far too far.

When will the Government realise that our European partners—whether they be Conservative, Liberal, Social Democrat or Socialist—believe that the same high standards mentioned in the Single European Act in relation to health and safety and working practices, in the workplace as well as in the environment, are prerequisites for the working of the single market? Our partners will not be held back by a British Government who believe in minimum standards.

Let me offer one helpful comment to the Minister of State, who I know does not share the prevailing view in the Government about the level playing field for competition referred to by the Foreign Secretary. Speaking at the Institute of Directors conference, the ambassador from the Federal Republic of Germany said:

"Our success in attaining the internal market depends in a very real way on simultaneous integration in the social field. We should work as far as possible and practicable for parity in social security and social benefits, in occupational safety requirements, vocational training, and last but not least in the field of worker participation.

[Mr. Robertson]

Those are the words of a representative of a centre-Right Government, lecturing our Government on what may happen.

Mr. Butterfill *rose*——

Mr. Robertson: No, I will not give way.

The Minister of State made the point that, before the next six-monthly debate on the European Community, the British electorate would have a chance to give its verdict on the conflicting visions presented to it on 15 June this year. Perhaps that will be a better test of opinion than any debate we have had in the House. The electorate will, of course, be confronted by the confusion on the Conservative Benches. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup has said that he will campaign for those who believe in the vision that he stands for. No doubt the right hon. Member for Henley will support another small group of elite candidates, and the rest will be told precisely what to say by No 10 Downing street.

Alternative and sharp visions will, however, be on display in the election: visions of a party that wants to take Britain back to the little England of the past, and sees no future in Europe except in the deregulated free-for-all for big business, or of a party that is committed to Europewide co-operation and believes in doing for the environment what can be done only at European level; a party that is willing to cleanse our beaches, our rivers and our water supplies; a party that is willing to tackle multinational companies and unemployment without the Community; a party committed to protecting the vulnerable regions, industries, firms and people within the Community.

That depends on a party that believes in the Community, in co-operation and in mutual respect, in an atmosphere of building majorities and of political give and take which we all, barring the Prime Minister, know is the essential reality for any domestic or multinational system. It is in the Prime Minister's blindness to the dangers facing the country, her unpreparedness and her casual, careless disdain for the new politics of Europe that we see the threat to the country and disaster for the Conservative party.

6.20 pm

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): I suppose that most of us are now Europeans of some sort, but what kind of Europe each of us wants seems to be a proper subject on which right hon. and hon. Members may differ. The representation on the two Front Benches is eloquent testimony that there are differences on both sides of the House. I could not identify in the speech of the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) any clear Labour party view about Europe. He had a certain amount of fun trying to knock down various Aunt Sallies, but I could not understand the Labour vision.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Minister of State on the speech with which she opened the debate, both for what she said and for what, perhaps wisely, she did not say. She was absolutely right to emphasise the contribution that we have made in the last decade to the development of the European Community and more particularly to the single market, which is in wide measure our creation. We have had great influence in liberalising and in reducing expenditure on the agricultural policy which had got out of hand. We have benefited from the rather brazen attack by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on the budget, and it was very much in our interest that she pursued that matter.

We need to continue emphasising the benefits of the current economic and financial thinking in this country which can make a great contribution to Europe, albeit with a certain modesty because we do have the highest rate of inflation in the Community and our living standards are not yet within reach of the living standards of the French, the Germans or, indeed, of the Benelux countries. So when we discuss social and other policies we should appreciate where we stand in comparison with our partners in the Community.

I am glad that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State did not embark on the proposition advanced in certain quarters that the real issue is between national sovereignty and federation. That is a windmill which should not be tilted at because it is not really there. I maintain that it is not, with some experience of the European movement since 1946. Indeed, I will go back further. In London 87 years ago, we proposed that the self-governing countries of the Empire, later the Commonwealth, should federate. The British Government put forward a proposal for a single imperial Government, eventually a single Parliament, a single imperial secretariat, a single navy and a customs union. Money did not come into it—we were all on gold. The proposal was turned down by the Colonies. If we could not get six mainly English-speaking, tremendously loyal and patriotic imperial countries, with only 20 or 30 years of self-government behind them, to federate, it is not likely that the ancient and famous states of Europe will go into a federation, whether directly or by the back door. It just will not happen.

Mr. Spearing *rose*——

Mr. Amery: I am not giving way. Mr. Speaker has asked us to be brief.

As to sovereignty, we have already given up a good deal in other spheres. The biggest surrender has been in the Western European Union, where we have committed ourselves indefinitely to station troops and air forces on the continent.

The whole idea, launched by Alexander Hamilton 150 years ago, that there could be no choice—that there had to be either nation states or federation—has been proved wrong by the British. We had the Commonwealth, which was a great success, with political co-operation, with a preferential union—it was not quite a customs union—with a single reserve currency, sterling, and a joint defence policy. There are lessons from our own history that we can apply with advantage in Europe.

The European Community has been in existence for some 30 years—we were not part of it at the beginning—and it is already more than a Commonwealth, though miles less than a federation, and it will grow in its own mysterious way. When we look back on it, that will be when we can say what kind of constitution it is developing. It will not be federal, and it will be different from the Commonwealth. It will be something new, and only later shall we be able to measure our contribution to it.

I thank and congratulate my right hon. Friend the Minister of State on the delicate way in which she handled

the report of the Delors committee. I must confess that I was slightly shocked by what I would call the kneejerk reaction of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the report when it was published. I was shocked first for protocol reasons. Mr. Delors is a distinguished civil servant. He was previously a politician and may aspire to being one again, but at present he is the appointed, unelected top civil servant of the Commission. He was asked to produce a report and he did so. He is like the secretary to the Cabinet. We do not criticise a Cabinet secretary because we do not like his report. If we want to argue about the Delors report, we should do so with the other Ministers. The Chancellor of the Exchequer should go to the other Finance Ministers. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is against the report. That is building up Mr. Delors unnecessarily. Since I had always understood that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister would like to keep Brussels under control, we should not build up the Commission too much. If Mr. Delors has ambitions for a superstate, he will be delighted at the way in which my right hon. Friend has taken him on.

I was also worried because my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and later my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, fastened on to paragraph 39 of the Delors report, which gives the impression that the Commission would like us to commit ourselves, before we embark on discussions, to the final goal of a single currency and a central bank. I have lived through all this two or three times before. When the Schuman plan was brought forward, we were asked to accept the idea of a supra-national high authority. Of course, such a high authority has never emerged. There is an authority, but it is not supra-national. At Messina we were told that we would have to accept a supra-national high authority, but General De Gaulle saw to it that there never was one.

I was horrified that we should take the matter as seriously as we appeared to have done. So, greatly daring, I went over to Brussels and asked Mr. Delors whether this was a condition or an indication. He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "If I am catching a train from Paris, destination Marseilles, and I find the train uncomfortable, or I change my mind about where to go, can I get off at Dijon or Lyons?" He replied, "Of course you may, and so may any of the other passengers. We simply would like you to have in mind where, on the whole, we think you should be going and where we hope you would like to go. But if experience teaches you that that is not where you want to go, then of course you must be free to get off. You do not surrender sovereignty in that sense."

The next point that worried me was the argument put forward by the Prime Minister that to have a single currency and a single bank must necessitate a federal Government. I am not sure that that is true. We had a single currency in the shape of gold, but all the gold standard countries went to war against each other in 1914, so there was not much sacrifice of sovereignty there. When we went off the gold standard, we produced the sterling currency, which was not a single currency but a reserve one —I shall return to that concept shortly—so I am not sure that it is a logical conclusion to suggest that it is not possible to have a single currency without having a federal Government.

The Delors report is a clever compromise between the maximalists and the minimalists with, as my right hon. Friend the Minister pointed out, the saving grace of not having a timetable, save that it urges those not already in —particularly ourselves—to join the EMS by the summer of 1990. I can see the difficulties. For example, we have 8 per cent. inflation and it would be uncomfortable for us to join unless we can bring that down to a more reasonable figure. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has said that, with God's grace, it will be down to 3 or 4 per cent. by that date. We do not know what the impact of the abandonment of exchange control would be on the French, Italian and other currencies. Delors says that it is already abandoned from the point of view of the corporate sector. We do not know what the effect would be on the private sector. Those are some of the problems that we must face. Let us suppose that we could say, "Not just when the time is right, but when we have got our inflation down and we have been able to study the consequences of abandoning exchange controls by the other countries concerned, then we will join, and we hope that that would not be too far after 1990." I am not demanding that we do that, but I hope that the Government will consider it seriously.

We come to phase two, and a tactical problem arises. All the countries—apart from ourselves and a couple of others—which are members of the EMS start from the EMS in negotiating phase two. Delors sketches what it might be, but it is just a submission from technocrats, officials and some bankers. If we are not in the EMS, we are not at the starting gate. We are not in a position to negotiate about phase two. Yet phase two, it seems, could be of enormous interest to us and we might make a great contribution to it.

In 1931, when we went off the gold standard, all the experts thought that the heavens would fall in. On the contrary, however, we created a reserve currency which became second only to the dollar throughout the world, although it was without any gold or other foundation. It was not a single currency. The various members of the Commonwealth kept their own central banks and control of their money supply and interest rates, but they lodged their reserves with the Bank of England and tried to keep their parities as close as possible. When I described that to Delors, he said "It is close to the phase two that I want to see." I wonder whether we might take the initiative and volunteer to help in creating the second phase, which could be done without any surrender of control of our own money supply or interest rates. We could be helpful. We are the experts in this matter and it is an initiative that we could take.

Phase three commits us to a single currency and a single central bank. It is a fascinating idea, but I do not see how we could conceivably commit ourselves to it because we have no idea what Europe will look like 10 years from now. Will eastern Europe come in? There are all manner of considerations which cannot be foreseen. On the other hand, need we reject it and say that it is unacceptable because of the possible surrender of sovereignty involved? That is why I have said in the past, though nobody really understood why I said it, that I would rather be guided by the words of the hymn:

"Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene; one step enough for me."

On the subject of hymns, there is the splendid one,

"I vow to thee, my country"

that we sing at memorial services, the first verse of which is a total commitment to the defence of the United Kingdom and its interests, and the second a noble

[Mr. Amery]

obeisance to a distant kingdom of which we have heard but never seen. So we might abstain from committing ourselves, but also abstain from rejecting the concept.

We must look at the European picture as it is. At present, all the countries concerned are not being drawn into Brussels but are being pulled in other directions. We have our own immense overseas interests. So have the French, in north and tropical Africa. The Spaniards and Portuguese also have big overseas commitments. Hon. Members will have noticed that the Spaniards have a horrible problem just now in that they have always allowed free immigration from Latin America. Will they be allowed to continue doing that? It would mean the free immigration of Latinos to all the European countries.

The Germans have the Drang nach Osten—they are fascinated by what is happening in the east. I would not exaggerate the importance of the Germans' move to reunification because the east represents only 6 or 7 per cent. of their overseas trade, but they dominate the European monetary system. If we are not in it, they will dominate it. Even if we go in, they will be very important.

I do not know which way the French will go, whether it will be Vichy or Free France. When I put that to M. Delors, he said, "If you come in, you will dilute the German influence, and we would not be against that."

I recall—this is pertinent and conclusive—that I once asked Winston Churchill how we were to reconcile our interests in the Commonwealth, which still existed, with our membership of Europe. He said, "It will not be easy—on the other hand, we must have a united Europe if there is not to be another Franco-German war and if we are to keep the Germans in the Community." And then he said, "A Europe united without us could be a Europe united against us."

6.37 pm

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): It is pleasing to me, as one who has taken part in these European debates for a long time, to see the sudden degree of interest that has been aroused. There was a time when I almost felt inclined to cross the Floor and put my arm around the shoulder of the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) and comfort him in his loneliness.

Things have changed, and it is evident that the Government are well capable of generating a lively debate without even having an Opposition. We have the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), who may catch Mr. Speaker's eye and speak in the debate and who has been talking about the Prime Minister's blind attitude to Europe. *The Sunday Times* quoted him as having referred to the famous fable about the hare and the tortoise. He pointed out that the tortoise won only because the hare stopped running, and he added:

"There is no conceivable prospect that the German, French, Italian, Spanish or any other hares are going to stop every few years to allow a tortoise wrapped in a Union Jack to lumber past."

That is strong stuff, and I agree with it.

The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), who is sadly not with us, said that the Prime Minister's views were absolute rubbish. That was not, perhaps, the most delicately intellectual comment he could have made, but it was pretty direct. Then, Sir Henry Plumb—[HON. MEMBERS: "Lord Plumb".] Lord Plumb, I beg his pardon. One forgets all these ennoblements because they come so quickly one upon the other. Lord Plumb was the leader of the Conservative group in the Strasbourg European Parliament. *The Independent*, on 10 May, said of Lord Plumb:

"While never naming her,"

I hardly need to say who "her" is—

"Lord Plumb will criticise almost every element of Mrs. Thatcher's Bruges campaign, reserving particular poison for the suggestion that Brussels is wilfully creating unnecessary red tape. 'The creation of common rules for a common market . . . will eliminate the pettiness of certain forms of national bureaucratic regulation. 1992 is blowing the whistle on red tape, not creating it'."

His speech also contained a clear defence of the social dimension. Therefore, there is some turmoil in the Government. The Minister began with a flourish——

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): I trust that the hon. Gentleman will make it plain that, on that occasion, Lord Plumb, was speaking not as a Conservative, but as the president of the European Parliament. There is an important distinction.

Sir Russell Johnston: Lord Plumb is the president of the European Parliament, but people do not undergo sea changes of personality when they take on different occupations, tasks and jobs. He is a Conservative. He is a decent chap, but a Conservative.

The Minister began with a great flourish, and went on the attack. I suppose that she was anticipating that others might do likewise. She spoke of the Conservative record in the 1960s, and denigrated the Labour party. I remember the 1960s quite well and the Conservative record in Europe at that time was not so startling.

The Liberal party was the first party to call for entry into the Community. At this election, the Social and Liberal Democrat party is the only one that is committed to both the Single European Act and the freedom that it will generate, and to the kind of social, economic and environmental policies that must necessarily accompany it. We also look forward to further constitutional development.

At the beginning of this debate, much emphasis was placed on scrutiny. We are, after all, gathered to discuss developments that took place in the European Community between July and December of last year. One might say that it is a waste of time because all the water has gone under the bridge. The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), who has temporarily left us, commented on this subject. If we are talking about scrutiny, we must talk about the European Parliament. There is no way in which this House can effectively scrutinise European legislation.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Nonsense.

Sir Russell Johnston: The hon. Lady may say nonsense as much as she likes. That is my considered view. If, however, we talk about making a pre-legislative contribution to what is being put together, that is another question. As a legislative Chamber, we have made very little progress in pre-legislative discussions, although to a degree the Select Committees are carrying out that type of work. If hon. Members are seriously concerned about the fact that they are unable to make a proper contribution to the evolution of European Community policy, the only

effective action will be pre-legislative, so that input can be made which can subsequently be considered and examined. That is the only way forward.

The right hon. Member for Chesterfield went on quite a bit about that, and about Crown prerogative and the fact that when the Government negotiate changes they do so as a Government. The hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) also joined in. The Labour party is in no position to criticise this aspect. It is precisely what the Labour party want. The derogation that the British Labour party made from the section of the European Socialist manifesto entitled "A People's Europe" is not about having a more supranationality, but about safeguarding the inter-relationship between sovereign states. In my humble opinion, the Labour party is not in a position to criticise the Government, much as it may want to.

Many hon. Members wish to speak and time is limited, so I shall confine myself to a limited number of issues. The Minister mentioned regional policy. The Heads of Government of the Community have consistently held the view that the common internal market must be accompanied by a proper regional policy. If it is not, we risk strong growth in the inner regions of the Community and depression in the outer areas, such as Scotland, the north-east and Wales, and other fringe areas in the Mediterranean, as activities pull towards the centre. That is why I make no apology for repeating a quote made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who is a central individual within the Government. After his recent Chatham House speech he said:

"The growth of regional policy"

—within the Community—

"would be positively damaging."

That was an extraordinary statement and very much a free market statement. The other day, at Scottish Question Time, I asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he agreed with it. He smiled seraphically and said that he did not. I would like a Minister to clarify the Government's view on regional policy in this debate. While I am at it, I might say to the Minister, who looks slightly sad——

Mrs. Chalker: I am not sad.

Sir Russell Johnston: It is about time we stopped blowing trumpets about the amount of regional money we receive, while ignoring the additionality rule. That money does not provide extra funds for the deprived areas but is simply an exchange that occurs within the British budget.

Reading the White Paper, one could easily gain the impression that the Government are fully content with developments in the Community. However, the six-month period that we are talking about contains the famous Bruges speech in which the Prime Minister put her backing firmly in favour of an unregulated free market throughout Europe and showed a great lack of enthusiasm for social, regional and environmental policies—social engineering is the phrase which is increasingly being used. We firmly believe that unbridled competition must be tempered. There are matters in the social sphere that the market, good as it may be at generating economic activity, will never undertake unless it is made to.

The Prime Minister is once again on the warpath, shooting from the hip at a variety of almost unexpected targets. I shall consider one or two. First, there were plans for a common card for the over-60s to enable them to benefit from concessions on public transport and other facilities. It was a sort of glorified European bus pass. The initiative for that came, strangely enough, not from the Commission, from the strange, wicked bureaucrats in Brussels, but from Eurolink Age, an organisation representing the interests of older people throughout the European Community which was set up by Age Concern. The project was probably the brain child of Age Concern's director, Sally Greengross.

A letter of 7 December 1987 to the Secretary of State for Social Services, from the hon. Members for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) and for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) and my hon. Friend the Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), who are officers of the all-party parliamenary group for pensioners, stated:

"We write . . . to express our support to European initiatives which were discussed . . .

Consideration is being given to marking a European year by the launch of a European Seniors' Pass . . . We believe that this . . . would benefit many individual elderly people across the European Community. We therefore hope that you will feel able to join us in supporting these initiatives."

Why not? I do not understand all this talk of interference.

I do not want to go on about cigarettes but, like all smokers—I know I should not be one—I look around for the least injurious cigarettes which will not kill me the day after tomorrow. In the Federal Republic and in France the nicotine and tar contents are printed on the packet. Instead of bearing the legend "low tar" the packets tell me exactly how low. What is the objection to that? The Secretary of State for Health should be wholly in favour of it.

I am told that we are to veto the Lingua teaching scheme at the Council on Monday, but I do not know whether that is true. The Association of Teachers of German wrote to *The Independent* to say that its members thought it

"particularly galling"

that the Prime Minister intends

"to deny the opportunity of cultural and linguistic exchange".

Mr. Alan Jones and Miss Margaret Tumber continued:

"One can only hope that wiser counsels will prevail and that"

perhaps the Government have their own plans

"to match the intention of Lingua in encouraging and funding pupil and teacher exchange, in providing grants for employers to enable them to improve the language skills of their workforce, and in facilitating exchanges between universities, polytechnics and other institutions of higher and further education."

One would imagine that this country had a splendid record of speaking foreign languages—it has not. I see no earthly reason why we should not participate in a programme to deal with that problem.

Mr. Butterfill: In his enthusiasm for all things contained in the treaty, will the hon. Gentleman reaffirm that the Liberal party remains committed to the principles of the European Atomic Energy Community, and in particular to article 1, which reads:

"creating the conditions necessary for the speedy establishment and growth of nuclear industries"?

If so, will he explain its attitude to Hinkley Point?

Sir Russell Johnston: I do not think that nuclear energy and language teaching are closely aligned, and I must press on.

[Sir Russell Johnston]

Language is the most important aspect in free movement. If people cannot speak other people's languages it is difficult for them to move and work freely in different environments.

It is interesting that the Prime Minister increasingly sets her face against free movement, which is an intrinsic part of the Single European Act. The hon. Member for Hamilton mentioned the splendid interview that the Prime Minister gave to the *Daily Mail*, headed

"Why I am the best European of all".

I read it rather sleepily this morning and thought at first that the interview had been given by Ted, but I was wrong. The Prime Minister said that we shall continue to need customs posts, immigration controls and all the rest of the barriers that the Single European Act was intended to do away with:

"How are you going to stop anyone from Bangladesh . . . coming for a holiday in Greece . . . right across all borders, no controls, and settling in Britain and we would have no means of finding out? Now, in France you have to carry an identity card, and you have to carry it everywhere so that police can challenge you anywhere . . . As I said in my Bruges speech, we are practical. They have identity cards, but can you imagine compulsory identity cards in this country? We recoil from it."

So what about football identity cards? What is the difference? In different ways we all have to prove that we are who we are by means of various forms of documentation, and the idea that identity cards are a dreadful intrusion on freedom is utter nonsense.

A couple of points about European monetary union. The Delors committee report was the most important happening of the past six months. The right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) described a conversation he had with M. Delors and gently criticised the Chancellor for reacting rather quickly to it. The Chancellor said, as reported in *The Independent*:

"Our view of the Community is one of independent sovereign nation states. We cannot accept the transfer of sovereignty which is implied"

in the Delors proposals.

"Economic and monetary union 'would in effect require political union and a United states of Europe' which was 'not on the agenda for now, or for the foreseeable future'."

But it is on the agenda now and it will stay on it.

The right hon. Member for Pavilion said that we should not start arguing about the precise form of a federal or confederal Europe, but there will be an increasingly supranational structure of some sort. It is unavoidable and, in my opinion, desirable, necessary and practical. The argument about sovereignty is based on a myth and is a means in practice of clinging to nationalistic rights which are becoming less and less meaningful in the European Community. To advance the Community, we must go beyond 1992 towards economic and monetary union, and that is the logic of the Delors proposals.

Yesterday's publication of the European social charter, although not strictly speaking under consideration in this White Paper, has already been mentioned. It is early to start being specific about it, but it lays down a number of fundamental social rights which should be exerciseable by citizens throughout the Community. It is not only a charter of workers' rights; it contains various social rights —the rights of women, pensioners and people outside the labour market—and we shall need common rules of that sort.

Common standards and entitlements are an inescapable part of the future of the Community, enshrining not only the right to make money but the right to social protection. My party and I are committed to the social aspects of the Community, and I hope that the Government will review the sort of approach that they have hitherto adopted.

6.58 pm

Mr. Michael Heseltine (Henley): The word "sovereignty" has rightly come up in the speeches made by right hon. and hon. Members because it is at the heart of the matter. I start my three brief points in a simple belief that is widely shared. If a country has the power to exercise sovereignty on a national scale, it is appropriate and desirable that it should do so—appropriate not only in the sense of national pride, but because the more local and immediate they are, the more effective the controls over that power are likely to be.

However, if in the world in which we live sovereignty is no longer capable of being exercised on a national scale because the scale of power that is necessary in the modern world has outstripped the capacity of a medium-sized nation to control it, then in the pursuit of the sovereignty of the nation Governments have a responsibility to seek to recover the power through partnerships of sovereignty that may embrace wider groupings of sovereign independent nations. That is why this country, against its instincts, traditions and much of its history, reluctantly concluded in the 1950s and 1960s that it belonged within the European Community of nations. We wished to recover a sense of national sovereignty, albeit a national sovereignty shared with other nations similar to ourselves. We could no longer exercise sovereignty on a national scale within a community of Europe, so in the pursuit of British self-interest we made that decision.

I am not in any way in favour of some anonymous, ill-defined remote concept of supra-European existence. I am interested in Europe because I see in the arrangements of Europe and in the power structure of Europe a way in which British self-interest can be exercised within a power that is more relevant to the world in which we live and in which increasingly our children will live. With all my privileged experience as a Minister in Conservative Governments, I have not known of one German, Frenchman, Italian or Greek who has any other interpretation of why those countries are members of the European Community. They see a wider sovereignty shared as a better prospect for them than the illusions of yesterday's sovereignty hung on to for too long. That is why we are together. If it ever ceases to be the case that the members of the European Community perceive their self-interest no longer to be bound up with the European process, the Europe about which we are talking today will cease to exist. There will be nothing new historically in that. Pan-European movements in the past have come to an end. If we cannot identify a personal or national self-interest, our pan-European process will come to an end—and so it should.

My second point starts with the Single European Act, which this Parliament was the first to ratify in 1986. Let us be under no illusion—Britain did not want to sign the Single European Act. We took the classic British role in believing that events would unfold and that the market would speak. The only reason that we signed the Single

European Act was that the other 11 members of the Community—fewer at that time—decided that they would go on with a structural advance in the relationships of Europe and, if we did not want to be part of it, that was our sovereign right so to determine. We had made that judgment before. They knew that, every time we exercised that sovereign right to stay behind, it was only a matter of time before we reassessed the position and sought to catch up, but then we would join arrangements that they had moulded in their interests and not in ours.

Once the House had signed the Single European Act in the pursuit of the single European market, we had accepted the reinstatement of the process of majority voting. *[Interruption.]* It was built into the original treaty of Rome, but was frustrated by de Gaulle in the Luxembourg compromise. It was to get back to the intention to create a single market that the Luxembourg Council of Ministers determined to enact again, and it changed the treaty in order to achieve the legislative process of majority voting.

Once any of us are involved in a process of majority voting, there is only one way to win—by persuasion. We must have the better arguments, we must win the electoral debate, we must persuade other partners in the venture, any one of which has the same right to hold up his hand in dissent. Once we recognise that, we will realise that not only must we have arguments that will persuade the constituency of our European colleagues, but that we have another constituency to persuade. If the purpose of the single market is to widen the horizons and opportunities for British commerce and industry, who will determine whether we win or fail? It will not be the Government or Members of the House—it will be the industrial managers of our companies, who believe that there is something to go for, who understand the opportunity and who commit their companies to the exploitation of that opportunity. If in the process of winning politically in the European debate we create an atmosphere of incredibility and disbelief about what Europe is about, not only will we alienate the very political constituency that must determine with us the rate of progress politically, but we will detach the British industrial and commercial management from the venture.

If we have not persuaded the industrialists to gear up to the process that is under way, we shall pay a devastating price in the 1990s. I am second to none in admiring what my noble Friend Lord Young has done to create awareness of the effects of 1992 across the country. Few people employed in our wealth-creating process do not know that the single market is coming, but if asked what they are doing about it, the Government's success in creating awareness is directly reversed by the attitudes of British industry, which today by some nine to one are still failing to make the adjustments on which success in the market place will ultimately depend. As politicians, it is incumbent upon us so to temper the language that we use in winning the intellectual debate in Europe as to maintain the enthusiasm of the industrialists upon whom our future depends. Thus is the task interwoven.

Although I understand all too clearly the principle upon which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health went to Brussels to win or lose the issue about health warnings on cigarettes, I wonder whether he would not have been wiser to hold his fire for the battle about the social arrangements for Europe, which really matter. If we are seen to fight on every battle ground, with the same wooden arguments and the same apparently obstructionist approach, we shall switch off the potential support of the very people on whom we shall depend. I believe that we must fight to prevent the more excessive elements of the social charter. It would be a disaster to try to impose mandatory workers on the boards of British industry. Let us fight on that ground, with all the intellectual conviction that we shall rightly need. Why do not the Government, who have done so much to widen share ownership in Britain, try to put into the social charter of Europe provisions to extend the share-owning democracy among Europeans? Why do we not take the best British ideas and put them on the European agenda rather than cavilling at the worst ideas of Europe and refusing to have them here?

It is important that we understand the changing definition of sovereignty. If one changes the definition of sovereignty, power moves from old concentrations to new, which is a source of resentment. How could it be otherwise? We are at the heart of that dilemma because power is moving from this place, which causes a growing and legitimate concern.

Mr. Aitken: Parliamentary sovereignty does not need to move.

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend says that it does not need to move, which rightly questions the whole European process, and I respect his position. History may prove him right. The endeavour may founder as it has foundered before, but so long as it has not foundered, so long as we are in it, and so long as our treaties commit us to it, the only way to protect British self-interest is to be at the leading edge of what is happening. We therefore come back to the transfer of sovereignty that is built into the process, not because anyone forced it on us, but because we signed treaties unleashing a profound reassessment of how British influence will be dealt with and administered in the world of tomorrow.

Mr. Spearing: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Heseltine: No, I will not give way.

There are two areas in which that sovereignty might be moving away towards the European concept. The first relates to Governments and the second to Parliament, and I wish to make a clear distinction between the two. I have been a member of a Government and I have had some experience of dealing in Europe, and I have a clear memory of the endless submissions that come up from civil servants asking for guidance about how they should handle the private and secret negotiations in Europe.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman must now bring his remarks to a close.

Mr. Heseltine: Governments know what is going on, but this House does not. The question that we must have before us is how to bring power back here. That is the debate that must continue, and that is the way to consolidate the advance of Europe politically with the democratic accountability in which we all believe.

7.10 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): The right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) is right to say that sovereignty is at the heart of the matter. Those

[Mr. Peter Shore]

who are not prepared to address that question are not taking part in the great debate that has continued in this country since the mid-1950s.

If I was to accept the right hon. Gentleman's definition of worthwhile sovereignty—a kind of power of control over virtually all the factors that influence one's national life—I would still believe that no country has ever enjoyed such sovereignty. To abandon one's Parliament and one's democracy is implicit in the abandonment of national sovereignty. The alternative way pursued by the world community for more than 50 years is to forge, through alliances and treaties, all kinds of agreements and regulations affecting the conduct of affairs. Those agreements, by their very nature are limited and, at the right time and if circumstances change, one can withdraw from or extend them.

A different path is open to us. The idea that we have no choice except to become submerged in some quasi-federal union in Europe or be left with our small catchment area of sovereignty is absurd. The alternative is the entire system of international relations developed during the past 50 years or more.

The Minister of State started the argument about scrutiny. I agree that we are not doing anything like enough in this House to scrutinise the legislation and the other proposals and directives issued from Brussels. The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) was right, however, to say that at least in one area of the Single European Act the only scrutiny that can lead to worthwhile action is that undertaken in the European Parliament. He is right, because that relates precisely to those areas of the Act where we have abandoned the right of veto over the proposals put before the Council of Ministers.

In those cases where there is no alternative but qualified majority voting, or where matters are decided by the so-called "co-operation procedure" of the European Parliament, no proper accountability is left to the Westminster Parliament. Such European scrutiny relates to those changes that were made in the Single European Act that deliberately removed the power of veto from the Council of Ministers. Scrutiny where there is no accountability is interesting; but it is not exactly what Parliament is about. Such scrutiny is not about the accountability of Ministers or about accountability for decisions to the people and to Parliament.

I shall make a short contribution, as I fall within the ten-minutes rule. I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) mentioned some of the economic facts that are so salient to discussions of the single European market and our attitude to them. Tucked away in appendix G is the appalling table of Britain's balance of trade in manufactured goods with the European Community. That deficit has risen from £1·2 billion in 1980 to more than £12 billion in 1988. That is a terrible affliction upon the British economy and upon the prosperity of the British people.

That deficit with the Community presently accounts for nearly the entire appalling deficit in overseas trade in our current account. Therefore, it matters enormously that we should start thinking carefully abut the effects of going forward to the even greater competitive system that is embodied in the single European market to be established by 1992. It also greatly affects the powers of national Governments to influence their economies.

Public purchasing power, which has been one of the most useful tools for the encouragement and development of important industries and enterprise in our country, is no longer to be a matter for the nation state to decide. There will be a register of state rights and the subsidies and other subventions, direct or indirect, made by states will be limited if not abolished by the Single European Act. The important question of monopolies and mergers policy will no longer be a national responsibility, but will be transferred to the Community, which has a great interest in cross-frontier mergers.

The arrangements I have described are part of the 1992 single market and of the Single European Act. Such arrangements are to be decided not by the Council of Ministers, on which we have a veto, but by qualified majority voting. Therefore, if the single European market is established, powers governing public purchasing, monopolies and mergers and the like will no longer be available to the British Government.

The right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) spoke about Britain joining the exchange rate mechanism of the EMS. The downside of that, of course, is that, if we join, we then lose virtually all control over our exchange rate and interest rate policies. In the news yesterday, we heard of the pressures upon us from Brussels for the harmonisation of VAT. Of course we have some reservations about that, but does anyone here doubt that future Governments will be allowed to retain the power to decide indirect taxation—VAT, customs and excise duty or company taxation—given the momentum of change in the next few years? That will happen unless a halt is called to these changes.

The Single European Act and the thrust of policy in the European Community today pose real dangers to us. The Prime Minister has a lot of explaining to do as the principal sponsor of the Single European Act. I must say that she makes a bogeyman out of Mr. Delors. Conservative Members are obviously much troubled by qualified majority voting; they fear it greatly. Such voting, however, does not apply in the social area, which is specifically exempted under article 100A2 of the revised European treaty. All matters relating to trade union legislation and social policy will be kept within the old rules of unanimity voting by the Council of Ministers and subject to the national veto.

The one exception, in article 118A, relates to measures affecting health and safety. On an odd day last summer, that may have made the Trades Union Congress delirious, but it does not make me particularly enthusiastic about what is gained from the European single market of 1992.

We shall have to make a choice about the kind of Europe we want. It is not improper for people to wish to see an end to national Parliaments and nation states. That is their privilege. However, we are on the road towards national oblivion and the destruction and dissolution of our own democracy. We may create in Europe equivalent institutions, but the power to decide our own policies in our own elected Parliament—a power that used to reside in our own people—is on the way out, and unless we are very careful, it will disappear.

7.20 pm

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): This is a critical debate on the future of the European Community. A debate on the issue is long overdue and it ought to be properly addressed. I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for allowing the debate to range slightly wider than the official title of the motion—developments in the Community during the last six months of 1988. You have the right to call any of us to order, but the problem is that the House has regularly debated European Community problems after the event instead of debating the essential question of what will happen in the near future and the big issues that will arise from the Madrid summit. Moreover, there has not yet been a debate on the Delors report.

Mr. Spearing: But there will be.

Mr. Taylor: It is intriguing that we have yet to have a debate on the social charter, although the timing of its announcement has been known for some months.

The shift in pace of Community progress has resulted from the passing of the Single European Act. There is no point in fudging that statement. It was because it was known that a shift in the pace of the Community was needed that from the Stuttgart declaration—to which the Government were enthusiastic adherents—onwards we, along with our European partners, made an effort to bring the Single European Act into existence. There is an important but subtle statement on page 1, the preamble to the Single European Act. It says that as a result of the Single European Act the signatories were

"Determined to improve the economic and social situation by extending common policies and pursuing new objectives, and to ensure a smoother functioning of the Communities by enabling the Institutions to exercise their powers under conditions most in keeping with Community interests."

I stress the words "Community interests".

Individual Members of this House may or may not be pleased that that is what it says. It was decided that in order to advance Community interests there would be a system of majority voting. The Single European Act made it clear that majority voting would be principally to enact the single market programme, but the Act as a whole also makes clear undertakings in other areas and has chapter headings such as

"Co-operation in Economic and Monetary policy (Economic and Monetary Union)"

and

"Economic and Social Cohesion."

We therefore should have addressed those matters in 1987 when the Single European Act was passed.

I am hostile to many aspects of the social charter. They would do grave damage to this country. My point is that we have known since 1987 that a social charter was under discussion, but all that we decided to concentrate on were the economic and business aspects of the Community. We hoped that any other aspect would go away. That has not happened, nor could it have been expected to happen.

Britain has a marvellous opportunity to convince the other EEC members that the Conservative Government have put in place a first-class social policy, particularly in relation to employment. Today's employment figures confirm that point. We now know that 6·5 per cent. only of the population is unemployed. More people are in paid employment now than have ever been. Moreover, the percentage of our population in paid employment is higher than in any other member state. That is a proud record. It is the result of deregulation which, as Britain has explained to the Community, is the right way forward in so many areas. However, we have not joined in the social debate, with the result that we now cry "Foul" when our Community colleagues produce something that they have thought through and wish to adopt.

Once again, this country is at a disadvantage. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) said—my hon. Friends know that I have a great interest in this, too—this country has developed employee share ownership. We have more shareholders—not all of them employees, admittedly—than members of trade unions. I know from my various connections that many people on the continent believe that employee share ownership is good for their business, yet it does not form part of the social charter. The House has a right to ask why that is so. The answer is that we did not enter the debate early enough.

The proof of that statement is that when we have entered other debates early enough we have, by and large, not been left alone and in the minority. I cite the Treasury team's excellent work in persuading our Community colleagues and the Commissioner that the plan that Lord Cockfield tried to foist on the Community in respect of VAT was nonsensical. He did not learn the error of his ways. It took a French Commissioner to see the error of his ways, but she did so because we positively took part in the debate. We advanced carefully argued proposals which provided the Community with an alternative point of discussion that was much more market orientated.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: But there was a veto.

Mr. Taylor: My hon. Friend really must stop making that point about the veto. We shall not win the intellectual battles in the Community if we just wield the veto argument. The whole point is that we must persuade our Community partners. *[Interruption.]* Of course we could use the veto, but we should do so only in a direst emergency. We must ensure that we have the majority on our side. That is the only way in which the Community can sensibly work together. It must be by persuasion.

There are many other areas in which the force of argument has helped this country. For example, the Community is gradually moving forward in the right direction on its competition policy. I hope that the Minister will address that question in replying to the debate. The Commission is now coming forward with more reasonable proposals for competition policy. I think that we shall find that they are more acceptable. We have also persuaded the Commission to inquire into state subsidies in other EEC countries. This is critical to the development of the single market. The last figures that I have to hand show that in 1986 £65 billion was spent on state subsidies throughout the Community—three times the whole of the Community's budget.

We do not need to say that we are at the mercy of a marauding bureaucracy in Brussels when we have won the argument. If we want a deregulated Community—which I do—we have to regulate to deregulate. It will not surprise any member of this Parliament that there are occasions in the House when we have to examine Government regulations which are to apply to this country. It is not surprising that at Commission level regulations should come forward to open up the markets. It is in this country's interests that the regulations that most directly

[Mr. Taylor]

affect our interests should be the toughest possible. It ill behoves us constantly to appear to be denigrating the Commission, which is the servant of the Council of Ministers and is trying to ensure that the Community opens up its frontiers to people, capital and business. We must address those critical problems.

In conclusion, we have an enormous opportunity. Many of us in the Tory party have been enthusiastic but not uncriticial Europeans for many years. We must not lose this opportunity by not realising that we can take a lead in these matters. Our arguments are convincing, but we must participate in the debate in a way which gains friends and influence instead of losing them. We must not go to the Madrid summit firing on all siege guns in the blind hope of winning some last battle.

7.30 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Quite properly and understandably the hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) addressed his remarks to his hon. Friends. We know that there is a difference of opinion in the Conservative party about the way in which it should approach Europe. I shall call it the EEC because imperceptibly we are going into Eurospeak, just as we have moved from the Common Market to the European Community, and now, conceivably, to European union.

Tonight, as before, I speak not so much as a member of a United Kingdom political party, but as a member of a party in favour of Parliament. Therefore, I wholeheartedly endorse the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore). He was talking not about a party advantage but of the advantage of parliamentary democracy in the United Kingdom for which there has been no mandate for any party to give away. Hence my intervention about a mandate for either the Stuttgart declaration or the Single European Act. I do not believe that the Government had such a mandate and I do not believe that they have it now.

On the question of Parliament and scrutiny, I speak as Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, rather than personally as I did in the introduction to my speech. Our debate is unnecessarily retrospective. The Scrutiny Committee has suggested on a number of occasions that such debates should be prospective. On a six-monthly cycle it would be appropriate if they looked ahead to the succeeding six-monthly cycle of presidency, and conceivably they would take place just before the successive six-monthly summit. That would provide the opportunity for a total review of where the Community was going and what the Government of the day should do. However, the Committee would also wish there to be scrutiny of particular issues. The Delors proposal for economic and monetary union and a central bank has been mentioned. It is no secret that the Committee has already recommended that document for debate and the Government have provided an explanatory memorandum. Similarly, if it comes within our terms of reference, there should be a debate on the social charter that we have heard something about. If scrutiny is to be what it says it is, I hope that such debates will be separated from the general six-monthly debates of which this is an example.

There has been some criticism of the standard of scrutiny. We hope that we have contributed to its improvement by HC421, a special report on the programme of legislation which the Commission adopted for 1988. We hope to be issuing a similar report for 1989 ere long. It contains mostly the Cockfield proposals for 1992, but not exclusively. Unless hon. Members have the report, they will not see what is en route.

I now leave the role of the Scrutiny Committee, revert to the introduction of my speech, and put on what I believe is a parliamentary hat. I am glad that the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) is still in his place, because I wish to refer specifically to his speech. Leaving aside a certain confusion about the nature of the Luxembourg veto compromise on which I shall not spend time, many of his remarks reminded me of what the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) was saying in the early 1970s about the opportunity for British industry. In the White Paper that the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup produced at that time, he said that the effect on Britain's manufacturing balance of trade would be positive and substantial. We all know that the effects have been negative, but substantial to the extent of £13,000 million a year. I do not believe that any prospect of economic monetary union, in which the Bundesbank would play a major part, would produce very much confidence. If that happened under the Common Market, what would happen under the single market? There has been some debate about the nature of the single market, but none as yet today about its extent.

The Single European Act has been referred to extensively, but its definition of the single market has not been quoted. Article 8A states:

"The internal market shall comprise an area without internal frontiers in which the free movement of goods, persons, services and capital is ensured in accordance with the provisions of this Treaty."

The right hon. Member for Henley described a great vision in macro-political terms which he further expounded in his book.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): That is free advertising.

Mr. Spearing: The book is of great macro-political interest, but it does not go far enough.

Despite extensive inquiries, I have yet to discover the extent and scope of article 8A of the Single European Act. At what point does the jurisdiction by majority vote, which that Act ceded to the institutions of the Community, cease? I asked the Attorney-General what legislation is outside its scope, and he replied, "Criminal and family law". I put it to the right hon. Members for Henley and for Old Bexley and Sidcup that, juridically speaking, there is virtually no limit to the effective jurisdiction of European institutions under the Single European Act and under majority voting. There are limits, but those limits are well beyond what anyone believed them to be when the legislation passed through the House.

If that is the case, my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney was absolutely right. It is not that power will go; it is going in every late-night debate where we vote away a consolidation of existing law. It is not just new law; we are building cages for future legislation of the House. Night after night the power of the House, and with it the power of the British people disappears.

There may be hon. Gentlemen who want that, but do their constitutents know it? Have they been elected here to

dissipate the power which put them here? They have every right to do it if they stood on such a platform on their election. I do not think that the right hon. Member for Henley did that.

In his absence, I accuse the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup of the ancient offence of praemunire—adherence to a foreign power. He was very excited on television on Sunday. I make a retrospective indictment of him of adherence to a foreign power in prospect. That prospect is no longer a prospect; it is with us night after night. Praemunire means adherence to a power away from the Crown. Of course, anything from Brussels bypasses the Crown as it is directly applicable.

The scope of the treaties to which the House and the Government are already party is bleeding the power away from the House, away from the British people in a way for which they have given no mandate and which they do not know about or understand.

7.39 pm

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): In the Nancy Mitford novels which were popular some decades ago, there was a character called Uncle Matthew who went around all the time saying, "Wogs begin at Calais." I regret that the Uncle Matthew tendency is alive and well and has been getting strong in the last few months as the debate in the nation and, I am sad to say, in our party—I might even say in the Government—has moved into a different phase. We should seriously address that. I endorse what my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) said.

We should invite the Government to consider again the policy and the implications of what we now have to describe as the twin-track policy and ask whether we should go back to a single-track policy. There is a tendency to underrate the deep understanding acquired by the British people about the significance of the European Community. It is, of course, quite easy to be tricked by the Uncle Matthew tendency, but fundamentally the British people instinctively understand the broad issues that are at stake.

There are three basic areas in the world—north America, Japan and the Pacific basin, and western Europe—and either we believe in Europe and belong to it or we wither on the side. I am certain that our constituents are not prepared to allow us to wither on the side. They look to us to make sure that we remain in the European Community. Although they do not understand the clauses and the nuances of the Single European Act, and are, understandably, not as sensitive as we are to the sovereignty of Parliament, they understand the broad issue that is at stake. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister most certainly knows it.

I remind the House of a memorandum that the Prime Minister addressed to her colleagues in the Community. She called for

"a series of new policies to promote the economic, social and political growth"

on which the future well-being of the Community depended. She said:

"This means giving greater depth to the Community in both its internal and external activities."

She spoke of the need to create

"a genuine common market in goods and services which is envisaged in the Treaty of Rome"

but said that that could be achieved only by

"a sustained effort to remove the remaining obstacles to intra-Community trade."

Only by that means could we enable

"the citizens of Europe to benefit from the dynamic effects of the fully integrated common market with immense purchasing power."

In a comment on the Commission, which is a focus of attention at the moment, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said that it was central to the functioning of the Community and that Europe needs to advance its internal development. One of the objectives that she enuciated was to

"heighten the consciousness among our citizens of what unites us."

We should surely remind ourselves of that once again. That memorandum by the Prime Minister to her colleagues was issued in 1984.

The only thing that has changed since 1984 is that we have come closer to the attainment of those goals. I welcome that, and the Cabinet, the party and the country should welcome it. I accept the five principles set out by the Prime Minister in her Bruges speech. Sadly, it was not the principles of the Bruges speech but its impact which has given encouragement to the little England tendency and to hon. Members who for entirely legitimate reasons of their own have never accepted Britain's membership of the European Community. That is entirely their right, but it is not the judgment of the House or the nation.

It is the judgment of our party that we should not accept many of the ideas being discussed in Europe. As two of my hon. Friends have said, the way to make sure that those ideas do not prosper but our contributions do is to be in Europe, to be positive about it, and to take our ideas there. That is the only way to be sure of a resonance from those who think like us in Europe. Let us be clear that the majority of Governments in Europe are more or less of the centre-Right persuasion and they are not interested in a Socialist utopia or in pan-European federalism. They are not interested in giving up their sovereignty.

I urge my hon. Friends who have reservations to look into their heart and ask themselves whether the attitudes that they betray are not a manifestation of a lack of national self-confidence. The Mintel report published last week clearly demonstrated something that we all know instinctively—that, although the French are chauvinistic and nationalistic, they do not fear working in the Community; nor do the Germans, and nor should we. We do not need to. We must make sure that the Single European Act works. We must accept it in its entirety and fight within the Community for the things in which our party believes. If we fight outside, we shall lose, but if we fight within Europe, our interests, and therefore those of the nation, will prosper.

7.46 pm

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): I have been a convinced supporter of the European idea for many years, but I have to admit to a strong feeling of what the Germans call schadenfreude. That is because it is the Conservative party which for so long has apparently been united in Europe which now appears to be divided on the issue. It is also the Conservative party, at least in the person of the Prime Minister, which is taking a shrill and wrong headed, anti-European stance.

The attitude and antics of the Prime Minister puzzled me. As the *Financial Times* said in an excellent leader on 17 May, the Commission is not a great bureaucratic

[Mr. Giles Radice]

machine. As one of my hon. Friends has said, it is somewhat smaller than most Government Departments. It is not a legislative body, but an executive body and its job is to enforce the rules, not to make them. The *Financial Times* also said that any decision involving a major inroad in national sovereignty has to be taken unanimously.

When decisions are taken by a majority vote, it is by virtue of the Single European Act, which the Prime Minister witnessed, if she did not actually sign, and which Parliament has endorsed. If the Prime Minister is in doubt about that, I can refer her to an excellent note prepared by the Library on the implications of the Single European Act.

As the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) has said, far from the Commission being a Socialist plot, both the Commissioners and the Council of Ministers have a non-Socialist majority. I do not know what the Prime Minister is up to, because clearly she must know all that. How are we to explain her rather peculiar behaviour? Partly, I suspect, it is her way of proceeding. She mistakes the Commission and the Council of Ministers for members of her Cabinet. She is so used to lecturing and hectoring and generally slagging her colleagues that when it comes to the Commission or members of other Governments she continues to behave in the same way.

I think that it is also partly due to the Prime Minister's incorrigibly insular nationalism. Instinctively, she believes that all foreigners must be in error whatever the circumstances. She grossly overestimates British power and that is probably her worst mistake of all. Her attitude is reflected in her fortress Falklands policy, in her overbearing behaviour towards Chancellor Kohl and her inappropriate references to wartime and saving the continent from Hitler. That attitude reveals a totally outdated and unrealistic estimate of Britain's position in the world.

The truth is that Britain is a medium-sized European power—no more and no less. It follows that our interests can best be pursued through co-operation, conjunction and co-ordination with our European neighbours, primarily through the European Community. We are more likely to be effective if we behave like a good neighbour and partner rather than like a blustering and petulant bully trying to punch above our weight in the world.

Europe is on the move and, because of the Government's behaviour, we risk being left behind or, even worse, being left out. Whatever the Prime Minister may say, the completion of the internal market has social implications. In a notable speech earlier this week, Lord Plumb was quite right to say that the social dimension is "part and parcel of ensuring fair competition, especially in regard to matters such as health and safety."

There is another powerful argument which other Right-wing parties on the continent of Europe recognise, even if this Thatcherite Conservative party does not. A floor of social rights on a European level is essential if we are to ensure that all Europeans enjoy the fruits of the internal market.

There are also important economic consequences of 1992. The closer integration of trading arrangements is bound to lead to closer economic and monetary arrangements. I agree that that process is afoot. There is now a strong case for Britain to join the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system. That would assist in achieving a more stable exchange rate and it would help secure lower interest rates and act as a very useful discipline against inflation. Equally important, it would enable the United Kingdom to get in on and influence the debate on economic and monetary union.

Whatever we think of the Delors report and its details and procedures—and we heard an interesting speech by the right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) about that—the danger for the United Kingdom now is that, as with the formation of the Common Market in the 1950s and 1960s, this country could be left out of the key decisions that will shape Europe's future. Joining the exchange rate mechanism would at the very least ensure that the British view was represented and not ignored during this crucial period.

It is essential for British interests and for the future of Europe that we begin to play a more positive role. After the way in which the Prime Minister has behaved in recent weeks, I confess that I begin to despair of the Conservative party, although some powerful voices on the Conservative Benches are beginning to speak out. More power to their elbows and may they continue to speak out because that would make for a more interesting Parliament.

Fortunately for the country, the Labour party is now putting forward extremely constructive proposals on the future of the European Community. Because of that, I will take particular delight in supporting my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Lobby tonight.

7.53 pm

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): We have all listened very hard to hear constructive proposals from the Labour party and tried to see the new shiny wallpaper of Labour's economic European policy. As time passes, we see less of the wallpaper and more of the rotten walls behind the policies. No doubt we shall hear more about those policies before the debate is over. I want to continue the theme of monetary union referred to by the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice). That issue preoccupies us and encapsulates many of the worries and issues that we are considering today.

Already it seems that the United Kingdom has been put a little on the defensive with regard to European monetary union. That is a great pity because I believe strongly that the British case on the monetary union is excellent. That case has not been put very well, but it should be put with great vigour and it is important that it is set against the more extravagant and unworkable ideas currently circulating in the Community under the label of monetary union.

The Delors report was referred to by my right hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) and others. Some of us have had a chance to consider it. I believe that it is very unsatisfactory and is not a contribution to European monetary union or greater integration of the European economies. The Delors report is a tramlines report. It is determinism. It states that we must leap on at the beginning and go right through to a goal which lies years ahead. Our practical common sense tells us that that cannot be the way forward.

I believe, however, that stage 1 of the Delors report is sensible—a lot of stage 1 is necessary to retain control of our currency—but stage 2 is technically impossible. No one has ever designed a set of central banks on a reserve

federal basis. Central banks cannot be operated like that. The Germans tried that system momentarily and found that it would not work. The Americans had a similar experience. A central band is a very centralised institution depending on a very few people and their very rapid decisions. Stage 2 is nonsense and stage 3 lies a considerable way ahead.

Nevertheless, stage 1 of the Delors report involves our being members of the exchange rate mechanism and the central bank governors co-operating closely together to bring stability to the currency markets. That is very sensible. It is important that we should go to Madrid to ensure that we are at the table to accept the stage 1 ideas to influence further developments in Community monetary integration. We should not allow the Delors ideas to race forward, or other proposals currently being aired for other Community members to get together to design further amendments to the treaty of Rome or even a new treaty. That would be disastrous for the momentum of western European economics, including our own. That would not be acceptable. It would be a great mistake if we went to Madrid in a negative mood and were unable to start constructive discussions on the basis of accepting the kind of ideas contained in stage 1 of the Delors report.

If we do not go to Madrid with a positive approach, we shall be excluded from the next stage of monetary developments in Europe. There is also a real danger that we shall lose complete control—sovereign control, to use this evening's language—over our currency. After next June, capital movements will be free in Europe. After 1992, banks will be free anywhere in Europe to take deposits in any currencies from any Community member. They will also be free to grant loans. There is no way of controlling our currency or influencing its supply and demand, both of which determine the price of a currency, without the pound being in some form of framework or without very close co-operation between central bank governors when the banking systems of Europe cease to be consistent and identical with the currency systems of Europe. There is no way of operating sovereign control over our currency and monetary policy if we have no framework. That concept must involve stage 1 of the Delors report.

Several hon. Members have referred to sovereignty this evening. Does stage 1 of the Delors report involve the loss of sovereignty? Yes, it does. A great deal of what is happening in the world of open trading, including the aim of the single market, the removal of tariff barriers, the rise of global financial systems and totally integrated world financial markets, must weaken states and national Governments and parties such as the former British Labour party—I am not sure whether the current Labour party holds the same view—which believe in the state as an instrument of their Socialism and idealism. That is the process that is going on. If that is not recognised, what is happening to the economic power of all national Governments has not been understood. Of course that power is being weakened. We should be open-eyed and realistic about that.

Let my hon. Friends fight the loss of sovereignty to Brussels over non-economic issues that we can handle ourselves. There is plenty of nonsense coming from the bureaucrats in Brussels that we should resist. As a believer in a free market Europe, the open trading system and the development of a global financial system, however, I do not believe that we can fight the transfer of sovereignty from national state Governments to consumers and international markets. If my hon. Friends wish to do that, they are abandoning the motive powers of free markets in the modern world.

We should recognise that sovereignty is being transferred to consumers and to markets and that Governments are becoming weaker in the sense that they can no longer wield the kind of power that Keynes and others taught that they could wield on a national basis and somehow steer and manage their sovereign individual economies. That power is being sucked away. If we want to bring that power back and become protectionists again, or Socialist nationalists—I use those words in an unoffensive way—the protectionist isolated economy can indeed be restored. Such economies exist in the world, in miserable places such as Burma. There are still some left in eastern Europe, although they are learning the lessons. Those are countries with sovereign powers over their consumers and markets and plenty of power in the state Government as well. But the entire trend, not only of European policy but of international economic policy, is to transfer sovereignty to consumers and markets, away from the state and away, I am afraid, from national parliaments as well.

My hon. Friends and Opposition Members can fight heroically night after night to keep that power in the national parliaments, in the state Governments and in their party policies and manifestos, but it is being taken away by the decision to commit ourselves to the international open trading system—the removal of tariffs and barriers. That is where the power is going and we should not fight it. Let us fight nonsense from Brussels, but to fight the realities of a modern economic system would be to plunge us back into a dark age of protectionism and dwindling prosperity, which all our common sense, and all who believe in a free economy, should resist.

8.2 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): The right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) said that capitalism in Europe is incompatible with democracy and that is one of the most candid admissions that I have heard. I hope that his speech will be studied because he was saying that the House of Commons and the ballot box is no route to justice, to development or anything.

This is not about sovereignty. No nation in the world is sovereign. The United States could be destroyed by a bomb from anywhere. We could be polluted from anywhere. We are talking about democracy—the right of people to shape their future by using the ballot box to make the laws under which they are governed. Democracy and sovereignty are not the same thing. The United States, the most powerful country in the world, has democracy, but it does not have sovereignty. It cannot protect itself from what happens in Tehran or somewhere else. At least we have had a candid expression of the real choice.

This interesting debate could, at least, be useful to the electors on 14 June in clarifying the issues and the choices. People have not yet appreciated the enormity of the change that has occurred. When the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) signed the treaty of accession under prerogative powers without publishing it, he gave away the rights of the electors to govern this country. When Parliament agreed the European Communities Act 1972, it confirmed it. When the referendum was put before the people, all the party leaders

[Mr. Tony Benn]

—the present Prime Minister, the former Prime Minister Sir Harold Wilson, and Jeremy Thorpe—united in a coalition to tell people that Europe would be good for Britain. When the Single European Act was signed without consulting the electors, that was consolidated. I am sad —I say this with deep regret—that the Labour party, of which I am a member, should have abandoned its basic belief that people can change their future through the ballot box. As the right hon. Member for Guildford said, the ballot box cannot be used to change the future when power is handed to markets and, as he laughingly said, to consumers.

This is an interesting debate because the implications of those massive changes are coming home. They are taking two forms. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars), who will no doubt speak, wants an independent Scotland within the Common Market. The Prime Minister wants an independent United Kingdom within the Common Market. Those Tory Members who joined in the praise for Europe want to see a more federal Europe. But the reality is that they all agree about one thing. I hope that those who read *Hansard* or listen to the debate never misunderstand that.

Let me go through some constituencies. The right hon. Members for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), Old Bexley and Sidcup, for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) and for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) and the hon. Member for Govan all believe that power has gone permanently from the House and can never be recovered. They may disagree about this and that, but they are united on that. The Opposition Front Bench is united with the Government Front Bench in the belief that those powers can never be returned and should not be asked for. That is the reality against which the debate takes place.

The consequences of that are worth a moment or two of discussion. I speak as a former Minister who was in the Council of Ministers for five years, as was the right hon. Member for Guildford. I was president of the Energy Council in 1977. As a Minister there I was a member of a legislative body meeting in secret. The Council of Ministers may sound like a Cabinet, but it is a legislative body. I proposed that the Council of Ministers should meet in public, but it would not accept that. We have *Hansard* and allow people to hear our debates, but the Ministers there did not want their constituents to know what bargains they were making with other countries. It is done by prerogative.

As I mentioned in an intervention, the only power that a British Minister has in Brussels is the power of treaty making deriving from the Crown. That is why the word scrutiny is meaningless. It would be more accurate to say that we are spectators of our fate. If it was said that at Wimbledon there are a lot of scrutineers of the game of tennis, that would be right because they would be watching, not playing. We are watching our fate being shaped, not participating in it.

The Bill of Rights was overturned when we joined the Common Market. It says that no court can interfere with Parliament. But now the courts have the right to supervise the legality of legislation that we pass according to some other criteria. In the process, I honestly believe that the franchise has been destroyed.

Let me try to make the point, which, in a strange way, is not political. If, under a Labour Government, there was a run on the pound and exchange controls were introduced, the courts would say that that was illegal. Civil servants would say, "I am sorry, Minister"—as they said to me in minor cases—"what you are doing is illegal." There would be a constitutional crisis at the heart of Government that could not be resolved.

Before Conservative Members laugh, let me say that that is one reason why they favour the Common Market —to prevent Socialism. But if the Labour party were in office now and we agreed to a mass of EEC social legislation, a Tory Government could not change it when they came to power. If it were a Labour Government looking at Jacques Delors' proposals—not that I have a lot of time for them—and if we stiffened and strengthened them so that an incoming Conservative Government could do nothing about the unions because free movement of capital and labour means a commonality of view across the Community, a subsequent Conservative Government could do nothing. If they tried, the trade unions could take them to court. The court would say that the Government may have been elected with a landslide majority, but they could not do what they want.

Nobody in this debate has addressed the fact that Community legislation cannot be repealed. It may be that it cannot be passed without unanimity, but it cannot be repealed without unanimity either. It is like a lobster pot —easy to get into, but difficult to get out of.

I sincerely believe that when the British people discover that the Government that they elect are confined by the decisions of the previous Government, agreed in the Council of Ministers, they will either take to despair, or to violence, or revert to the most awful nationalism of the kind that the Prime Minister and, I fear, the hon. Member for Govan espouse—the idea that somehow it is the foreigners that are the trouble. The trouble is caused not by foreigners but by the structure basically being undemocratic because it cannot be changed through the ballot box.

There are many ways of looking at Europe for those who are called little Englanders. There are lots of internationalisms apart from that of frère Jacques Delors, who is so beloved of the Trades Union Congress because he treats it with more respect than the TUC receives from No. 10. The TUC never gets invited to tea at No. 10 these days, but it is invited to three-course lunches in Brussels because M. Delors needs the TUC. Socialism was never brought about at the top. No progress ever came from the top, because top people always have a vested interest in the status quo. Social advance always comes from underneath. Look at China and what is happening in Poland. It was not that the central committee in Beijing or in Warsaw decided to change but that the pressure for change was there. Take away the legitimacy of that pressure and the capacity to channel it through the ballot box, and there will be trouble.

Some people favour a fully federal Europe. I can understand why. We would all have a vote and elect a president and two Houses. It would be fully an American system. But I favour a commonwealth of Europe—an association of fully self-governing states that would harmonise as quickly as it could, where it mattered, but in which no majority would have the power to push legislation through against the wishes of others.

The successive Parliaments in which I have sat for many years have abandoned not their own rights, because we had none, but the rights of those people who sent us here. When that is learnt, it will not be 1 million people in Tiananmen square but 1 million people in Parliament square who will remind us that we are their servants and they are not pawns in our game, to be given away in the pursuit of market forces or some European dream from Henley or somewhere else. That is the issue which the House must face.

The Labour party does not want to face it because it is embarrassing. The Conservatives do not want to face it because to do so would reveal what they have done. However, one day the people will face it, and that will be uncomfortable. Democracy cannot be denied by any amount of lecturing about Adam Smith and the rest. Democracy is the desire of the people to govern themselves, and that cannot be extinguished by any number of Acts or treaties signed by the Conservative party.

8.12 pm

Sir Richard Body (Holland with Boston): This is the second time that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have called me immediately after a speech by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn); and for the second time I must embarrass him by admitting that I find myself more in agreement with him than perhaps I ought to be. The right hon. Gentleman is right to question the meaning of the word "sovereign", which has been used so often in the debate.

One wonders what the countries of Europe outside the Community, which are in the majority, think about the word "sovereign". I believe that they would point to the United Nations and say that most of its 159 member countries won a place in it by showing that they had achieved self-determination and had ceased to be subordinate to a colonial power. The broad test of admission to the United Nations is being a self-determining state—the ability to make one's own laws, to have those laws interpreted in one's own country, to make one's own treaties, and to impose one's own taxation. Those are the four elements of sovereignty as defined by constitutional lawyers.

Sovereignty is not the same as the notions expressed in the notable speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine). No country is now sovereign by his definition. One sighs when so many of my right hon. and hon. Friends denounce others of us for being anti-Europe. I say to my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) that Britain has for a long time been part of Europe, both geographically and historically.

How are we to work with our neighbouring countries? The route we have chosen is shared with a minority of other European countries, which is to go the super-national way; to turn our backs on the elements of a sovereign nation state and to submit to the super-national approach leading to what is called a deep Europe. That confronts Europeans—and I hope that we are all Europeans—with a great dilemma.

The argument for European co-operation in the future will be not economic but environmental. To speak of only 12 European countries as Europe and to act only within that little Europe is futile. How can we cope with the fearful pollution of the North sea, for example, if we cannot work with the other countries that adjoin it—Scandinavia, the Baltic states, and Switzerland, which plays its part in polluting the North sea through the Rhine?

We must find a method of widening Europe, for it is a wider Europe we need—not a super-national but an international Europe, whose countries recognise that there are different circles of interest, and not a single circle of interest, encompassing all 35 of them, let alone a circle of interest limited to only 12. There are several circles of interest demanding international co-operation, and the countries within those circles should work together to achieve more than they could individually.

The question must be asked, what is the best route for achieving that? When the right hon. Member for Chesterfield speaks of a commonwealth of Europe, I must go along with him. We already have the Economic Commission for Europe comprising 35 countries, which for the past 40 years has brought down no end of non-tariff barriers and accomplished environmental achievements long before most of us started talking about the environment. That is the kind of Europe—a wider Europe—that we should have. However, we cannot have a wider Europe if we are to create a deep Europe. Countries outside the Community will recoil from losing their statehood, or whatever term one uses, and their self-determination, and sinking them into the European Community.

The dilemma that we face in Europe is that we go along either the deep Europe route or the wider Europe route. There can be no mixture of the two. Sadly, we are now going down the deep Europe route, which will frustrate and foil our efforts to achieve that which we ought to be achieving in Europe in terms of the environment, trade and many other matters. They include the European patent system. What a non-tariff barrier is the patent. One can register a patent in London today and it can take effect in Stockholm and in other countries of Europe outside the Common Market. That has been achieved through the ECE. That is the kind of thing that we ought to do in bringing down the barriers that exist outside the Community, while at the same time ensuring that people feel that they can still determine their own policies and own Governments, and can ensure some sense of democracy. We shall not achieve that if we go along the deep Europe route.

8.20 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): I rise in my place to perform a rather unusual task and that is vigorously to defend our Prime Minister. This may be the first time and it is probably the last time that I shall do any such thing, but I feel that she has been grossly misunderstood and, indeed, misrepresented. How could a woman of her status not know what she is doing? In Europe I spend a great deal of my time explaining to people that it is not correct that our Prime Minister does not understand the implications of being a European. After all, as I point out, it was she who pushed through the Single European Act and voted for it. I did not vote for it, but the Prime Minister voted for it. Who put the Whips on the Conservative majority? I did not do that—the Prime Minister did it. Who was it who insisted that this should be pushed through in a very short time on a guillotined motion, against the feeling of most Members of this

[Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody]

Parliament that it needed to be debated in considerable detail? That was not I—it was the Prime Minister. I believe, therefore, that she is badly misunderstood when she is represented as not being a very good European.

All sorts of interesting things can happen, however. I am away from the House for two weeks with a Select Committee and return to find that the Common Market question has undergone an extraordinary sea change. Can this be the organisation of bureaucrats in which preferment is not by ability but only by nationality and which, I am told, is a hot-bed of Socialism? I really do not recognise it. Those of us who have had to do with it over a great many years are hardly likely to accept that description. What is important and should be confirmed time and again is that the present Conservative party has got itself into an extraordinary situation precisely because it has never been prepared to consider the way in which the House of Commons deals with European legislation.

I was interested to hear the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) say that sovereignty was the arrangement whereby a group of nations got together to decide what they would do. It is an interesting use of the English language if not an accurate one. I believe that what we ought to be doing here is something rather different. The House of Commons has machinery which would enable it at every point to have an input into European legislation. It has a series of Select Committees which currently match individual subjects—Select Committees which occasionally, but not very often, look briefly at individual directives or regulations but never at the point at which they could have an influence on the decisions taken.

If that is the situation, the Prime Minister could make a very simple, practical gesture to prove to us all not only that she is fully European but that she understands the implications for a democratic state of the changes incorporated in the Single European Act. She could come to the House before the summer recess, because she is a practical woman and likes to do things with rapidity and to take charge on her own, and say that in future she would like all the Select Committees to look at a very early stage at all suggestions emanating from the Commission.

It is the Commission, whether or not its members are described as bureaucrats, which can initiate legislation. Many European parliamentarians have the right to comment but not to decide, so it is not true that there is any kind of democratic control over what happens. To call the members of the Commission civil servants is a slight misnomer when so many of them are not only directly appointed by their own nation states but have it made very clear to them that the responsibility for decision-making purposes still resides in the Quai D'Orsay, in Bonn, in Madrid—wherever their own future lies. If hon. Members do not believe me, I can only say that they have not discussed this matter very frequently, as I have, with many European civil servants over the years.

Thomas More had one of his narrators in "Utopia" say that intelligent human beings who trusted one another had no need of treaties because if they trusted one another they would never do anything to injure one another's interests. If, on the other hand, they believed that they had to sign treaties because that degree of faith did not exist, that meant almost by implication that they were prepared to break the treaties that they had signed. I paraphrase, but it is a lesson that all politicians would do well to remember. Thomas More learnt the hard way that politics is a singularly unkind and unrewarding job.

Let us therefore accept that we have the treaty and the machinery, and the House of Commons can, if it wishes, this month take back a simple power. If we do not at any point represent the interests of our constituents in many of the directives that are being passed, these debates will become longer and longer spaced out and the amount of detail going through will be less and less scrutinised by the Mother of Parliaments. I offer one simple solution. Let us have a Select Committee of the House of Commons with representatives of every party, the sole function of which is to consider at the very earliest stage the implications of directives and make it clear to Ministers what their attitude is. The Danish Parliament does this very efficiently with a committee which can be called together at great speed and can discuss individual items. We do not do that. Even in the other place European legislation is better scrutinised than in this House, and in some instances much more efficiently.

If we do not take that course, debates in the House of Commons about what it is to be European or what it is to react to the Single European Act will be so much hot air without the understanding that it is power that decides where Europe will go. It is not an intellectual argument. The French, the Germans and the Italians do not rely on intellectual persuasion. They rely on carefully constructed coalitions of views, the giving of one benefit to receive 10 in return. The British do not understand the rules, they have never learnt the game and they are being beaten into the ground.

I offer one simple solution. Let us today send a message to the Prime Minister saying that we know that she is a European, that we are as European as she is and that we will support her if she simply brings back into our machinery all the legislation that is to be decided by majority votes and takes note of what the British say. Would not that be a remarkable innovation?

8.26 pm

Mr. David Curry (Skipton and Ripon): My grandparents were born when there was a British Empire and, had they so wanted, they could have governed that. My parents were born and lived their formative years at the time of the Battle of Britain. I have no doubt that for that generation the moment when the Anglo-Saxon world stood alone was the high point of their awareness of their Britishness.

For me—and this is where I nail my colours to the mast—the creation of Europe seems to be the most important task that my generation can undertake. I realise that other people have different ideals, but that is what brought me into politics and that is an ideal from which I will not resile. It is not a hopeless or far-fetched ideal; it is a very practical one. After 10 years as one of the Prime Minister's foot soldiers in the European Parliament, I am aware of the pitfalls, the barbed-wire and all the difficulties involved.

The choice for the United Kingdom is quite clear: it is engagement or withdrawal. I do not believe that there is a halfway house. I do not believe in a second-class citizenship in Europe. I can imagine the Prime Minister's response if she were invited to captain the second eleven in

the European Community. We have to be part of the ongoing process of Europe or get out of the Community. There is no practical way between the two.

If there is no choice but to continue—and I do not believe that this Government, with its commitment to Britain's role in the world, could conceivably contemplate withdrawal, because our role in the world is so involved in our membership of the Community—we have to consider how to make the best of it. There are several guidelines that would help us in the coming months, when there will be important decisions to take.

First, we should use a rhetoric which is appropriate to the occasion. We are told constantly that there are people who agree with us. They do not declare it, but there is anecdotal evidence that there are people who agree fundamentally with what we say. We have to make it possible for them to declare that they agree with us. Sometimes we erect a wall of rhetoric which does not reflect our politics and makes it difficult for them to declare that they share our point of view. That is an important political fact about achieving our objectives.

Secondly, we should be careful about the erection of the Brussels bureaucracy into some kind of modern evil empire with Mr. Delors as the demon king. I simply do not believe that that is a plausible representation or that it helps our case. I should like to see the return of pragmatism to our debates in the Community; I have always assumed it to be the great British virtue.

Thirdly, we must recognise that the single market is not and has never been a purely economic doctrine. It has always had implications for sovereignty, for all the reasons that are enshrined in the Single European Act; it has always been a constitutional as well as an economic movement. Other people have the right to define 1992 in terms that suit their political conditioning, background and needs. I agree that the social charter is a mish-mash of half-baked ideas of doubtful legal status; I agree that we should not eat at that table. Nor, however, should we deny that others may have political needs—for example, a social market tradition in their economies—that they will wish to put on the agenda.

I also believe that there is a close link between European Community processes and defence, and that involves Germany's role. Not the least of Europe's achievements has been the anchoring of Germany's fragile democracy in the western camp——

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Not now.

Mr. Curry: Democracy has been fragile throughout German history. A common subject for discussion in the European council chambers is "Can we trust the Germans?" I think that that is rather insulting to them, but I recognise that with the loosening of the reins in eastern Europe there are bound to be temptations. The best way in which we can ensure that Germany remains a fully fledged western partner and part of NATO is by not denying her the important alternative vision of the continued progress of Europe, which is a crucial element of our defence.

We must approach the Madrid summit—where we will consider the Delors report—with care and circumspection, but with a determination to engage in discussions. First, we must say that chapter 39, with its irrevocable commitment, must go. I do not think that it amounts to a row of beans: it is a typical document produced by civil servants who are impatient with the politicians' delay in making decisions. It will not bind any politician. Politicians may sign such documents, but if the circumstances change they will not keep to the agreement. Chapter 39 might just as well go now as be disproved later.

Secondly, we should distinguish between economic and monetary union. There are links between them, of course, but they are not the same. There are plenty of examples of political organisations in which economic policy is to some degree independent of monetary union. I see no reason why the United Kingdom cannot sign up to stage one of the Delors report. It will involve joining the exchange rate mechanism, but there are arguments for that, although I recognise that there is hostility to it among my right hon. and hon. Friends. The argument can cut either way, and I am not sure that I would fight a religious war over it.

We are likely to experience a decline in inflation relatively soon, along with the price stability achieved by the continental countries—partly through stringent monetary policy, but also because of the link in the exchange rate mechanism. Ireland's inflation is running at 2·5 per cent. I feel that the case is, on balance, in favour of joining the ERM before long. For one thing, I feel that it is the least expensive means of reducing inflation: the commitment to fight it will be given an institutional form which will influence the market. Perceptions matter in this business. I also believe that the introduction of the pound will mean that the whole mechanism must be expanded and strengthened. That will take time, and will take priority over more weird and wonderful aspects of the Delors report, of which I share the suspicion voiced by my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell).

Joining the European monetary system would require a more formal structure of central bank co-operation, agreement on monetary targets and a strengthening of commitment to intervention. Conversely, however, strengthening the commitment may require a less practical use of that commitment.

I believe that the Government have brought about significant achievements in Europe: the fight against protectionism, the importance assigned to the link with the United States—which is crucial—the reform of finances and farm policy, and the drive for the single market. When the history of this period is written, I believe that people will identify the break-up of the Communist empire, the new relationship between the Soviet Union and the United States—and the new relationship between Europe and the United States that is bound to evolve—the development of the Pacific Rim economies and the unification of Europe. This is one of the most historic movements that have taken place in my generation, and I trust that the United Kingdom will play a full and constructive part in it.

8.34 pm

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): I thought that the most interesting part of the speech by the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) was his observation that there comes a point in the history of various parts of the world at which power moves from what he described as the old concentrations. He also made the fair point that it is entirely legitimate for people to pursue the national interest, and to view changing circumstances from a "national interest" perspective. There is certainly a recognition that power is moving from the old concentrations of the Union created in 1707 to the wider

[Mr. Jim Sillars]

union of the European Community, leading many—including myself—to argue that Scotland should be an independent member of the Community.

In the past few months, the response to that logical argument—in particular, from the Governor General of Scotland—has been that Scottish policy is vigorously championed inside the Community, but that the present apparatus operated by the British Government is adequate to locate Scotland's influence within the Community. As the White Paper shows, the reality is very different. It tabulates 32 meetings of the Council of Ministers, at only three of which the Scottish Office was represented—and those meetings were concerned only with fisheries. Fourteen informal meetings were held, at none of which Scottish Office Ministers were present. It seems that, apart from fisheries, there was no direct, distinct or unique Scottish interest in matters such as the environment, energy, insurance, banking, social Europe, health, technology, education and steel. The White Paper mentions the

"major ministerial speeches on Community topics"

to be found in annex C. Of the 49 speeches logged there, not one was made by a Scottish Minister. That illustrates the scale of Scottish silence and—in my view—impotence, and our lack of influence on European policy.

I want to concentrate on two issues. The first is social Europe, and here I address myself to the Under-Secretary. It has been interesting to hear the different points of view about the legal basis of a veto on social Europe. Some hon. Members have said that it will be subject to a qualified majority, others that it will be subject to unanimity. The Minister of State has hedged and dodged a fair amount by saying that the Government have to see what is contained in the directive that will come before us before giving a positive and formal response. Surely the legal basis of the social charter should be clarified at an early date: it is an issue of genuine public concern and should be widely debated.

Many people, not only in the United Kingdom but throughout the European Community, regard social Europe as the other side of the coin, balanced equally with the free-market aspect of the Single European Act and the attempt to set up an internal market. In its report to the Council in December, the outgoing Commission makes that point very forcefully. But the British Government seem to view it as one-way traffic: everything that strengthens capital must be pushed forward. The free movement of capital puts it in a powerful position to exploit opportunities in the wider internal market, but also puts it in a powerful position to exploit the Labour party.

The British Government's scenario, as I understand it, involves no attempt to obtain an even or indeed a reasonable balance between capital and labour, especially in a Community with such a desperate level of economic development.

There will be a temptation on the part of capital to play one group of workers off against another group because of the different levels and standards of wages and conditions in different parts of the Community. Capital will attempt to force down wage rates and standards of health and safety. We have seen it already in the so-called free market United Kingdom economy, in the treatment of people who used to be protected by wages councils and of young people aged 16 or 17 who are told to take youth training scheme places or get no money.

The majority of the 320 million people in the Community live in civilised economic countries, where market forces are subject to control. They have experienced economic and social success because of that. We cannot expect them to accept undiluted Thatcherism as the only consequence of the Single European Act and the internal market. If the British Government do not know it, others in Europe recognise that people are the biggest, most important and most valuable resource. Other countries will want to continue a "people first" policy, giving people respect and dignity and acknowledging their importance by ensuring that in the world of work, which is important to every individual, they have enshrined rights, the same as employers are given by the so-called deregulation and freedom of the open market. It is shameful and ultimately destructive for the United Kingdom Government to threaten a veto on the social charter.

The second issue involves principle. The hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) put it well when he said that the British Government have to make up their mind whether it is engagement or withdrawal. I do not think that people and politicians in this state have ever made up their minds about whether they are part of the European Community. I know that, physically and legally, the answer is that we are a part of the Community, but I am asking the question in a political/economic sense.

The political arena is crucial. Attitudes, will power and a willingness to be constructive, to participate and to see other people as partners, not opponents, are vital. The United Kingdom seems to be part of the European Community, but not with the Community. Until that fundamental question is solved, we will continue to have girning, bickering, tackling and scrambling along, as the rest of Europe, which is used to consensus and partnership, makes significant progress. I do not think that there has ever been an honest answer from Government in the main areas of policy-making to that fundamental question.

The Single European Act was designed to produce momentum and to enable the European Community to hold its place in the new world order that is opening up. Any hon. Member who believes that a single country can stand by and watch the shift of economic and political power from the Atlantic to the Pacific and still survive without co-operation in Europe is living in cloud-cuckoo-land.

The important issue is what Europe does next. There will have to be further decisions on the kind of political and economic instruments needed to control the forces realised by the internal market. What kind of Europe will our children inherit in the 21st century? That is the crucial question. Instead of talking ridiculous and childish nonsense about whether cigarette packets should have the health warning on the side or on the front, we should put our energy into the bigger issues. Statesmanship and vision are required. I do not think that we will get them from the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) or from the Prime Minister. They should be there, but they are not.

What we see from the Thatcher Government is a demeaning exercise in chauvinism stoked by parochialism. It makes many people ashamed to be associated with it. I

wish to dissociate my party from it and I hope that it will not be long before Scotland in its entirety is dissociated from it.

8.45 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): I am strongly in favour of Europe, but I am equally vehement against federalism. This has been a momentous year in Europe, partly because of the Bruges speech. I do not think that enough attention has been paid to the important effect of that speech on the development of the European Community. There is no doubt that it has reset the agenda. It has done one other thing, too. The developments that have taken place in the House on the redefinition of our approach towards the scrutiny of legislation that comes to us from Europe will be emulated by other national Parliaments. We have already seen evidence of that in France, and I believe that it will happen in other member states.

During the debate we have heard about the use of the veto. One thing that has to be made clear is that the exercise of the veto and the ability to fall back on the unanimity provisions in the treaty are important in relation to VAT and to those parts of the social charter that are subject to the veto—there is a grey area there. The powers of the House through the scrutiny process and the exercise in the Council of Ministers of the powers accumulated by Ministers will be seen to be more valid because of the use of the veto than because of the Single European Act majority voting provisions.

That is not to say that, if the Single European Act were to be voted on again, I would vote differently from the way in which I voted originally. If our membership of the Community is to mean anything and if we are committed to the European Community, with the 300 or so legislative proposals that were outstanding, we could not have removed the logjam without a form of majority voting.

I am concerned that there is a misunderstanding about the nature of the Community. My right hon. Friends the Members for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) and for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) talked about the importance of persuasion and about whether we should have something akin to a commonwealth of nations. We heard the same comment from the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). It is important that the House should reflect on the fact that this is a legal order with a Court of Justice which has a tendency, if not an objective, towards political integration in Europe. There are those—I have come across them frequently and I do not criticise them for the honesty with which they hold their views—who genuinely believe that we should move towards a federally and politically integrated and united Europe. I disagree with them profoundly. The great empires that aspired to be constructed on the basis of legal arrangements all came to nothing. We need a flexible, mutual, reciprocating Europe of the kind that we now have, with the existing arrangements that were set up in the aftermath of the Single European Act.

We must accept that there has been a policy of moving by stealth towards a politically united Europe. That is openly admitted by people in the Community. They make no secret of it. The situation has been blown open largely by the Bruges speech and by a handful of people who have campaigned to bring it into the open.

There remains a strong sense of dirigism in the Community, and my great concern, of equal proportion to my concern about sovereignty, is the tendency within the dirigiste system for a move towards autocracy. I would not be worried about that if I genuinely thought that there was a means of filling the democratic vacuum—we hear much about the democratic deficit; I prefer to call it the democratic vacuum—that exists.

There are two alternatives. One is to move step by step towards—as the vice-president of the European Parliament put it—a single government for a sovereign people of Europe, which is the European Parliament. I would regard moving towards that goal as being fatal to Europe, let alone to this country and to my constituents. The second is to reinforce the democratic process in this House and persuade people—to borrow some words used by my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley at the end of his remarks—to bring back to the Parliaments of Europe, which are directly elected by their constituents, the task of representing them, thereby ensuring that we return to a range and horizon of democracy which fits in with the huge area of legislation and activity that has been absorbed into the European Community.

I firmly believe that the remoteness that the European Community would experience as a result of going down a quasi federal path would result in contact with the people being lost. It would not be long before democracy disintegrated. It is an irony that at a time when there are centrist tendencies in the system that we are experiencing, the Soviet Union, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and other countries are going centrifugal, not centrist. There are those in the United States who would like to see their arrangements changed because of an over-influence by states which interferes with the speed with which trade must be conducted.

I agree with the Prime Minister in her policies towards Europe. The Bruges speech was the major turning point of the European Community this year, not merely for Britain but for Europe as a whole. We will continue to have independent sovereign states, but we must look at the precision of the legal treaty base of the Community. At the same time, we must look at the powers and democratic traditions of this and other European countries.

Democracy in this country, with two world wars behind us and 300 years of tradition, is worth preserving. It must be admitted that some member states have only recently had revolutions or experienced totalitarianism, so that their democracies are shallow and need time to develop. If we in the Mother of Parliaments maintain the degree of democracy that is required in this House and persuade the other member states to look hard at our determination to ensure that democracy survives here, Europe will be a more democratic place for all the people of Britain, and of Europe generally, to inhabit.

8.55 pm

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): When I first came to this House 15 years ago I heard much the same arguments being adduced about Europe as I have heard today. I have listened with interest, as always, to what has been said, remembering that we are looking back not only at the last six months, which are covered by the report, but from where we are now to where we were all those years ago. There seems now to be a role reversal between the two main parties, at least on the surface, compared with the position when I first came to this place. I wonder why that role reversal has come about if not because some newer

[Mr. William Ross]

hon. Members have come to understand the consequences which face us if we proceed down the road that we have followed for the past 15 years.

The right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) told a story about getting on a train and being able to get off here and there and said that there was no timetable for the journey. But there was a destination, as there is in the matter that we are discussing, and in this case the destination was mapped out long ago. It is that destination that has always troubled me. While other parties have to some extent shifted their ground, the Ulster Unionist party has not shifted its position one iota on this. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members might find their party in a happier position on the matter today if they had not been so busy shifting their ground in recent months.

The Single European Act was sold to this House as the vehicle which could deliver to the population of Britain a single open market—a sort of western Europe wide open market for our products. If that was all that it was supposed to do, and if people believed that, then I confess that many Members of Parliament were either wilfully or willingly deceived, for not everyone who was putting that idea forward had only that idea in mind. There was a long-term destination before those who put up the Single European Act and all that went before it. In other words, the creators of that Act went far beyond a single market. I believe that they sought a united states of Europe, a single government, a single currency and a single policy for that government, acting as any government must. The Act was largely a smokescreen to hide the real intentions, for those concerned were talking about a market rather than about the constitutional and political implications.

The whole matter goes far beyond the scrutiny aspect to which reference has been made. The fact that there is now the necessity for scrutiny shows how much power we have given away and the many areas over which we no longer exercise real authority—or, as others have put it, sovereignty—in the governance of this nation.

Free trade does not need the same Government, the same law or even the same currency. We had references earlier, in effect, to statements such as, "Poor little Britain," "Poor little England," "Poor little United Kingdom" and "What can we do on our own?" I wonder how anybody elected to this House could think so little of the capabilities of the people whom they govern. I have greater confidence than that in the people of this country.

Although I was very young at the end of the last war, I think back to the condition of Europe, and particularly of Japan, at that time. Now we have only to walk through our streets and to look in the windows of our shops to see them stuffed with high quality products produced by the economic miracles of Japan and Germany, to name but two countries. This country has within it the ability to do far better on its own than it has hitherto. I have confidence in this country, and I am glad that my hon. Friends and I have always taken a jaundiced view of the EEC in all its forms. I am glad to see that other hon. Members—some, unexpectedly, Conservative Members—are coming round to the view that we have always held.

9 pm

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): This has been a thoughtful and interesting debate, and one in which the opening speech of the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) was not echoed by most of the other speakers from the Labour party. That shows the deep divisions on this matter that exist in the Labour party. It is trying to grope towards a new view of Europe, and a more positive suggestion, although I believe that it did not join in the collective declaration of building Socialism in Europe, which was made by the other Socialist parties represented in the European Parliament.

Mr. Foulkes: We signed the joint Socialist manifesto of all the European Socialist parties. The Labour party was a full signatory.

Mr. Dykes: That is a good way of explaining it. I meant that many Labour party members both here and in the European Parliament argued against that very idea. There have been changes within the other parties as well. However, the Liberals are entitled to say that, over the years, they have been consistent in their general enthusiasm for Europe. We remain, however, not only, as is self-evident, the governing party, but the party with the classic enthusiasm for Europe. That has been shown in today's debate with, perhaps, one or two exceptions, though not many.

There is a realisation that we must go forward as a Conservative party and a Conservative Government in developing the European Community. There is a tremendous enthusiasm for that, as shown in the Prime Minister's so-called Bruges speech. One sees in it a tremendously profound enthusiasm for the European Community. Some members of the press, and perhaps some members of the Conservative party, have misunderstood that. Quite logically and understandably, it is when we come to the details that we find different arguments being advanced. That is not a weakness or a problem. We also have arguments about aspects of domestic policy in the Conservative party before policies are finally formulated. We hope that people will rally round when the policies are finally agreed and presented by way of legislation. Could that not provide the same basis for our approach to the proposals on how the Community is being developed?

I am known to be enthusiastic about the development of the European Community and recent constitutional changes to try to accelerate that, because the Community was developing in such a hesitant and faltering way. However, I would not accept such an absurd idea that we should approve of everything suggested by, for example, the Commission by way of new policies or everything that comes out of the Council of Ministers and different portfolio Councils on various complicated matters. That would be crazy and would not lead to a genuine Community.

It would equally be a weakness if members of the Conservative party began to have what some members of the press have recently described as fatal second thoughts about the Community. I do not think that will happen. It is merely a temporary pause and nothing more than a blip on the radar screen. Why such doubts have suddenly arisen remain a mystery.

Like, I am sure, other hon. Members, I receive many letters on this subject, which has become a major debate.

It is regrettable that the House always return to the first principles involving why we joined. As far as I know, no other national Parliament does that. Even the Spanish, who joined fairly recently, now get on with their membership of the Community. I recently had a very telling letter from someone living in Oxford. After commenting on a letter which I had had published in a newspaper, the writer said:

"In common with many others I am most anxious lest the UK marginalises itself in the Europe of the future. The P.M. has said 'our destiny is in Europe'—but geographically we are on the edge—therefore we have to be especially positive in policy discussion——

Mr. Marlow: Cannot the hon. Gentleman read his brother's writing?

Mr. Dykes: If I had time I would comment on that, but sedentary interruptions are not allowed in these brief speeches tonight.

The quote continues:

"if we are to play a leading role."

That is not merely because we are geographically on the edge. More importantly, we joined much later than the original members, which produced its own built-in disadvantage which still exists.

It is not a weakness to see the point of view of others in the Community. That is, I suppose, the definition of the word "community". From our travels in other member states, we know that they still have suspicions, which unfortunately have been renewed recently, about our membership because of the various utterances made from time to time. That is a pity.

I notice that our latest intellectual party document about politics called "Talking Politics", which all Conservative Members use religiously, said on 11 May:

"Europe: the Conservative approach. The single market is a Conservative invention, making the Community a real common market at last."

I am proud of the ideas that we are developing with the single market. However, the idea is not that no other member state is keen on the idea of a single market. That is why it has been developed, because it is a common Community decision. Therefore, we must be careful to listen to our fellow member nations and bodies politic in the different countries, and members of the European Parliament representing other national delegations.

I am sorry to have to make such a heretical suggestion, which I know is risky as we work more and more with foreigners, but we must also listen more to Commission officials. There are British officials in the Commission who have plenty of ideas about the future development of the European Community. We cannot say that we have a monopoly of ideas and that the Commission officials are to deal with only the mercantilist, commercial single market and nothing else, and that there is no such thing as social policy.

The premier capitalist economy of Europe, Germany, is unfortunately much more successful than we are, although I hope that we shall one day catch up with them. Even Right-wing German business men regard the concepts of social policy as perfectly legitimate instruments of Government policy and decision-making.

Mr. Maude: That is what they are so cross about.

Mr. Dykes: The Minister makes a good point, which I accept readily because that is the essence of the Community. Other member states will have different packages of ideas reflecting their historical traditions, proclivities and particular political majorities. I hope that we will not enter the scenario of dictating what political majorities the other member states should have. Some of my colleagues do seem to have been tempted recently to suggest that.

Mr. Maude: These are very proper matters for the German Government to have in mind. All we are saying is that we do not believe that we should have German ideas about social policy planted on us. It should be for this House to decide that.

Mr. Dykes: I entirely accept that. That is why my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary is a communautarian. I have always believed that, and I know that he has a tremendous enthusiasm for the single market. I want him to be in the frame of mind of accepting other ideas as well. The Community is about give and take. We should not say that we refuse to accept the idea of country X, for whatever mysterious or self-evident reason. I do not think that that will arise.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) used to be very anti-EEC when he was a Labour Member, but has now changed. *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) and I have a continuing dialogue about these matters. The hon. Member for Govan and others have said that we should have more self-confidence in this country. The Government need more self-confidence vis-a-vis the rest of the Community. Why are our Government so nervous about the European Community? This Parliament too needs more confidence about the European Community.

I totally reject the idea that scrutiny will not be effective in the future, under the guidance and tutelage of the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). Those procedures will become much better. This Parliament will link up with European Parliaments and—why not?—with the other national Parliaments as well. Then we will fall within the true definition of a Community where there is give and take. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) said, it is not only national self-interest superimposed on a developing supranational structure, although that is the main motive driving force. We look after the nation's interests and therefore, we hope, the interests of our citizens and voters.

However, it is not only that. There is also the idealism of the Community—the common desire to build a modern, prosperous and social Europe. I do not think that the social charter will be a problem, and the Government need not appear hysterical about it. I hope that I have used the wrong adjective. I believe that there will be give and take and that in the end the matter will be agreed around the negotiating table at Madrid, or later, in the relevant Council. Individual states will compromise; they can develop their own ideas and not be dictated to by others.

However, if we—fatally—keep repeating week in and week out that we are opposed to a collective view on all aspects of policy in the Community, we shall make ourselves more and more marginal, to use the word in the letter that I quoted, even though we have been a member for 16 years. That would be humiliating, and I refuse to accept it. Such a result would be unnecessary and would make us look utterly foolish in Brussels and Strasbourg. Whatever the election result on 15 June, we shall need to

[Mr. Dykes]

work with our colleagues in the European Parliament on collective scrutiny so that we can influence Government policy.

I always enjoy the highly theoretical but sincere speeches made by the hon. Member for Newham, South who, like the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), described the wonderful, mystical ballot-box relationship between the people and this sacred sovereign Parliament. It would be nice if that theory were right, but in practice we know how the system works: the usual channels, the Whips clamping on the whip, ossified majorities in this place and a voting system which allows Governments to rule without restraint or limitation on the basis of a minority vote of the total electorate. All systems have their imperfections—but also take advantage of the fabulous opportunities which were described by my right hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery).

9.12 pm

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): This has been a fascinating debate—it is going on in the country, too. The hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes), who we all know is a sincere and enthusiastic supporter of the Common Market, must be rather a disappointed man this evening. Things have gone so far that he is reduced to being engaged in controversy with the Government and Conservative Front Bench spokesmen, which shows the split that has developed in his party. At one time, the hon. Member for Harrow, East, like others in this country, must have thought that the Common Market issue was settled, but it clearly is not. It has now reached the forefront of British politics and caused a major split in the Conservative party. That does not surprise me greatly—I always thought that it would happen. I merely wondered why it took quite so long to do so.

The basic truth is that we are faced with a major dilemma, and by "we" I mean every Member in all of the many corners of opinion on the Common Market in this House—the issue does not divide neatly into two sides. This dilemma takes the form of the incompatibility of the EEC with our parliamentary system. The Community is incompatible with the democratic parliamentary self-government of this country. The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) always diverts my attention by shaking his head right under my nose at what I say—he has done so for years—but whatever he thinks, to the extent that the Common Market develops, if it does, and to the extent that it succeeds in its own terms, our Parliament becomes more and more redundant. That is the fact with which we shall all have to cope. We can only have one or the other: British parliamentary democracy or the treaty of Rome. I suspect that no one ponders these matters more than you, Mr. Speaker.

Some people say that the answer is proper scrutiny. I am all in favour of as much scrutiny as we can effect, and I pay tribute to my parliamentary neighbour, my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). However, even under his chairmanship of the Scrutiny Committee, satisfactory scrutiny is not possible, for a number of reasons.

First, there is so much of this legislation; secondly, there is the timing of the tortuous process. A third reason was adduced by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), who said that Ministers go to the Common Market under prerogative powers—treaty-making powers—and act in the name of the Crown, not that of Parliament. When that question was asked, I rose on a point of order, the only time in 10 years that I have done so. I felt strongly about this, because the Minister refused to answer my right hon. Friend's question. She could not answer the question whether Ministers act with prerogative powers and are thus beyond the powers of the House. She is fudging the issue. We can have as much scrutiny as we like, but if we send our Ministers under article 100A, and there is majority voting, even if we are capable of instructing our Ministers they may be outvoted.

The Prime Minister sent the Secretary of State for Health on a humiliating trip recently. It concerned the wording on cigarette packets, and the Minister told the EEC to keep its nose out, because this was a matter for the House of Commons. The EEC told him to get lost. So even if there is unanimity in this House and we send a Minister off to Brussels convinced of our opinions, it will make no difference because the powers have been lost under the Single European Act.

The shoe is beginning to pinch. The sovereignty of Parliament is not a reactionary idea: it is the British way of doing things. I hope that people will not mock that way, which has come out of our history and is not a party-political issue. Parliament is sovereign; there are no restraints on it—that is the constitutional doctrine. We are not bound by past generations. Each new generation can do its own thing in its own way. That is the British genius and it has served us extremely well.

The Common Market imposes restrictions, inhibitions and restraints on us and tells us what to do. As that happens more frequently, it inevitably causes friction and tension. The EEC keeps extending its competence—it is sometimes called creeping competence. We have not paid much attention to the six-month report, but I shall refer to it out of deference to my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson)—I know that he reads these documents every night before he goes to bed. The report informs us that the Scrutiny Committee considered 415 documents and recommended 48 for debate in the House——

Mr. Spearing *rose*——

Mr. Leighton: I do not want to offend my hon. Friend, but I hope to allow another Conservative Member to speak before the debate ends—I even hope that he may agree with some of what I have said.

No one can deny that debating these issues late at night is unsatisfactory. It is a farce and a sham, and hon. Members know that, which is why they do not bother to turn up.

The Council of Ministers is a legislature that meets in secret. Whatever it decides is then translated willy-nilly into our law. Every time that happens that is subverting and derogating from our Parliament and not just from one side of the House. If there is a political development, perhaps we will change sides and we will have some say in Government. It is the nation's Parliament that is being derogated from.

The Single European Act destroys the pledges that were given in the referendum, when the Government issued a paper that said that no new policy or law could be inflicted on Britain without the assent of a British Minister accountable to the House. That pledge has been destroyed, because that Minister can now be outvoted. I see that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) is present. That process in the EEC will not only destroy our parliamentary self-government, but will fragment the United Kingdom. Why should the Scots bother to send Members of Parliament to Westminster if decisions are taken not here but in Brussels? The Scots are likely to think that it is a waste of time sending Members of Parliament here, and that will damage the unity of the country.

The incompatibility must be resolved. It is now coming to the boil. We have not heard the end of the story. Some of us have taken an interest in the matter, and I hope that the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) when he carried out his research found that I was one of the 10 noble Members who voted on Third Reading——

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): It was 20 hon. Members.

Mr. Leighton: I hope that I was one of those 20. I have been in that noble band over the years and I intend to keep with its noble cause, because I belong to the Parliament party and I am sure that in this country we will prevail.

9.21 pm

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): This country is making an important contribution to the development of the European Community in keeping alive the argument for liberalisation of markets and for deregulation. This country is keeping alive the argument that prosperity grows most swiftly and progress is made most rapidly when the case for less government is urged successfully on those who would over-govern or over-regulate. We can see that in a number of positive proposals that have been put through on British initiatives or have been strongly argued for by British representatives—for example, the deregulation of some aspects of civil aviation, which has brought cheaper air fares and more choice of routes; the liberalisation of capital movements, which has created a more genuine financial market across Europe; and the proposals to deregulate telecommunications and aspects of public purchasing, which can give businesses a real chance to sell in the wider European market and develop the commercial links, the interchange and commerce on which the entire growth of the European ideal must rest.

I dissent from those who have argued that British industry is ill-equipped to meet that challenge or is in some way impeded by the policies being pursued. Obviously, the contrary is the case. British business wants a Government consistent in defending British interests, consistent in arguing for more access and consistent in arguing for less government and more freedom for business to prosper, and that is what business in this country has. We can see that that has succeeded by the way in which the Japanese, the Americans and others outside the Community wish to locate and invest here to ensure that they are in a good position. They come to the country where enterprise policies are most supported and where the British community gives them the kind of backing that they require to exploit the wider European market.

When I came to the debate, I was obviously conscious that there had been arguments in the press about possible splits. I found the debate interesting because there is indeed a massive split on offer in the House today—and it has been seen in the Opposition. A succession of Labour Members have made extremely powerful speeches in defence of British national democracy and against the European Community at exactly the same time as Labour Front Bench spokesmen have argued that Labour is now the good 'European party. They are the same Labour Front Bench spokesmen who will not tell us all their policies on Europe and have tried to keep them secret from their own party until the publication of a document, from which many of their colleagues feel excluded, in which policies are developed which are not good European policies by Commission standards. The Labour party does not accept that Brussels should fix British taxation, economic policy, social policy or many other policies. The Labour party appears to be moving closer to the Government's position in accepting that we are part of a wider European Community and that that wider Community is one that must be limited in its ambitions and concentrate above all on the prospects of 1992.

9.25 pm

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): I, too, came into British politics because of an enthusiasm for the European Community, but I share the apprehensions of many other speakers about the apparent lack of democratic accountability within the institutions of that Community. There is a need to remedy that position.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) said that we should not criticise M. Delors, because he was a senior civil servant similar to one of our senior civil servants. My hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) said that Commissioners were servants of the Council. If only that were the case, but it clearly is not. The Single European Act, for example, says that the Council acts on a proposal from the Commission. I believe that that is the root of some of our problems: it is the Commission that sets the agenda for what we are discussing. It is not this Parliament and, regrettably—although it now has some increased powers—it is not yet the European Parliament. Most proposals are coming from people who are not accountable to any of us, which is the root of many of our problems.

I must congratulate my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the other Ministers who have been going to the meetings of the various Councils on the progress that they have made towards 1992. I believe that on the banking own funds directive, financial services, public procurement, mutual recognition of professional qualifications and indirect taxation they have done a good job. However, I do not believe that many of the Commission's other proposals are relevant to the completion of the internal market or the creation of prosperity in Europe. An example of that has been the social charter. The Commission has its priorities wrong, and it should be concentrating much more on other areas that are in urgent need of being rectified if we are to create a true common market and a true European Community.

It is important to consider Government subsidies. The French, for example, in comparison to us, give double the amount of subsidies to their industries, the Germans two

[Mr. John Butterfill]

and a half times more, and the Italians eight times more. That urgent matter has not been addressed by the Commission and I believe that it has been extremely dilatory.

One needs only to read the Court of Auditors' report to realise that nothing like enough has been done to prevent fraud. At the moment the management is totally incompetent. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) has already described how progress on general insurance is being frustrated. Enormous barriers to takeovers still exist within the European Community. Anyone can come to this country and take over one of our companies, but in Germany and Spain there are no formal takeover codes. The enormous problems still facing the Community must be solved.

The social charter proposals take away from national parliaments what should be their responsibility. To retain some form of national sovereignty does not contradict the idea of progressing to some form of federal Europe. In the United States of America there is a national Government, but individual states take decisions on those issues about which they feel passionately or about which they believe the local communities should have the right of decision. I believe that that should be the future model for Europe. We should not go along with the social charter claptrap that is now coming out of the Commission.

9.29 pm

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Those of us who are regular connoisseurs of such debates, whether as volunteers or conscripts, will agree that this has been a vintage occasion. Although the Opposition greatly welcomed the debate—much more than the Government, I hazard the guess—we would much prefer properly organised prospective rather than retrospective debates. We could then consider forthcoming decisions in the Community and express our views and the House could begin to take a greater interest in proper scrutiny of that legislation.

The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) was the only hon. Member to consider the previous six months in detail. Certainly they were eventful, particularly the infamous Bruges speech to which almost everyone has referred today. That speech was so internally inconsistent as to be totally self-contradictory. One sentence proclaiming an alleged belief in the European ideal was followed by another beating the nationalist drum and challenging the basic tenets of the Community. Henceforward, however, we are to describe that speech as an example of twin-track policy—we have the Minister of State to thank for that description. If such double-speak was intended to confuse our enemies, it succeeded only in confusing our friends and partners in Europe.

Perhaps the Prime Minister is confused. Confusion was certainly apparent in her astonishing impromptu speech —referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice)—at the *Daily Mail* and *Evening Standard* opening with Bubbles Rothermere et al. The Prime Minister said in reply to her predecessor:

> "We stood when freedom was challenged, we stood and we fought for freedom and the liberation of Europe was mounted from our shores, and would not have been liberated unless we had stood and unless America had joined us. That is the vision of Europe I have. That is what the battle is really about."

What a strange comparison. Apparently, she perceives the threat from Brussels as comparable with that from Adolf Hitler.

Such speeches are part of the "lively" dialogue that has been taking place within the Tory party. It is not just nuances of difference or even two to six different interpretations—it is now open warfare. Lord Plumb, a leading Conservative, described his Prime Minister's actions as "petty national protectionism". He said that her call for a Europe merely of sovereign states, co-operating with each other where they wished, misunderstood the nature of the Community. He put her right as firmly as any man can by pointing out that

> "there are no serious advocates in the Community of a European super-state".

The right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) rightly reminded us of that today. I venture to suggest, with perhaps a little humility—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Robertson: This is the new Labour party.

Mr. Foulkes: Yes, indeed.

I venture to suggest that we might make a better judgment on the issues if we recognised that the European Community is neither a capitalist plot, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) might think, nor the Socialist super-state envisaged by the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor). The Community is what we, as members, make it. Whether we agree to share our sovereignty is our decision.

In the debate that has been raging within the Conservative party we know that the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) has been less restrained in his criticisms than Lord Plumb. My hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) quoted the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) extensively and that right hon. Gentleman spoke eloquently for himself. From all the discussions and actions of the past few weeks it is not clear, however, whether the general confusion, and, in particular, the confusion about the Single European Act, is caused through ignorance or deliberate duplicity.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton said, article 100A of the Single European Act was rushed through the House, with a three-line Whip and a guillotine, against a united Opposition. We considered the legislation in Committee on the Floor of the House on a Friday and the Government panicked and moved the closure because they were so worried by the effectiveness of the opposition.

It was clear to us, as it ought to have been clear to Conservative Members, that the Single European Act introduced qualified majority voting on health—that includes warnings about the danger of smoking—safety, environmental pollution and consumer protection. The only exclusions were fiscal provisions, those relating to the free movement of persons, and the rights and interests of employed persons. Either Conservative Members knew what they were doing but now regret it and pretend that the reality is different from what it is, or they did not know what they were doing, which would have been a disgraceful dereliction of duty.

The Prime Minister is now stamping her foot petulantly and getting her Cabinet Ministers to mimic her in Europe,

not just in relation to smoking but, as the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber said, on identity cards for pensioners—an idea that came from the voluntary movement in this country—the health and safety package and the social charter.

Labour is enthusiastically committed to the proposals for a social Europe where workplaces are safe and workers are well trained, fully consulted and properly rewarded throughout their working lives. Labour is also enthusiastically committed to a Europe where the role and contribution of women is properly recognised. Our programme, announced this morning, for upgrading employment rights, for radically changing the nature of training, for putting industrial relations law on a fair footing and for cleaning up the working environment will reinforce and be reinforced by the agenda for a social Europe which is now being developed but which is vehemently opposed by the Prime Minister and Conservative Members.

At Prime Minister's Question Time earlier today, the Prime Minister described the social charter as more of a Socialist charter. As my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) reminded us, however, Lord Plumb said at Chatham House—and others have repeated it today—that

"It is in fact part and parcel of ensuring fair competition."

On Tuesday last, Lord Cockfield said to the Select Committee on European Legislation, which my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) chairs so excellently, that

"Social policy is part of the policy of the Community, as enshrined in the Single European Act."

If we are all to compete fairly in the Community, there must be harmonisation of the social as well as the economic and free market aspects of the Community. Equally, environmental standards need to be raised to the highest and equal levels, not just to keep our water pure and our beaches clean, but to ensure fair competition between enterprises in different countries. Capitalists do not voluntarily spend money on environmental protection if it cuts their profits. The Opposition know that all too well. On this, as on other issues, the Government are guilty not just of double-talk—the twin-track policy that we keep hearing about—but of double standards. We all marvelled when the Prime Minister suddenly discovered environmental issues and donned the green mantle, although, as my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition said, she donned it only to reveal that it is deeply soiled.

Once again, the Government's action fails to match the truth. If I may be forgiven for citing a local example, all seven Ayrshire beaches, including two in my constituency, fail to meet the requirements of the European Community directive on quality of bathing water, thus jeopardising health and undermining the huge and growing tourist potential. The Clyde river purification board urged the Government to take action and Strathclyde regional council wants to upgrade its sewage treatment works, but the Government refused to make capital available for that purpose. Again, they are all talk and no action. We now know that that is called a twin-track policy. The Prime Minister talks tough but fails to produce any effective action.

As we know, the Single European Act means that, increasingly, important decisions will be taken at a European level. That governmental activity must be brought under proper democratic control. The Opposition see the path of future progress as being towards closer co-operation rather than an attempt to create a united states of Europe. As Ernest Bevin said, we are not going to open that Pandora's box and let all the Trojan horses out.

The solution is not to create a centralised tier of government in Brussels to supplant national government, but to make sure that the extensive and growing European co-operation that we seek is responsible to the British Parliament and the British people. Ministers must be made accountable to Parliament for the agreements that they make at the Council of Ministers. That is why we want an effective system of parliamentary scrutiny of European Community legislation. Again, the reality does not match the talk. The Government adopt a twin-track policy, as we must now call it. Statements in the House of what is being done in our name by Ministers in Brussels have withered to almost nothing. The Opposition have suggested a European Grand Committee to improve scrutiny, but no action has yet been taken. The Prime Minister and other Ministers prefer to keep decision-making away from the House and within the Civil Service, ministerial and Council of Ministers nexus where they can get on with it without any real scrutiny.

Our amendment highlights the inadequacy and ill-preparedness of the country to face the challenge of 1992. I am glad that a Minister from the Department of Trade and Industry—the so-called Department of enterprise which adopts another twin-track policy of all talk and very little action—is to reply to the debate. The British economy is saddled with a massive trade deficit and a higher inflation rate than in any comparable country. It is an under-invested, badly-trained, ill-equipped economy which is in no shape to compete in the 1990s. The right hon. Member for Henley correctly pointed out in his book that 90 per cent. of major British companies undertake no market research on the continent, and that 93 per cent. take no initiative to train employees in another European language. What are the Government doing? They are planning to send the Secretary of State for Education and Science to Brussels to veto the Lingua programme which might have improved that situation. In addition, 95 per cent. of British firms have no sales agents working in the rest of the Community. Those are just three key examples of our lack of preparation.

I hope that I have persuaded some Conservative Members who occasionally support us. The sad reality is that the Conservative Government have left Britain ill-prepared for our European future. Ten years of Conservative Government have left us too weak economically to meet the challenges and too socially backward to take the opportunities. The danger is that failing to meet the challenges and turning our back on the opportunities will condemn us to a mean and dispiriting future, as a depressed economic region on the edge of a greater European economy. We reject that option. That is why we ask the House to support our amendment.

9.43 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. Francis Maude): I have great pleasure in agreeing with the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) that we have had a most remarkable debate. He is a veteran of the

[Mr. Francis Maude]

six-monthly debate; I am a veteran of the debates we somtimes have later at night. He was right to say that this has been a vintage occasion.

There has not been that much said about the White Paper which is the subject of the take-note motion. I do not go as far as my hon. Friends who, in their amendment, describe it as a "depressing document". Perhaps there is not enough life and sparkle in the document to keep a five-hour debate going.

We had a series of notable speeches, especially from my right hon. and hon. Friends. My right hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery), with a majestic historical sweep, opened up horizons which are of value to us all. My right hon. Friends the Members for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) and for Guildford (Mr. Howell) and my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body), to take just three hon. Members who made remarkable speeches, applied themselves seriously to the issue that has been of concern to the Conservative party for a long time.

The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) made an extremely powerful speech. He showed that the one theme running through all the speeches and which informs us all is that these are matters of the profoundest importance for the House. It has been a long debate and I have only 15 minutes in which to reply to it. Some of my hon. Friends have asked me to deal with specific points, but in the short time available to me I cannot possibly do justice to all the issues that have been raised. I hope that my hon. Friends will forgive me if I do not go into points in great depth.

There has been much comment about the future. Perhaps the most remarkable phenomenon in the debate was that the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) in opening for the Opposition sought to present his party as the most European. So European is it that while he spoke there were only six Labour Back Benchers in the Chamber and almost all of them disagreed with him. I can see why the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley, who wound up for the Opposition, was at pains to invite my right hon. and hon. friends to support the Opposition amendment. The reason for that is plain to see. The Opposition could rustle up only 20 Members to vote against Third Reading of the Single European Act, but it does not look as if they will be able to manage even as many as that tonight.

The serious contributions came predominantly from my right hon. and hon. Friends and I should like to deal with the central anxiety that some of them expressed, that we are not fully engaged in the European Community. My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) said that we were nervous about the European Community. We are not a bit nervous and the facts utterly confound that anxiety. Every measure of compliance with directives, of the implementation of court judgments, of complaints to the Commission or courts against us shows us to have the best record in Europe.

Of course, we occasionally raise objections to a proposal at an early stage in a way that may look negative, but that is actually because as good Europeans we take European proposals seriously. That means that we sometimes point out difficulties and problems which others have not spotted. That enables us to take a lead in Europe.

Let us look at one example, the issue of approximation of indirect taxes. We said at an early stage that, quite apart from our objection to the imposition of VAT on food, the Commission's proposals were cumbersome and bureaucratic. We were derided for being negative, but we put forward alternative proposals which were better in every way.

We argued and persuaded for a solution which harnesses market forces and which avoids the centralisation and regulation of the Commission's proposals. By dint of our hard work and leadership, we have won over many other member states to the fundamentals of our position, and the Commission itself now recognises that its original proposals simply would not work. Yesterday it announced new ideas which go a good way towards meeting our basic concerns, for example, on zero rates. That is a major vindication of our firm stance. Of course there is much hard discussion ahead, but the argument is going our way. That is but one example of the ways in which Britain leads in Europe. I fully accept what my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley says, that we should be at the leading edge. I believe that we are.

Let us look back 10 years to the issues which then bedevilled the Community and which some people argued threatened its very existence: a common agricultural policy totally out of control; a budget with huge imbalances; a single market which was no more than a dream; a Europe held together by cash and red tape. Ten years on, the CAP is beginning to be seriously reformed. At long last, surpluses are reducing. That has not happened by accident. It has happened because of hard arguing, firm leadership and a refusal to accept that it was impossible. Britain is in the lead.

We must not forget the huge and growing budget contribution which the previous Labour Government had so skilfully negotiated. In 1984 when my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was negotiating to reduce the budget contribution, the Leader of the Opposition was characteristically supportive of British interests. He said that the Prime Minister had better enjoy the sunshine at Fontainebleau because he did not think that she was going to enjoy much else. He said that my right hon. Friend would not come away with £475 million adding, "That I do know."

For once the Leader of the Opposition was right. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister did not come away with £475 million; she came away with £600 million and she has saved Britain £4·5 billion in total since then. Had my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister not argued and argued and persuaded and persuaded, that net contribution would today be some £4 billion, which would represent nearly 3p on income tax. That was Labour's legacy.

Throughout the campaign to reduce contributions to the EEC, what was the Liberals' battle cry? It was "Surrender, surrender." Who takes the lead in attacking fraud in the Community? Once again, Britain has led and has pushed that issue high on the agenda.

The single market is no longer a dream. It is a growing reality. Who was pressing for that?

Mr. Foulkes: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Maude: No, I will not give way. I have little time.

We Conservatives said so many years ago when my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup

(Mr. Heath) led us in that historic move into the Community that the achievement of a real, free, single common market was one of our principal goals. However, because of disagreements within the Community, because of other problems and because so many other countries have consistently defended their nationalistic and protectionist corners, progress was frustrated.

Time and again during the negotiations that I conduct for the United Kingdom, it is Britain which leads, it is Britain which drives programmes forward and argues for the European, liberal and genuinely free market solution. Only last June we supported a Council resolution stating that market forces should be strengthened, that the cost of compliance with Community legislation should be minimised and unnecessary regulation avoided and that existing legislation should be reviewed with a view to simplification. I stress that that was a proposal by the Commission which was supported by all 12 member states.

We are not isolated in Europe. We are winning converts all the time. We have rarely voted against single market measures. The only time that I did so was because the measure was not European enough. It would have allowed national protectionism to continue. In contrast, Germany has voted time and again, and been voted down, against measures which it found too liberal to stomach.

Let us consider some examples. Last year the Commission introduced a directive to open up the market in telecommunications terminals. We supported that directive because it would break down barriers to trade. However, the French, Italians and others are challenging it in the European Court. Last month we argued and won our case for a directive to liberalise transfrontier broadcasting. Who opposed it? It was opposed by Germany, Belgium and Denmark. On most of the issues we are in the majority. We are driving the programme forward. We are in the lead.

When we oppose proposals, as we do perfectly properly, it is rare for us to be alone. For example, we argued against the proposal for a right of residence directive partly because it dealt with issues outside Community competence. Many other member states had equal difficulty with it and the Commission has now withdrawn it.

The Netherlands, Luxembourg, and, increasingly, Germany are as fundamentally opposed as we are to the proposal on withholding tax. The suggestion that Britain is on the sidelines while the real arguments go on without us is incomprehensible to those of us who take part in the discussions, day by day, week by week and month by month. So often we argue, in close alliance with the Commission, for a free market and a deregulated Europe against the narrow nationalism of some of our partners. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said in her speech at Bruges:

> "Britain does not dream of some cosy, isolated existence on the fringes of the European Community. Our destiny is in Europe, as part of the Community."

Nothing could be clearer than that.

My right hon. and hon. Friends have spoken of the future of the Community and our future in it. Three years ago we signed the Single European Act. That was the first major change to the treaty of Rome for 30 years, and we agreed it. We signed it along with 11 other nations because it was necessary to achieve the original aims of the treaty. It was proving impossible to complete the single market against the single country veto. That is what the Single European Act changed. It introduced majority voting for specific purposes. It was to enable the single market to be completed.

Mr Spearing: Not specific.

Mr. Maude: It specifically states that taxation, monetary issues and issues affecting the rights of employees can still be vetoed. We do not complain about majority voting. We have gained a great deal from it. As my right hon. Friend the Minister of State said, transfers of sovereignty are not done in pursuit of an ideal; they are done out of hard-headed self interest. That was done by all the 12 member states who signed the Single European Act.

Of course, there will occasionally be times when we lose, but as long as the issues on which we are voting are those which the Single European Act envisages, we will stand by those decisions. But we will argue, and so will many of our partners in Europe, against measures that extend Community competence beyond what we have agreed. Neither we nor our partners are being bad Europeans when we hold fast to the terms of the Single European Act. I make no apology for that.

Now there are further proposals for further institutional changes. The Delors report is a useful document. It is rigorous in its analysis and it fudges no issues. The central and unavoidable conclusion that it reaches, as we knew it must, is that an economic and monetary union involves a transfer of sovereignty from member states to the new central monetary institution and central control of fiscal policy. That effectively means political union.

I do not say that that will never happen. What I do say is that it is not now, nor for the foreseeable future will it be, something on which the Community could agree. That firm view, shared by others in the Community, does not mean that we will stand back from the discussions on monetary co-operation.

The Delors report sets out three phases towards monetary union, but I have to say that the committee made it much more difficult to take part in those discussions by linking, in article 39 of the report, agreement to phase 1 to agreement to phases 2 and 3. Of course, we can talk about phase 1. Far from our being on the sidelines, we are already well ahead of our colleagues in the Community. None of this can happen without the final removal of exchange controls in Europe. We did that 10 years ago. The rest of the Community, after we and the Commission argued and persuaded for so long, agreed to follow suit by the middle of next year.

It was we who pioneered the issuing of ecu Treasury bills and who led the way in holding ecu and other European currencies in our reserves. It is we who have open financial markets. It is we who have led the way. We may have a two-speed Europe, but it is we who are ahead.

Let me talk now about another area in which it is said that great changes must be made. I do not contest for a moment that there is a social dimension to the single market. That is all about providing benefits to our people as consumers, travellers and employees. All the studies show that a substantial number of new jobs will arise. But the one thing that would guarantee that we squander those benefits would be to encumber Europe with the dead weight of heavy social regulation.

That is why the Labour party is at long last taking an interest in Europe. The one consistency in its stance at any moment is that it is prompted not be principle but by its

[Mr. Maude]

cynical and incompetent calculation of electoral advantage. Its attitude to the single market repays study—opposition, opposition and opposition.

Dr. Seal, the leader of Labour Members of the European Parliament, said:

"The completion of the single market will make many of Labour's industrial and trade union policies illegal."

He is right. The Labour party has concluded that if it cannot have Socialism through the front door, it will have it through the back door. It is right to think that it will not get it through the front door. The British people will ensure that. But we shall make sure that the back door is locked.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 51, Noes 176.

Division No. 286] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Bermingham, Gerald
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Clay, Bob
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Dixon, Don
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
McAllion, John
McNamara, Kevin
Marek, Dr John
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Mowlam, Marjorie
Murphy, Paul
Pike, Peter L.
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Spearing, Nigel
Wall, Pat
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Billen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'ts)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howells, Geraint
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knowles, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of the White Paper, Developments in the European Community July-December 1988 (Cm. 641).

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will have noticed that only 51 Members voted in the Aye Lobby. Would it be possible for *Hansard* to include what I believe the European Community call an "explication de vote" so that we may

know how many hon. Members were anti-marketeers and how many were pro-marketeers—or whether perhaps they have been influenced by the new Labour policy document?

Mr. Speaker: We do not use Community procedure in this Chamber yet.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101 (5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

Social Security

That the draft Social Security Miscellaneous Provisions Regulations 1989, which were laid before this House on 2nd May, be approved.

Legal Aid

That the draft Legal Aid (Functions) (No. 2) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 17th April, be approved.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Question agreed to.

PETITION

Mr. Gerald Wheeler

10.12 pm

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): I wish to present a petition on behalf of Mr. Gerald David Wheeler of 9, Langdale house, Churchill gardens, London SW1. I do so on behalf of my right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke). He has expressed himself agreeable that I should present the petition on behalf of his constituent, who is very keen that it should be presented formally. Mr. Wheeler's sister is my constituent, which is why I was chosen to present it.

This is a long petition, and I would summarise it thus. Mr. Wheeler believes that under parliamentary privilege in speeches in the House and reports thereof his integrity was impugned so seriously by the former hon. Member Mr. Leo Abse that his business foundered. He has sought legal remedy, but without success. His hurt remains, and to that end he prays as follows:

Wherefore your Petitioner most humbly prays that your Honourable House will immediately take into consideration your Petitioner's continuing present personal grievance and appoint a Select Committee to examine and report on the submission by your Petitioner that he should be granted compensation and/or such other relief as it may think fit and proper.

And your humble Petitioner, as in duty bound, will ever pray &c.

To lie upon the table.

National Theatre

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

10.14 pm

Mr. Alastair Goodlad (Eddisbury): I welcome the opportunity to bring before the House the funding of the Arts Council and the Royal National theatre. As the House knows, the National theatre was a vision which took many years to become palpable. The House will wish to recognise the immense contribution made by Lord Olivier, by Lord Goodman, by the late Lady Lee and more recently by Lord Rayne.

The House might regard the Royal National theatre as currently thrice blessed in having my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) as one of its directors for the last nine years, and in having Lady Soames as its recently appointed chairman. There is no one in the country whose personal dynamism could better lead the Royal National theatre into the future. Her only conceivable drawback is that, were she to appear before the audience, she would upstage—nay, eclipse—every known leading lady, past, present and future.

The third blessing is in the combination of Richard Eyre as director and David Aukin as executive director. Those who saw Richard Eyre's directions at the National theatre of "Guys and Dolls", "The Beggar's Opera" and more recently the electrifying production of "The Changeling"—indeed, those whose theatrical memories go back as far as the Cambridge run of "Expresso Bongo" in the 1960s—will have recognised that here is a man of unusual genius and vision, with the capacity to evoke something unique and special from all involved in his productions.

With the help of Government, local authorities and private sponsors, and through much hard work, a unique national institution has at last been created with which a massive number of people, at home and abroad, identify. The Royal National theatre is the jewel in the crown of the British and, I believe, the European theatre. It exists, in the words of Richard Eyre,

"to do work which either by content or by execution, or both, could not be performed or would not be initiated in the commercial sector. It provides continuity of investment, of employment and of a theatrical tradition, and this requires a subsidy to supplement the revenues from the box office.

Composing the content of the repertoire will always be a balancing act between adventure and caution, between known classics and the unknown; recent plays and new ones. But the spine of the work will always be the classics which are our genetic link with the past and our means of decoding the present.

Every age sees its own reflection in these plays. We find in them not the past throwing a shadow on the present, but an image of ourselves. The classics survive, not because they are relics venerated for their age, but because of what they mean to us now.

But we have to keep rediscovering ways of doing the classics. They do not have absolute meanings. There is no fixed frozen way of doing them. Nostalgia is a powerful, but slow acting poison and it can cripple; the life of the theatre should always be in the present tense."

I will speak of the present. The institution that now exists consists of three separate and distinct theatres—the Olivier, based on the classical Greek theatre; the Lyttelton theatre, based on the proscenium arch theatres of the last three centuries; and the Cottesloe, based on the Tudor inn yards. They are modelled on theatrical designs from the three greatest periods of western drama.

[Mr. Alastair Goodlad]

Crucial to the experience of visiting the theatre is the front-of-house area which, in contrast to the cramped conditions of much of the commercial theatre, encourages people to relax and gives them room to do so. Sir Denys Lasdun's building has not met with universal praise at all times, but neither has St. Paul's cathedral. I believe that the Royal National theatre, on one of the most beautiful sites in London, will be seen by history as a far-sighted and brilliant extension of traditional theatrical ideas.

The front-of-house area is like a fourth auditorium, where people can browse at bookstalls, look at exhibitions, eat and drink, or sit and chat. Important, too, is the National theatre studio, financed by private sources and housed in the Old Vic annexe. There the National theatre refines and extends its skills and generates new writing and experimental work. Regular studio nights are held in the Cottesloe, when examples of work in progress are shown to the public for one night only.

Important, too, is the education department which links up with schools and colleges, and takes specially created productions on tour. Touring at home and abroad of main house productions, never in greater demand than now, is an important aspect of the theatre's work. I know that that importance is recognised by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State and by the Arts Council. The theatre also provides facilities for visiting theatre companies, both from Britain and abroad.

I shall speak shortly about money, but I begin with quality. Productivity, cost-effectiveness, profit margins and so on are vital when we talk of accountability for public funds. At the end of the day, the case for the subsidised theatre is made on the stage, and the important questions, as Richard Eyre has said, are what is on the stage, is it any good, and what does it mean to the people who watch it? The recent excellent box office receipts of the Royal National theatre derive directly from the quality of the productions and the atmosphere of the theatre. A priceless national asset has been created which is going through an immensely exciting period, and it deserves every possible support that the Government and the House can give it.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Is my hon. Friend aware that in what he says on this issue he has the full support not only of my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) and me, who are present, but of Members in all parts of the House, and that we wish him every possible success in this debate?

Mr. Goodlad: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who is a great, loyal and effective supporter of the theatre.

In his introduction to his last report as chairman of the Arts Council, Lord Rees-Mogg said:

"those responsible for the distribution of public monies to the arts must never lose sight of the goal of excellence. The word fell into disuetude as the Arts Council, in collaboration with the Regional Arts Associations, developed policies which had the central aim of increasing the accessibility of the arts to all sorts and conditions of men and women. The Council was right to adopt this course, but must always take care not to be seen to abandon those on whose daring and skill—the painters, sculptors, actors, composers, film makers, writers, musicians, dancers—the whole great enterprise culture depends."

Unfortunately, the recent history of funding by the Arts Council and its current proposals give exactly the wrong message. I am not suggesting that my right hon. Friend, in asking Lady Soames to become the chairman of the Royal National theatre, offered her a poisoned chalice, but her Ladyship may be forgiven for having woken up wondering whether the contents might not have been a trifle corked.

The current running costs of the Royal National theatre are in the region of £17 million, of which about £8 million comes from Arts Council subsidy. In 1987-88, the subsidy was not increased at all, during a year when inflation was over 4 per cent., and the grant from the Treasury to the Arts Council increased by nearly 3 per cent. In 1988-89, the subsidy from the Arts Council to the Royal National theatre increased by 1·35 per cent. at a time when inflation was nearly 3·5 per cent. and the grant from the Treasury to the Arts Council increased by 9·4 per cent.

It is now proposed by the Arts Council that for the next three years—that is, from 1989-90 to 1991-92—grants of 1·8, 2 and 2 per cent. respectively should be made. In other words, while inflation as measured by the RPI will have increased by 30 per cent. in the period, and the total subvention by the Government to the Arts Council raised by nearly 24 per cent., the Royal National theatre's grant will have increased by a mere 7·3 per cent. over the same five-year period.

In the last two years, the theatre survived its real reduction in subsidy through a number of methods—by continued excellent housekeeping, by holding pay awards down to the movement of the RPI, by keeping high audience attendance targets, by holding back capital expenditure and building costs—a policy which cannot be continued indefinitely, given the cracks and corrosion and the necessities for renovation that are now all too apparent—by implementing the recommendations of the Rayner report and by exceptional receipts from the exploitation of productions such as "Amadeus", "Single Spies", and "A View from the Bridge" in the West End and the United States, and from the film and video sales of the productions.

The theatre also generated new private sector income from sponsorship and patronage—£400,000 two years ago, with a target of nearly £1 million this year. Those achievements enabled the Royal National theatre to build up a fallback reserve, but the continued erosion of the theatre's grant led inexorably to a budgeted deficit for 1988-89 and the virtual elimination of the reserves by March 1989.

The three-year funding budget which the theatre submitted was based on an average inflation rate throughout of 5 per cent. a year, but that now looks too low. The board can balance its budget for the current year only by a series of undesirable devices: by cutting the artistic programmes to a level which puts at risk expectations from the box office—a counter-productive way of proceeding—and by increasing the target for private sector funding to about double that achieved in the previous year—and that, in a market place heavily crowded by arts organisations chasing sponsorship, is an optimistic assumption. It is the view of the board that it would now be unrealistic to rely on private sources as a means of making good the shortfall, by including a rate of inflation that is now out of date and by continuing to hold back capital projects.

Annual building running costs payable by the company, which does not own the building but occupies it on a 21-day licence from the South Bank theatre board, are currently £3 million. Substantial contingent liabilities

on necessary capital expenditure, against which the Royal National theatre company has no reserves, have now built up. Those are dangerous procedures in terms of prudent long-term management and a board of directors with limited liability.

Two years ago, the theatre was forced by Lambeth council, under threat of closure, to refurbish and re-equip the main kitchen. At that time, there were reserves, but it could not take such action today. I do not need to remind the House of the closure of the Cottesloe theatre in 1985.

The present budget also assumes the maximum possible award under the incentive funding scheme. I know that the board would like an assurance that the maximum sum allowable, of £250,000, will be available over the next two years. The budget submitted probably could not be met without a substantial fall in the general rate of inflation.

In addition, the theatre is under serious pressure from the unions. At the moment, claims are at the rate of 25 per cent. from the musicians, 32 per cent. from equity stage management, 14·5 per cent. from equity actors and 15 per cent. from the Broadcasting and Entertainment Trades Alliance. Following the theatre's policy of linking pay awards to the rate of inflation when it was low over the past few years, rates in the outside market are now higher, and the theatre faces the risk of losing valued staff and industrial unrest.

The nature of a theatre's business is unpredictable. Running a £17 million operation with no realisable assets, with an overdraft facility limited to £150,000 and no reserves, is a hazardous exercise. The budget for 1989-90 is based on revenue assumptions which are necessarily uncertain, and very much on the high side. The inflation assumptions are no longer valid and the reduction in the artistic programme may well put at risk the box office income. It is the considered view of Richard Eyre and David Aukin that any further cuts in the programme could lead to a spiral, in which diminishing activities were followed by diminishing financial returns. The House cannot contemplate such a prospect with equanimity.

By penalising the success of the Royal National theatre in increasing its box office returns and its sponsorship by reducing grants in real terms, the Arts Council is not only abandoning the daring and skill of those who make the National theatre work, but threatening the theatre's very existence. The Royal National theatre lives on a financial knife edge. If, by cutting back on educational and production expenditure, the sale of seats should fall, the council will have started the theatre on that downward spiral from which it will be difficult to recover.

Elsewhere in his valedictory introduction, Lord Rees-Mogg says:

"the Arts Council is proud of its traditional commitment to judgment by peers. Our panels, boards and committees are well-stocked with distinguished representatives from the arts professions. Their advice, although central, is not sufficient. The voice of the public must also be given due weight. This is the fundamental reason why I support the Council's objective to reduce the Art World's reliance on State subsidy to lower the proportion, not of course the absolute amount, of grant, to the overall turnover of arts organisations. The way in which the public discriminates is through its willingness to pay for its pleasure."

The National theatre has passed that test with flying colours. Every night of the week, 52 weeks of the year, the National theatre puts 2,300 seats for sale in the market place and depends for its survival on the sale of at least 1,750 of them. Box office receipts have increased by 20 per cent. in the past 18 months and it is extremely short-sighted that such success should be met with a withdrawal, in real terms, of its funding.

Elsewhere in the Arts Council report, Mr. Luke Rittner writes:

"there is one constant factor in every annual report of the Arts Council, and it is money. It almost goes without saying that we believe that the Government will see huge benefits if it decided to increase its investment in the Arts. We shall certainly continue to put that case to the Government."

He goes on to say:

"no-one on the Council wants to see the National companies held back, nor do we want to stifle the Arts in the Metropolis. However, unless there were a dramatic increase in overall funding, it is difficult to see how we can ever really get the balance more equitable."

What is needed is an increase in the grant for the next three years. The company is not asking to be feather-bedded—far from it. It is proving itself in box-office terms and hopes to continue to do so. It has a very ambitious target of sponsorship, and keeps a close eye on costs, but it has to recover lost ground, invest in fabric and amenities—the lavatories have been described as a public disgrace—and improve revenues from front-of-the-house sales. Failing this, the Royal National theatre will be headed for insolvency and closure.

Although this may sound over-dramatic, I should remind the House that in 1985 Lord Rayner concluded a report, following the Coopers and Lybrand investigation into the theatre's affairs, in which he said:

"it would be a mistake if Government and the Arts Council were to use the evidence and conclusion of this Report to contain or reduce further its funding of the National theatre. . .continuing Government funding at or above its present level in real terms will in my view be essential".

That authoritative view has not been heeded and the theatre is that much nearer to the brink of a grave financial crisis. I urge my right hon. Friend to give serious consideration to this matter in his discussion with the Arts Council on the funding of the theatre.

I am not here suggesting radical solutions such as direct funding of the Royal National theatre, the dismemberment of the Arts Council, or even the privatisation of the South Bank theatre board. What I am suggesting is that a highly prized national institution should not be put at risk, contrary to the advice of the Rayner report, by a real reduction in core funding at a time when a substantial increase would yield enormous dividends, both financial and artistic.

It is healthy that earnings from private sector income now play a larger part in turnover of arts organisations than in the past. I pay tribute to the role my right hon. Friend has played in helping to bring that about. I also pay tribute to his introduction of incentive funding and the introduction of three-year funding, which is a significant development. However, as my right hon. Friend knows, it is now in some jeopardy, at least in the case of the Royal National theatre. I applaud the fact that the Government have increased expenditure on the arts by 33 per cent. in real terms over the past 10 years, and on the performing arts by 13 per cent., but I agree with Lord Rees-Mogg and Mr. Rittner that only a dramatic increase in overall funding will bring about the massive artistic dividends for the country which both he, I am sure, and the whole House would wish to see. I think, too, that he would see enormous political dividends from such action. That is not a wholly unworthy consideration.

[Mr. Goodlad]

Lord Rees-Mogg said in his valediction that the voice of the public must be given due weight. I believe that the public, as represented in this House tonight, would give a massive endorsement were my right hon. Friend to bring about a further substantial increase in funding for the arts —an increase which in absolute terms would be minuscule in relation to overall Government expenditure but which would be of great significance to the future of the arts in this country, not least the Royal National theatre.

I shall leave the House and the Arts Council with some lines from "Expresso Bongo", which I remember hearing sung a quarter of a century ago by the present director of the Royal National theatre, in the role of Bongo Herbert —drum beats echoing between the bridges and banks of the River Cam as now they might from the Thames to Piccadilly:

"Oh, oh, oh, don't sell me down the river
If you wanna throw your baby overboard
Then you're gonna have to answer to the Lord.
Remember, rivers keep on flowin'
Down on a one way tide,
And some day that's where you'll be goin'
If you take me for a ride."

Later in the libretto come the softer tones of Maisie:

"You're the one who can make me or break me
Don't shake me off your tree
For once in your life, take me
Seriously, I mean seriously."

10.33 pm

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad) on taking this opportunity to debate the arts and, more particularly, the Royal National theatre, and on the way in which, with his tremendous knowledge of the subject, he expressed his views and anxieties about it.

I am glad to say that this is the third debate of an artistic nature since March of this year. I am also glad my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) was able to be here and to intervene. I shall deal with the Royal National theatre in a moment, but it is important to view the position of any one company in the context of Government support for the arts as a whole.

It is our policy to keep up the level of central Government support for the arts—indeed, we have done better; the Arts Council's grant is up by 13 per cent. in real terms between 1979-80 and 1988-89—and to create the conditions in which the arts can develop by attracting additional funds from other sources. Our overall objective is to increase funding by improving self reliance. The Government have encouraged a range of initiatives to help bring that about. In 1984, for example, we launched the business sponsorship incentive scheme, which has now brought in more than £25 million in new money and has attracted 1,000 new sponsors. I presented the 1,000th award in Scotland this week. We have made extra funds available to the Arts Council for its incentive funding scheme, which encourages subsidised bodies to become more self reliant in their development and growth. In its first year the scheme is expected to bring about £13·5 million of new private sector money into the arts, plus £3 million from the Government—a 3:1 ratio, rather than the 2:1 ratio demanded by the scheme.

The cornerstone of my policy is the need to increase access to excellence in the arts. To that end, I asked the Arts Council to earmark a certain proportion of its grant to increase touring in the regions. Its new Great Britain touring fund financed more than 60 weeks of extra touring, including 38 weeks of drama, in its first year. I am glad to see that the Royal National theatre has an ambitious touring programme and has an increased emphasis on access through education.

An important part of the Arts Council's strategy has been to shift more resources from London to the regions. I accept the implication of the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury that it is difficult for the Arts Council to get that balance right. The council has devolved more of its money and responsibilities to the 12 English regional arts associations. The council's grant to the regional arts associations has doubled in real terms since 1979-80. Expenditure on directly funded Arts Council clients in the regions has increased considerably. However, we must not—and I am sure that my hon. Friend does not —assume that all centres of excellence are in London. We have a vast range of centres of excellence in the regions —for example, the Welsh national opera, the Edencourt theatre in Inverness, the Royal Liverpool philharmonic orchestra and the City of Birmingham symphony orchestra, to name just a few.

I now turn to the Royal National theatre. I listened with great care to what my hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury said. I am aware that this great theatre faces a number of pressures and problems, which my hon. Friend highlighted so carefully. However, I will re-emphasise and reinforce what my hon. Friend said about its achievements. The Royal National theatre's policy is to present to a high standard and within a balanced programme classic, new and neglected plays from the whole world of drama. I echo my hon. Friend's praise for the theatre. Since its formation in 1963, the company has won 134 awards, which is more than any other theatre company. It was fitting that the theatre be granted the "royal" prefix in October 1988 to commemorate its 25th anniversary. The RNT consistently plays to 80 per cent. of its capacity, which is a remarkably high average. More than 700,000 people saw the company in 1987-88. The RNT's recent productions, under the excellent chairmanship of Lady Soames, and the outstanding management and direction of Richard Eyre and David Aukin, have been of a very high standard. I saw an excellent performance of Ibsen's "Hedda Gabler" there last week, and I remember seeing a superb performance of "The Winter's Tale" in Georgia, performed in plain clothes because the costumes had gone astray amid Soviet bureaucracy. That standard of excellence cannot be achieved without leadership from the top and commitment from every member of staff—from the stagehands to the front-of-house staff.

The theatre receives its grant in aid—more than £8 million this year—from the Arts Council; 51 per cent. of its income comes from private sources. I congratulate the theatre on the launch of its endowment fund initiated by Lord Rayne, the previous chairman. I operate under the arm's-length principle, which has been adopted by successive Governments since the war. I believe that it is essential that the allocation of specific grants and judgments of artistic merit should continue to be taken at arm's-length. The Arts Council exists to distance such decisions from political considerations. That is as it should be. Governments and civil servants should not be arbiters

of taste and Arts Ministers must not allow their own artistic inclinations to govern their policies. Let me also make it plain that no one should assume an automatic right to an increase in grant or a certain level of grant. Judgments must be made on merit by the Arts Council and, of course, the regional arts associations.

I see no need to change the present arrangement whereby all the subsidised arts bodies are funded by the Arts Council. Moreover, the terms of reference of the Wilding review of the structure of arts funding make it plain that the arm's-length policy will continue.

The three-year funding has laid new foundations for long-term strategies, which apply to the Royal National theatre as well. Its introduction in 1987-88 included an 8·5 per cent. increase in the Arts Council grant that year and a 17 per cent. increase over the three years to 1990-91. I am fully aware, however, of the problems and pressures imposed by inflation. It is important to remember that it affects everyone, not just the arts organisations. It is, therefore, essential for the Government to defeat inflation, which remains a top priority.

It is for the Arts Council to determine how it should allocate its funds. In recent years the council's priority has been to devolve resources and responsibilities to the regions. I know that Peter Palumbo, the new chairman of the council, is well aware of the particular problems of the national companies, some of our flagships of artistic excellence—the Royal Opera house, the English national opera, the Royal Shakespeare company and the Royal National theatre. Incidentally I look forward to visiting the RNT in July to meet the staff. I know that the theatre is concerned, as always, to achieve the most excellent productions that provide access to the most number of people—the goal of all of us concerned with the arts. It is wrong to assume that it is not possible to reconcile excellence with improving access to the public. Both must be achieved.

I believe that people in all parts of the country have a right to the best of the arts. That is why my hon. Friend drew attention to the importance of touring. The tours undertaken by our great centres of excellence, such as the RNT, are important because people in different parts of the country are thus able to see the greatness of that theatre.

I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for raising this important subject, for airing the concerns of the RNT, of the trusteeship and of the chairman and for clearly putting to me some of the problems that the theatre currently faces.

I take this opportunity to assure my hon. Friend that I will draw his concerns to the attention of the chairman of the Arts Council, Mr. Palumbo. I congratulate my hon. Friend on drawing attention to the increasingly important role not only of the theatre, but of the arts as more and more people enjoy them.

Because of the RNT and the rest of the arts, I believe that we can look to the 1990s with optimism—despite the pressures that the arts currently face—especially as more and more people realise that the quality of their lives can be improved by the excellence of British arts.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at eighteen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 19 May 1989

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

British Nationality (Honorary Citizenship) Bill

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 90(2),

That the British Nationality (Honorary Citizenship) Bill be referred to a Second Reading Committee.—*[Mr. Amess.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Domestic and Satellite Broadcasting

9.34 am

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): I beg to move,

That this House welcomes the communications opportunities offered by technological developments in terrestrial and satellite broadcasting and cable distribution systems; urges Her Majesty's Government, when creating a legislative framework for the future of radio and television broadcasting and interactive services, to pay particular attention to the need to continue to stimulate quality programming and maintain diversity of ownership and choice; and further calls on Her Majesty's Government to establish a coherent policy for the promotion of United Kingdom and pan-European satellite services.

I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office has been able to join us this morning. It is either the third or fourth Friday on the trot that he has made himself available in the Chamber. People outside the House do not realise how valuable it is for hon. Members to spend Fridays in their constituencies, and that is particularly so for Ministers. I hope that the Minister's constituents will understand the need for his presence here today. I am also particularly pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler), who is the Chairman of the Select Committee on Home Affairs, which contributed a great deal to the White Paper, is also present today.

My fortune in the ballot has come at an extremely opportune moment. The White Paper entitled "Broadcasting in the '90s: Competition, Choice and Quality" has been published and digested. I understand that, in its wake, the Home Office has received about 3,000 expressions of interest, comment and mostly constructive criticism. The legislation that we expect to be announced in the Queen's Speech in November is being drafted, so the time is right for this debate.

I hope to inject a note of optimism into the discussion. Much of the argument has centred on a perceived threat, and far too little has been made of the tremendous opportunities that new technologies such as broadband, satellite and better use of terrestrial facilities can offer. The equation has been drawn to read "more equals bad", instead of "more equals more choice, more scope for creativity and a richer broadcasting culture".

I began my broadcasting career in local radio. Too often in communications debates, radio is ignored altogether or is often regarded as the poorest relation in the communications family. In my county, Kent, we have two excellent radio stations. BBC Radio Kent has breakfast time audiences that rival those of Radio 4. The station has twice won Sony awards, and it will win more.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) never ceases to remind me that his home station, BRMB, won the "best station of the year" award this year. Through hurricane, snow and the sinking of the Herald of Free Enterprise, BBC Radio Kent has provided a real public service, of which it is rightly proud. I hope that, when considering a reduction in local radio funds to introduce yet another high quality, intellectually stimulating, public-service audience participation game show, the management of the BBC will recognise the high esteem in which our local radio stations are held. Who will fund those stations after 1996, when the BBC charter comes to an end? The White Paper does not tell us.

We in Kent are fortunate, too, in having a complementary local radio station, Invicta Radio, which uses the latest computer and digital technology to create a different kind of music programme. However, Radio Kent and Invicta Radio are county stations. It has long been a source of sadness to me that Cabin Radio in Herne Bay, which sends programmes by landline to three hospitals, is prevented by law from broadcasting to a wider audience. I hope that the broadcasting Bill will give that excellent amateur station with professional standards the chance to turn into the real local radio station for which we have been waiting.

I hope that, within the context of diversity of ownership, my hon. Friend will look kindly on the relationship between community radio stations and genuinely independent local papers, because, to be cost-effective, they will need each other.

I wish to move as swiftly as possible to developments in telecommunications and satellite, but I must first turn back to the television aspects of the White Paper. I reread this week the observations of the BBC, the independent contractors, the IBA, the Cable Television Association, the Independent Producers Association, TVS, the Campaign for Quality Television, Channel 4, the Media Society and, the Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians, Oxfam and the further work of the Select Committee on Home Affairs, to name but a few. The game has moved on since the White Paper was debated and we must reflect on some of the points that have been made.

I offer my hon. Friend the Minister of State a highly personal view, but it is one that is shared by several other commentators. Any suggestion to hive off one channel of the BBC's night hours would be absolute folly. That is the one area in which the BBC might reasonably be expected to expand with a subscription service and many of us still feel that such a service may and perhaps should become part of the long-term solution to the BBC's funding requirements.

On 9 March 1989 my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary stated in *The Listener:*

"Subscription is attractive as a principle but untried in practice in this country. We think it should be tested and tried."

There is surely a case for establishing a "BBC 3" subscription service between, say, midnight and 6 am. Remove even one channel of the night hours and the opportunity for such a development would be lost or, at the very least, the incentive for it would be removed. If the

[Mr. Roger Gale]

BBC is to be—as I believe that it should be—not only a public-service cornerstone but a hothouse of talent, it must have room to experiment but it must not be asked to experiment at the licence payers' expense. A subscription night-hours service offering at least some first-run programmes that might later transfer to a wider audience on BBC1 could provide such a canvas.

My hon. Friend the Minister of State will not be surprised to hear me say, in the context of subscription, that I still believe that we are wrong not to require the mandatory fitting of peritelevision sockets in all new television sets. That is an opportunity that the Government will be seen to have missed.

While talking of BBC funding, it is high time that we made provision for the introduction not only of subscription only-services, such as British Medical Television but of closed user groups so that the BBC and the independent companies can maximise their sale of confidential programming. There is absolutely no reason to featherbed the British Telecom-Mercury monopoly over that potential for one day longer than the statutory undertaking that was given of November 1990. As a member of the Select Committee on Home Affairs, I wholeheartedly endorse the report's recommendation on that. Again, the downloading of data and confidential programming is best done at night, which is another good reason for leaving the night hours alone.

The White Paper proposal that has caused the most outrage and anguish was that to auction off the independent franchises. The fury has been partly that of the vested interests which have made even the British Medical Association seem temperate, and partly, like the BMA in its area, it has been a genuine concern about quality programming.

I am not one of those who unquestionably accept the folklore that British television is the best in the world, any more than I accept that American television is the worst in the world. Some American programming is certainly atrocious and banal, but so is some of ours. The Americans also make some excellent programmes and offer a huge diversity of choice to their audiences. Those who want to maintain high-quality children's programmes should look at the opportunity presented by the prospect not of a couple of hours programming a day, but of a dedicated channel. Those who want programmes on religion, sport, gardening, films, news, weather or on any other common interest should consider the same. That is the prospect that confronts us with many more channels.

Nevertheless, some of our television is among the best in the world, especially in children's programming. Through the independent network, we also provide a rare kind of local service and we should not throw that baby out with the bath water of deregulation.

I find no shame in joining that growing army of admirers that have welcomed the appointment of Mr. George Russell as chairman of the IBA and chairman-designate of the new Independent Television Commission. I do not find it difficult wholeheartedly to endorse the proposals that he makes on Channel 3 through the IBA's submission on the White Paper. A strict quality and public service threshold and a sound business plan should be a prerequisite of consideration for a franchise. Competitive tendering based upon those programme and business plans makes sense.

As a producer and television director, I know that maintenance of the network is desirable, with the proviso that greater access for a broad range of programme offers is made available to the smaller regional companies. In its submission TVS rightly stated:

> "The major companies' present access (to the network) blocks the regionals' access to all but a fairly narrow band of programme types."

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will agree that that is one restrictive practice that we can well do without.

I share the widely held view that the prospect of a levy is iniquitious. When franchise holders receive their franchises they will already have paid an economic price for the franchise through, I hope, competitive tendering. If a levy is then to be made on large earnings, it should be upon profits not on revenue. I always thought that that was called tax. Any other system would simply be a disincentive to investment in exactly the kind of programme quality that we keep saying we want to see on the screen. I hope that my hon. Friend will take that point on board when he speaks.

I hope also that my hon. Friend and my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will respond to the real fears that have been expressed about the possibility that franchises may quickly become commodities or "millionaires' train sets" like some newpapers. I hope that my right hon. Friend will impose a two-year moratorium on sales or hostile takeover bids after the tender has been accepted.

If concern for the network has been very real, a much greater fear lies in the potential for the concentration of ownership. The prospect of national newspaper owners also controlling large chunks of the television industry is not appealing. It is a far cry from the co-operation between local papers and community radio, which I welcome and to which I referred earlier, to the prospect of major newspaper titles and terrestrial and satellite television stations all resting in the same News International plc, Maxwell Communications, United Newspapers plc, Pearson plc or Thomson International hands. We recently had a taste of cross-media ownership in promotion by *The Times* and *The Sun* of one particular satellite channel and their criticism of other existing stations. I hope that my hon. Friend will tell us his thinking on that vital issue.

Up to now, I have confined my remarks to terrestrial broadcasting. Before leaving that subject I must recall that none of the programmes that we love or loathe would reach us at all were it not for the network of BBC and IBA transmitters. I have always been a staunch admirer of our engineering ability and an advocate of the privatisation of transmitter services. There is tremendous scope for the provision of transmitter systems, not only for television pictures, but also for data and voice telephony. However, I urge my hon. Friend to accept the well thought through submission that those two enterprises should be sold as entities in their own right and not broken up and disposed of piecemeal.

I have mentioned the report of the Select Committee on Home Affairs, chaired by my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North in relation to the proposals for the future of Channel 4. I am certain that my hon. Friend's excellent report reached the only conclusion that was possible or available to him, given the brief to which he was working. The brief was to assess the proposals in the

White Paper, but, significantly, the White Paper did not regard the status quo and the relationship between the Channel 3 companies and Channel 4 as an option.

There is a good case for not trying to mend something which is not broken. I understand that there is a need for competition for advertising and that our advertising rates are perhaps some 50 per cent. higher than those in America and Japan, and damaging to industry. However, competition will come from other sources—through Channel 5, cable and satellite channels.

We apparently opted for or are on the verge of opting for a half-way compromise where Channel 4 is recreated as a wholly owned subsidiary of the Independent Television Commission with a safety net income guaranteed in a roundabout way by its competitors on Channel 3, who will also be required to publicise its programmes. That makes no sense.

We have regarded the remit of Channel 4 rather like the Holy Grail. We should either leave the relationship as it is, which is one option, or hive off the non-commercial minority programming to our public service cornerstone, BBC 2, and have the courage to release Channel 4 on a fully competitive basis into the marketplace. Either solution would be more acceptable. With great respect to my hon. Friend and the new chairman of the IBA, who both suggested the same option 2 solution, the beast that they have chosen is not fish and may well prove foul.

Those of us who served a few years ago on the Cable and Broadcasting Bill did so with some pleasure. We believed that we were ushering in the dawn of an interactive cable service that would bring not only television, but home shopping, home medicine, home education, data services and voice telephony into every household. We have been sadly disappointed. With 20:20 hindsight, the country should have been cabled with broad band before British Telecom was sold. Now the all-important ducts—those expensive holes in the ground that are the greatest capital cost in the installation of the cable system—are in the hands of a private company, and progress is slow. The removal of capital allowances at a vital moment crippled the launch of cable, and restrictions on foreign inward investment have hampered developments further. Nevertheless, Aberdeen Cable, which was the first, now passes every house in Aberdeen, and Windsor and Croydon Cable will follow soon.

We are still in grave danger of infanticide. The White Paper proposals to prevent local delivery operators from selling programme services, now thankfully withdrawn, have damaged confidence in the industry still further. I continue to believe that interactive cable is the delivery system of tomorrow and must be given every encouragement. Unless we want to see at least one and possibly two or three satellite dishes on the roof of every block of flats or in every semi-detached garden, we must look to cable delivery for multi-channel choice.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Tim Renton): I am listening to my hon. Friend with great care. He said that the proposals in the White Paper to separate the delivery of programmes on the cable network from retailing has damaged the industry even further. However, he made passing reference to the fact—perhaps he would like to expand on this—that recently we said that we would not insist on the separation of delivery from retailing. Does he agree that that has given somewhat greater encouragement to investors in the cable industry because it has shown that we are prepared to listen to consultation on the White Paper? Does he agree that, when the industry, which is, as he said, in relative infancy, has sensible and detailed opposition to our proposals, we have been prepared to think again?

Mr. Gale: I know from my friends in the industry that they are particularly grateful both for the way in which the Home Office has listened to their representations and for the fact that those proposals have now been withdrawn. The fact remains that there have been setbacks at almost every watershed in the history of cable. Just before the launch, the Government, for broader reasons—I accept that—withdrew capital allowances, which was undoubtedly a setback and a bar to investment. Restrictions were imposed on overseas investment and changes occurred and are occurring within the cable authority. Latterly, various other factors include British Telecom's reluctance in some cases to make its ducts available to other cable services, for wholly commercial reasons that we must accept. At a time when several foreign investors were showing considerable interest in our cable potential, as I hope they are again, that suggestion was just another factor that made them falter. As my hon. Friend said, the Government have withdrawn it, and I hope that the planned investment may now return.

Sadly, the industry is still reeling from the thought of what it regards as competition from satellite master antennae systems, which in common parlance are SMATV. They are systems where one satellite dish is placed on the roof of a block and is cabled downwards. The cable companies see satellite operators arriving to place dishes on the roofs of blocks of flats and to cable them, providing satellite services to the same blocks of flats that they had hoped to serve. I do not understand how long satellite companies can be expected to wait while cable systems are being built. The answer, surely, is to allow SMATV systems to be installed, but only through broad-band cable and that can later be connected to a full cable service from the bottom upwards. I cannot but feel that, with a little harmony, the satellite and cable operators will have to co-operate and work together, now and most certainly in future. I believe passionately that satellite and cable systems should be complementary, not competitive.

The Home Affairs Select Committee argued in its report that to stimulate investment in broad-band cable we should allow overseas companies that have shown interest, particularly American ones, to take a major stake in some of our franchises and to blaze a trail. They have the money and the expertise.

In his statement to the House, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said:

> "We hope to announce our views on this whole area before too long."—[*Official Report*, 27 April 1989; Vol. 151, c. *642*.]

In the light of his earlier intervention, can my hon. Friend the Minister tell us the news that we should like to hear—that foreign investors will be allowed to participate in cable in a major way? Perhaps he could also take a clear message to our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry that broad-band cable services must be allowed to compete with Telecom and Mercury for voice telephony services, not only locally but nationwide. In return, British Telecom and Mercury must be allowed to carry entertainment, if they wish.

[Mr. Gale]

I argued as a lone voice in the Select Committee that the Independent Television Commission should be not a television but a telecommunications authority. My hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North, as Chairman, put me firmly in my place by reminding me that that suggestion was out of order because the Home Affairs Select Committee has no power to consider Department of Trade and Industry matters. He will now see why I argued in that way. With the advent of the digital transmission of television pictures, television and voice telephony and data, much sooner than is perhaps generally recognised, will all be speaking the same digital interactive language. The effect of that on two-way communications through broad-band cable can be dramatic. Nicholas Mearing Smith, the chairman of the Cable Television Association was right when he said that we do not want a lot of "cheap and nasty" systems. We do not. We want the high-technology, interactive very best and it is still within our grasp. We cannot allow the protectionism of the Telecom-Mercury duopoly to stand in the way of that development within the cable industry.

My hon. Friends will be relieved to hear that I turn now to the final element of the motion, which is the need for a coherent policy for the promotion of United Kingdom and pan-European satellite services. I began with radio. Most of us in the Chamber can remember listening to Mr. James Savile, OBE broadcasting on crackly air waves the then latest pop music from Luxembourg. It is a nice irony that tiny Luxembourg, having captured our ears all that many years ago, it is now, through the Astra satellite, capturing Europe's eyes. RTL, the parent company of the old Radio Luxembourg, is casting its eyes towards British TV franchises to beam up to satellites after the sale of the independent companies.

If cable is the landline of the future, satellite , surely, is the broadcast transmission system. Why are BBC and ITV not carried by satellite? I am told that there are 904 existing transmitter sites in the United Kingdom, but there are still 1,441 areas in the United Kingdom with between 10 and 200 people living in them that cannot receive television at all. Satellite broadcasting could reach every one of those homes.

As the number of channels and choices grows, we have heard complaints that there will not be enough money to make good programmes to fill them all and that there will not be enough advertising or subscriptions to pay for them, because, as the critics say, there is still only an audience of 50 million people. However, there is an audience of 500 million people waiting for pan-European broadcasting by satellite which is a gargantuan audience for advertisers and for programme makers. If we in the United Kingdom do not satisfy that audience, the French, the Germans and the Italians—Signor Berlusconi—will.

I hope, Madam Deputy Speaker, that you will not rule me out of order, but I noticed with some amusement that, when the press received its copies of the report of the Select Committee on the Televising of Proceedings of the House, which we shall be debating shortly, the great intellect of the Gallery seized upon the diminutive fact that the Select Committee appeared to be restricting broadcasters, so that they might not show cut-away shots of nose-picking or sleeping hon. Members.

"The viewing public should be able to see what those in the Public Gallery see,"

thundered the *Evening Standard* editorial. What the entire press corps blissfully overlooked was the much greater censorship that will be exercised by the editorial judgment of broadcasters, allowing the public to see only "scrap of the day" on the 9 o'clock news or "News at 10".

Before you do rule me out of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, I shall come back very firmly to the debate. A dedicated satellite channel would allow anyone with the inclination to watch the entire proceedings of the House and would also serve as a distribution system for regional television and radio stations, as well as for continental stations. It can be done, and I shall hope to move that amendment in due course.

One person who has most certainly grasped the awesome potential of satellite broadcasting is my hon. Friend the Minister. It is not widely recognised, but it is very largely due to his personal powers of diplomacy that, in the week before last in Strasbourg, the Council of Europe transfrontier broadcasting convention was finally opened for signature. Without that convention, which he negotiated and which lays down international standards for taste, decency and advertising, we would have faced a free-for-all throughout Europe. Many countries in the Council of Europe—including the United Kingdom—have already signed. Significantly, perhaps, France, Germany and Italy have not yet done so, but I am sure that they will. There is at last in place a convention that will be applicable from Ankara to Lisbon and from Nicosia to Greenland, and will embrace everything in between. It will be up to each of the 23 countries of the Council of Europe to ensure that it is honoured, but we owe a debt to my hon. Friend the Minister for recognising the scale of the problem, getting to grips with it, and finding a solution.

The challenges and the opportunities of multi-channel broadcasting are considerable. However, we are in danger, without co-operation and clear strategy, of seeing British Satellite Broadcasting invest some £600 million in order to fight a different system run by Mr. Rupert Murdoch's Sky Channel on the Astra satellite. That can only be a financial and cosmic battle to the death; it is absolute madness. The viewer is not remotely concerned whether his television comes by satellite, terrestrial broadcasting or cable or down a piece of string with a tin can on the end. What matters to him is that the picture quality is high and that the programme standards are good. At the end of the day, that—along with a reasonable choice—is all that matters.

My hon. Friend the Minister managed to sort out the transfrontier convention, which took some doing. I challenge him, therefore, to work his magic on a satellite policy that will lead to, perhaps, one 80-channel super-Astra, which would bring with it not a demand for two or three different dishes to receive two or three different standards of transmission, but a superb choice of programmes, voice telephony and data. If he can take that on, I wish him well.

Some critics have said—and will no doubt continue to say—"Why can't you leave our TV alone?" Internationally, communications systems are developing. The game has moved on, and to do nothing is not an option. We can either lead—as we have done in the past—or we can follow. I hope that we shall continue, through our new legislative framework, to show a courageous lead.

10.5 am

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): I am sure that we are all indebted to the hon. Member for Thanet, North, (Mr. Gale) for calling this debate, because this is an issue that cannot be debated enough. The decisions that the Government and the House will make in the next year or two will be of colossal importance.

Earlier this week we were debating the future of the Rose theatre where Shakespeare's plays were performed. There was an atmosphere of reverence and concern about the future of that ruin, because people realised that that site was important to our culture. I wish that we could have that same sense of reverence and concern about television broadcasting. Television is not a commodity to be bought and sold like any other commodity—it is an important reflector and stimulator of our culture. We must recognise that, sometimes by design and sometimes by accident, we have set up in this country something of cultural brilliance, which is admired throughout the world. Our system of broadcasting has managed to reflect and stimulate our culture extremely well. We should tamper with that system with great apprehension, though tamper with it we must, because satellite and cable, which are to be welcomed, will bring with them much more choice. However, we must ensure that we tamper with the system in a way that does not destroy what we have created.

Above all, we must ensure that people have a high quotient of enthusiastic programming. Programmes must not be passive, enabling people just to pass the time or get ready for sleep. They must be programmes that the citizen positively wants to see. It is possible to find such television programmes at present. We must start from the idea of producing top quality programmes. By that I do not mean esoteric art programmes, but the full range of programmes —drama, comedy and sport. We must recognise that for the great mass of people broadcasting is the major means by which our culture is reflected and stimulated. The importance of television is equivalent to the importance of books in times gone by.

It is therefore essential that television companies are left with sufficient resources to make and commission many quality programmes. Simply selling to the highest bidder and then exacting a levy on revenue will inevitably lead to less being spent on programmes, especially when the advertising revenue is unlikely to expand sufficiently quickly to meet all channels' needs. We must ensure that there is sufficient money left within the system to produce quality programmes.

One reference in the White Paper at which we should rejoice is:

"BBC Enterprises Ltd.—the world's largest exporter of television programmes".

That has happened not by accident, but by design. In 10 years' time, however, shall we be able to say that that company is still the world's largest exporter of programmes? When one visits other countries people tend to talk about BBC programmes when they mean programmes produced by the British broadcasting system. That is a tremendous tribute to the independent television companies, and I am sure that the overseas sales of those companies rival those of the BBC.

We must ensure that broadcasting's enormous job-creating potential—it is not quite a sunrise industry —is maximised. It is easy to produce formula programmes, but it is dangerous and difficult to produce programmes which may fail. We must give the companies sufficient resources so that they may occasionally fail in order to reap the rewards from their industry, which will be of great importance to us in the future.

The Opposition will oppose the idea of selling franchises to the highest bidder. We all accept that the Government should receive income from the sale of spectrum space, which is a precious resource. We believe, however, that, having received a fair price, which is relatively easy to sort out, the Independent Television Commission should award the franchises to those companies making the strongest commitment to their localities and to those companies which have the most credibility in terms of the range and quality of programmes.

For someone representing a Scottish constituency, one of the depressing things about the White Paper is that in all 45 pages Scotland is not mentioned once. I am sure that that complaint could also be made about other regions. A kind of lip service is paid to regionalism, but we must go beyond that. The United Kingdom is made up of separate entities and it is essential for people to believe that their part of the United Kingdom is reflected in and stimulated by the system established. The thought, for example, that Scotland should simply be represented by one independent television company is not attractive. That would not reflect the diversity in Scotland.

Grampian television in its submission to the Government on the White Paper made an interesting and telling point—that it is the desert island choice of its viewers. If viewers were to choose one television company to take with them to a desert island—an island off the Highlands, one assumes—it would be Grampian. They would do so because that channel is the one that most frequently reflects and stimulates their local culture. That company is important to the Gaels because of the opportunities to hear their language and to see programmes of concern to them. It is also important because of its coverage of local politics and its coverage of what might be termed "minority" sports, but which are majority sports to the people of the region. That company is also important because of the community service that it offers.

It is crucial that any future system has within it companies whose ownership is held by a majority in Scotland. In that way, regional identity is reflected in a company's programmes because the people who control the company come from that region and feel for it. It is depressing that under the terms of the White Paper one can imagine having two television companies for Scotland owned by one multinational company with no loyalty or concern for the region. That does not represent competition or quality.

Mr. Renton: It is nice to hear the hon. Gentleman's voice again on a Friday, albeit on a different subject. The hon. Gentleman has said that the thought that there could be one independent television franchise covering the whole of Scotland is unacceptable, but no one has made such a suggestion. On the contrary, the IBA said in its submission on the White Paper that currently it thought that it would be sensible for the independent television regional franchise map to remain as at present. Although it accepted that the final decision rested with the ITC, it doubtless believed that the ITC would seriously consider the IBA's suggestion. Last week, at the Conservative party

[Mr. Renton]

conference in Perth, I spoke about broadcasting and I repeated that comment by the IBA. I said that I was certain that the ITC would give serious consideration to the IBA's suggestion when it came to decide the shape of regional franchises in 1991.

Mr. Worthington: The Minister's presence in Scotland last week was extremely welcome, as was the content of his speech. However, just because the Government do not put something in a White Paper does not mean that they will not go ahead and do it. To be narrowly party-political for a moment, during the previous election campaign the Government explicitly assured Scotland that there would be no opting-out of schools in Scotland, but a Bill to do just that is now going through the House. The Opposition must consider not only the White Paper, but what other thoughts might be going through the Government's mind.

Just before Christmas, the Minister said that there would be no cross-subsidisation within the system for transmission costs. Currently, Grampian television receives about £2 million a year in subsidisation costs from the rest of the network, which enables that company to flourish. When the Minister said that there would be no cross-subsidisation of transmission costs, he was actually saying that a company with similar boundaries to Grampian would be unable to survive in the future. If Grampian failed, the logical conclusion is that there would only be one Scottish television company. Perhaps the Minister will intervene to say that he will withdraw his previous statement.

Mr. Renton: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will not mind if I take up his suggestion. The idea that he has just advanced is an over-simplification of the situation. He will know that we have commissioned Price Waterhouse to do a detailed study of the economics and mechanics of privatisation. We hope that that report will be available shortly and we hope to publish it.

The Independent Broadcasting Authority pointed out in its submission that the way to deal with the obviously greater cost of transmission in areas such as Grampian, where there are many transmission masts to cover a wide area, would be to relate the cost of transmission either to the number of households in the area or the percentage of net advertising revenue that the area or region had. It thus arrived at the concept that transmission costs should be related to the earning power of each transmission mast. That is not subsidisation; that is one possible way of dealing with the problem of a remote area such as Grampian, Borders or Television South West. I repeated in Perth last week that that is one of the suggestions that the Price Waterhouse report will consider.

Mr. Worthington: I am grateful for that intervention. It suggests that the depression caused by the Minister's remarks before Christmas about no cross-subsidisation of the system can be alleviated by the suggestion of flexibility. I regard it as essential for the system of the future that the principle of equality should be honoured. We should have a television system that costs the same for consumers anywhere in the United Kingdom, on the same principle that is applied to posting a letter within the United Kingdom. A first-class stamp costs 19p wherever it goes in the United Kingdom. It would not be acceptable for people who are part of the United Kingdom to pay different amounts for television services. It is an important element of our kingdom that some costs should be in common, rather than there should be a cheaper television system for the Greater London area, which is served by one transmitter at Crystal Palace and more expensive costs in Grampian, where there are eight main transmitters and 68 subsidiary transmitters. I hope that the Minister will ensure that we all belong to the United Kingdom in that sense.

The White Paper seems to encourage formidable forces of centralisation of control and production. In Scotland, we are extremely concerned that fewer programmes will be made there and that they will be of a lower quality. It was interesting and gratifying that the Minister suggested, when speaking in Perth—not being there, I have read only extracts of his speech——

Mr. Renton: The hon. Gentleman would have been very welcome.

Mr. Worthington: It was good to hear the Minister saying in Perth that his mind was open to the possibility of Channel 5 headquarters being located in Scotland. At present, BBC1, BBC2, Channel 3 and Channel 4 are heavily focused on London. The Minister has said that his mind is open to there being a Scottish base, so I hope that he has not closed his mind to that base being in Glasgow, rather than Edinburgh, as he suggested last week. Scotland has about 10 or 11 per cent. of the United Kingdom population, but only 3 to 4 per cent. of the investment in programme making is in Scotland. It is important that we set up a system that brings about more equality in programme making.

One can see where job creation in the new satellites is going. According to *The Guardian* a few months ago, Sky television has about 400 employees. British Satellite Broadcasting has about 500 employees.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): And half the number of viewers.

Mr. Worthington: It is no longer the case that Sky has half as many viewers as employees because its employees have now been given a satellite dish and thus the number of viewers has been dramatically increased—or at least the number of potential viewers.

The essential point is that Sky employs several hundred people, BSB employs about 500 people and W. H. Smith employs about 100 people in its television concerns. Those jobs are centred heavily in the south-east of England. It is important that quality jobs should be spread out more equally throughout the United Kingdom in future. We do not want to have only satellite riggers jobs in future; we want to have quality production jobs as well.

At present, there are 3,000 quality jobs in Scotland, but the major problem is that Scotland simply does not speak to Britain. There are too few outlets in the network. In wider political terms, it is simply not good for our television output to be so heavily metropolitan. That is not simply a Scottish point, but a regional point. There is an imbalance at present and our new system should be seeking to rectify that imbalance. In 1988, Scottish independent programme producers produced 2·25 per cent. of the total hours by independents to Channel 4. They sold 15 minutes to the ITV network and nothing to

the BBC. Scotland does not want simply to be a conduit for programmes made elsewhere. That is damaging to Scotland and damaging to the kingdom.

The hon. Member for Thanet, North has already made a point that I feel fairly confident that all hon. Members who speak in the debate today will make. The hon. Gentleman spoke about the alarm felt about the mixture of newspaper control and television control. I can see no reason why anyone should have more than one newspaper or more than one television channel. To go beyond that brings us into dangerous territory. Surely no hon. Member in the Chamber—I am not referring to the dozen or so here this morning, but to all 650—could be happy about the consequences of the development of our national newspaper industry. Surely we realise that there are grave dangers in 70 per cent. of our national newspaper output being in the hands of three people. We must take this opportunity to ensure that there is a positive ban on the people who already control too much of our press being in control of our television system as well.

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): To support the point that Conservative Members also share the hon. Gentleman's anxiety, I would like to ask the hon. Gentleman's view on the following. It seems that, as the discussions about satellite broadcasting continue, we have an unprecedented situation in which major newspapers —both the popular and the so-called "quality" end—are writing articles and editorials in support of satellite broadcasting companies which can be of no interest. Those newspapers cannot write anything that does not support those companies for self-evident financial reasons. Thus we already have a major distortion of the debate on the functioning of satellite broadcasting, by virtue of the unhealthily close links between certain newspaper owners and the satellite broadcasting companies.

Mr. Worthington: I am grateful for that point. A few weeks ago, I introduced the Right of Reply Bill. Newspaper proprietors said that, because of that Bill, financial editors would be unable in future to voice their concern about certain companies. On certain major newspapers in this country, financial editors already do not utter their worries about some companies; they cannot, because they are controlled by those self-same companies. That is a sort of censorship.

In the White Paper on broadcasting there is much praise for the BBC, which is described as the cornerstone of the system. The White Paper departs from what the Home Affairs Select Committee, of which I am privileged to be a member, said about the BBC and ITV. As I remember it, our report stated that the foundation of the system should be BBC1 and BBC2, and Channel 3 and Channel 4. They should form the four-track central core of the new system, wedded to the principles of public service broadcasting. I fear that the consequence of the proposals in the White Paper will be that the BBC is marginalised and ghettoised, as has happened in other parts of the world in which only a limited part of the system has public service responsibilities.

This will apply especially if the Government carry out their threat to remove the licence fee in a few years' time and replace it with subscription. Many people connected with ITV, and others concerned about future viewing, have written to me to say that Channels 3 and 4 must retain their public service broadcasting commitments. Around them we can build Channel 5 and the satellites. It should not be the sole responsibility of the BBC to carry forward public service broadcasting.

My preference for Channel 4 is the status quo. That seems to be logical; it is a proven system. The Home Affairs Select Committee did not even consider the status quo because it was ruled out by the White Paper. We took the line—rightly or wrongly—that we should look at the best of the rest. We wondered how we could save this success story, given that the Government seem to have ruled out the very means by which it was created—an illogical act. I cannot see how Channel 4 can maintain its success if it is thrown on the open market—it will lose its remit. Its remit is crucial, and it needs to be attached to the Channel 3 companies.

I believe that we face not a threat but an opportunity. We undoubtedly have a great chance to build on the huge success of British broadcasting and to stimulate programme making of high quality in this country. If we put programme making at the centre of the new structure we can achieve that. This will include giving a much greater role to the independent programme makers, whose influence is growing.

The White Paper does not seem to recognise how producing programmes in a particular area can stimulate its culture. In Scotland, there is a soap opera called "Take the High Road", which is certainly not as successful as the appalling "Neighbours". However, it is of great value to the area in that a £1 million pay roll is associated with the programme, money which goes into the greater Glasgow area and stimulates musical, dramatic and creative activity there.

It is no accident that Glasgow is to be the European city of culture in 1990. Some good local authorities have put in a great deal of work, and so have the local theatres, but the bedrock of all this is the investment in programme making in Glasgow by the television companies, which has had spin-off effects in related activities in the west of Scotland.

Programme making, and reflecting and stimulating local culture——

Mr. Renton: May I take the hon. Gentleman up on his point about independent producers in Scotland? I have been following what he said with great interest, and he has a real point. I add, in passing, that "Take the High Road" is a good, interesting soap opera. I happened to meet one of its lady stars on her bicycle in the Hebrides last summer and we discussed the programme at some length—but that is incidental.

It surprises me that, outside London, Scotland has the greatest number of independent producers in the Kingdom —it has about 50 of them. Yet, as the hon. Gentleman said, they put on only 3 per cent. of the programmes on the network, although 10 per cent. of our population live in Scotland. As a Scottish Member, does the hon. Gentleman agree that, while there is a great deal of creativity and talent in Scotland, at times there is too much of a tendency to make Scottish programmes with too much tartan flavour, which are therefore unacceptable to the national network? Scottish independent producers might sell more programmes outside Scotland and throughout Europe if they produced programmes that were sometimes rather less Scottish.

Mr. Worthington: I was going to conclude, but the Minister has opened up many different avenues. It is enlightening to discover that Government policy is framed as a result of meetings on bicycles in the Hebrides——

Mr. Renton: It was consultation.

Mr. Worthington: It is unsatisfactory that the concentration of programme makers in Scotland do not seem to get a fair share of the network; the fault may lie with them as well as with the system.

The difficulty about the Scottishness of programmes is that the best programmes always have real local integrity. Borders can be crossed if a programme has cultural integrity. Mid-Atlantic programmes with no roots in a particular locality never work, so some programmes made in Scotland which are distinctively Scottish would have multinational appeal because of their cultural identity, but if a programme maker made a programme about meeting a Minister while bicycling in the outer Hebrides, it would have limited appeal for a continental audience. I agree that sometimes programmes can be too esoteric.

We must recognise this great opportunity to spread programme making more fairly around the United Kingdom and to ensure that it reflects and stimulates local culture. That has already started under the present system, but it could go much further. I repeat my gratitude to the hon. Member for Thanet, North for giving us the chance to have this debate and I look forward to the speeches by other hon. Members.

10.39 am

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): I am also a cyclist but I confess that there is a degree of difference between the nature of the accosting that may occur between the Minister of State and people in the Hebrides and that which occurs in Bayswater. The debate is not about such entertainments: it is on a more serious subject.

It is a privilege to follow the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngravie (Mr. Worthington) because he contributes to the work of the Select Committee on Home Affairs in a quite exceptional way. He brings to it his experience of Scotland, which is invaluable to the work of the Committee, and also his talent for common sense and wisdom for which we are all grateful.

I shall later comment in detail on the themes raised by the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie. They clearly illustrate the role of the Select Committee on Home Affairs because the work of that Committee is not only to monitor the expenditure and responsibilities of the Home Department. When it examines policy matters it inevitably ranges over the interests of the United Kingdom as a whole. Broadcasting, although primarily the responsibility of the Home Department, is nevertheless a United Kingdom subject. It concerns the whole country and a range of Government Departments.

The hon. Gentleman made some important comments about ownership, and I share some of his anxieties. I recognise the importance to him and to Scotland of the contribution that broadcasting can make to Scotland and the contribution that Scotland can make to broadcasting. The Select Committee on Home Affairs report on broadcasting was especially concerned to deal with regional broadcasting. It is very important to us all and the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie made some important comments on it.

I shall now look into my pork barrel of words to see what I can say about my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale). He too is a most distinguished member of the Select Committee on Home Affairs and his sparkle and independence of thought enlivens us all, especially in our private debates when we formulate the recommendations for our reports, He is a broadcaster of great distinction and for that reason his contribution to the debate and to the work of the Committee is of special significance. It is interesting to note that there are in the Chamber hon. Members—certainly some of my hon. Friends—who have also had professional experience of broadcasting and their contributions will be of special value.

I shall venture for a moment into the work of the Select Committee on Televising of Proceedings of the House on which my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North had the arduous responsibility to serve. Despite the importance of the debate there is just one Back-Bench Opposition Member in the Chamber. I do not criticise Opposition Members for that because it is not central to the point that I wish to make. There are seven Conservative Members in the Chamber, and if the debate were to be televised to the full extent it would convey to the public a misrepresentation about the way that we think and feel about broadcasting. However, the work that is done in the secret places of the Palace, in the Committee Rooms, over many months and in which so many of us in the Chamber this morning play a part, is often far more significant than the great general debates that we suffer and sometimes enjoy in the Chamber.

That is important because in its report on broadcasting the Select Committee on Home Affairs struck a number of chords. All of us on the Committee were pleased that my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Home Department were able to accept so many of our recommendations and incorporate them in the White Paper. It is to be hoped that they will appear in the legislation to be placed before the House after the Queen's Speech in the autumn.

My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North has made a special contribution to policy. That is because he also serves the interests of the United Kingdom and the House in the Council of Europe where he has been able to convey his knowledge of this subject with considerable effect. That has helped the Council to arrive at a united approach about standards throughout the Community. I congratulate my hon. Friend on having the wisdom to initiate this debate and on the work that he has done on behalf of the country in this important field.

Before concentrating on some important matters of detail, I shall turn to the work of my hon. Friend the Minister. I can think of no one who has done more to ensure that the United Kingdom interests in the Council of Europe and in the Community are kept to the fore in broadcasting policy. I was glad to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North pay such a handsome tribute to the Minister in recognition of what he has achieved for all of us under the most trying and difficult circumstances. We owe the Minister a great debt of gratitude and I am sure that all hon. Members will echo that sentiment.

I shall not take up some of the themes that my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North so ably touched upon. However, I should like to look in particular at two issues in the current debate about the future of broadcasting—the issues of cross-ownership in media outlets and the future of Channel 4. Cross-ownership, by

which I mean cross-control rather than cross-investment, is addressed in a rather sketchy way in the White Paper. Since last November events have thrown the issue into sharper relief. Many broadcasting organisations and groups such as the CBI and the Consumers' Association have expressed the view that the proposals do not go far enough. I share that view and it is a clear theme of the debate.

It is a long established principle of policy that the ownership of media should not be concentrated in a few hands. This is reflected in the special provisions relating to the powers of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in relation to newspaper ownership and in the number of ITV franchises that one company can hold. The undesirability of cross-control of outlets is recognised in local markets, in the prohibition of companies owning both local newspapers and independent local radio stations and in the limit on the size of shareholding that a newspaper company may have in an ITV contractor.

Limited cross-media investment has always been accepted at around 20 per cent. maximum holding, but has been carefully policed. The Government's White Paper pledged continuing support for the principle—my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary in January stressed the Government's determination on this—not to allow British television to fall under the sway of international media conglomerates. Given that such groups have been in part associated with the decline in press ethics and standards, which have exercised the House in recent weeks, my right hon. Friend's remarks were particularly welcome.

So why are continuing controls over cross-ownership necessary? Why do other countries such as the United States, Australia and now Italy, which the Home Affairs Committee visited, see the need for them? First, because they underpin the principle of pluralism in guaranteeing diversity of control over information sources and, secondly, because they reflect the importance of fair competition and of such separation since newspapers, television and radio are, in large part, the very gatekeepers to the market place.

Cross-control of the media is wrong in principle and creates a situation in which mischief can take a hold. It can lead to a distortion of fair competition and to a lack of objective reporting, both of which are contrary to the public interest. Distortion of competition can arise since there are a number of ways in which cross-subsidy or cross-promotion can take place within such integrated groups. Free advertising is only the most obvious example of this, and it amounts to several million pounds worth annually.

This distortion of coverage can arise because pressure might be directly applied to journalists to write favourably about their proprietor's television interests, or to avoid covering embarrassing stories. Perhaps more insidiously, the journalists may come to practice self-censorship. These developments may, in turn, lead to newspaper readers being fed a partial view of events or to the mixing of editorial coverage with promotional material. The problem is compounded—it also runs wholly contrary to the Government's desire, professed in the White Paper, to avoid the uniformity of editorial line—if newspaper editors are simultaneously senior television executives, or vice versa.

These issues have been brought into focus in recent months with the launch of Sky Television controlled by News International, which already owns 35 per cent. of our national newspapers, with the tabling of early-day motion 434 and with reports from the European Institute for the Media and the Broadcasting Research Unit. It is not a coincidence that, among the quality newspapers, only *The Times*, a Murdoch newspaper, publishes the schedules of Sky Television.

A lacuna has developed in the law. The Government have made it clear that they regard cross-control of the media as undesirable. I applaud the speech made by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary on this matter, which showed sensitivity to the genuine concern felt about the issue on both sides of the House. That speech applied only to what the White Paper termed Channel 3, Channel 5 and the non-direct broadcasting by satellite franchises. The controls do not apply, but should apply to those services using a medium-power satellite and directing programme services primarily at this country. If cross-control of the media is a bad thing, then such control should apply regardless of whether the service is transmitted terrestrially, by high-powered satellite or by medium-power satellite.

The argument could be advanced that new medium-power satellite services command only tiny audiences, and that they can safely be left alone, but this applies almost equally to the national DBS series and seems to say that such services should be allowed to grow, and once they have grown, after several years, they should then be made subject to controls. This seems somewhat unfair to investors in such services.

I hope that, in reply to the debate, my hon. Friend the Minister, who has responsibility for broadcasting, will say how the Government will address this problem. Without wishing to pre-empt him, I must say that this is not a matter that should be left solely to the discretion of the Independent Television Commission except in so far as it is responsible for enforcing principles clearly set out in the legislation. I also hope that the report of the Office of Fair Trading on media ownership will be available to inform on the drawing up of the broadcasting Bill.

It is wrong to argue that since such medium-power services do not use national frequencies, the Government are powerless, particularly if the services are based in, linked up to, or financed from this country, or would expect coverage on cable or multi-point video distribution system services here. Safeguards could bite on any of these points in the last resort. If all else failed, the newspaper interests of any group seeking to defy the rules laid down by Parliament could be brought into question, with divestment available if necessary.

In the longer term, it would be sensible to put in place an agreed European Community framework on the issue since broadcasting will become less controllable within the national borders. A holding of, say, 25 per cent., in a television station should be the maximum permitted to any large-scale national newspaper proprietor.

I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to announce how they intend to uphold the principles of preventing cross control across the range of broadcasting services directed into British homes. This is now a pressing problem, and a failure to resolve it satisfactorily risks casting a shadow over the excellent elements in the forthcoming broadcasting Bill.

My other concern, which the House has already debated this morning, concerns the future of Channel 4. My Committee reported recently unanimously, in the unavoidable absence of my hon. Friend the Member for

[Mr. John Wheeler]

Thanet, North—an absence that, upon reflection, the House might think was fortuitous from the point of view of the Committee reaching a unanimous decision. We support both principles annunciated by the Government in the White Paper—maintenance of the distinctive remit of Channel 4 and the separate selling of advertising. We recommended the one option in the White Paper that would achieve both those aims, namely, that Channel 4 should become a non-profit making subsidiary of the ITC with a financial guarantee in reserve. It is no good making Channel 4 fully independent, but denying it the financial base to sustain its remit because, ultimately that would mean a new national commercial channel without the variety and diversity presently brought to television by Channel 4. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to resist demands to maximise the revenue available from the fourth channel, because to do so would destroy all that Channel 4 has achieved.

The Select Committee found a wide range of agreement on its proposal for the future funding of Channel 4, including that of Mr. George Russell, the chairman of the IBA and designate chairman of the ITC. Indeed, there was much favourable comment upon our proposals. It is, perhaps, unusual in such issues to have such widespread support. It would ill serve the best interests of British broadcasting if that united opinion on future funding were to be lightly ignored. I wish to share in the congratulations expressed by the House on the appointment of Mr. Russell to those important posts at a time when we are shaping the future of broadcasting. He is the right man to lead the regulatory and supervisory authorities.

I conclude on a personal note. Hon. Members may note that I am wearing the tie of the police college. At noon today the Home Affairs Committee will introduce a major report on the police college and higher police training, including many significant and, inevitably, controversial recommendations. Even as we debate in this Chamber, the massed ranks of the constabulary, accompanied by the media, are foregathering in the Upper Committee Corridor to hear what the future holds for them. I hope that hon. Members will forgive me if, through necessity, I withdraw to attend to those other duties on behalf of the Home Affairs Committee—quite naturally unsupported by many hon. Members who, perforce, are obliged to remain in the Chamber.

11.3 am

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for calling me relatively early in the debate. I regret that I, too, cannot stay for the whole of it, for which I apologise to my hon. Friend the Minister and to right hon. and hon. Members. My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) and I have often worked together in broadcasting. More recently, we both served on the Select Committee considering the televising of the House. I congratulate him on serving the House well by introducing this important subject of the development of the broadcasting industry and the technology that goes with it.

I am grateful for the 12 years of worthwhile experience that I gained working as a reporter and presenter for the BBC. However, for a long time I have been conscious of a duopoly at work between the BBC and ITV, which perhaps has continued for too long. There is a real need for much greater opportunities to break out in broadcasting. Some of us well remember the resistance to change when ITV first appeared. Although I was not in the House at that time, many hon. Members and many people in the media and in broadcasting, especially in the BBC, were concerned about its emergence. Now, it is very much a part of our lives.

Technology is moving very quickly—hence the appropriate nature of the motion and also the timing of the White Paper introduced some months ago. Even during the Select Committee's 15 months of deliberations on televising the House, the technology of cameras and lighting moved ahead quickly. When we began our deliberations, we were told that certain requests relating to the size of cameras in the Chamber and the style of lighting that would confront hon. Members could not be met. However, because of the probing, the pressure and some cajoling by the Select Committee, it appears that we are now on the brink of extremely advanced technology that will be available when the House begins the experiment.

Several points emerged from the White Paper, and they have been raised this morning by my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North and other hon. Members. We all agree that the BBC is the cornerstone of British broadcasting. It was the true beginning of British broadcasting and, for many years, the institution that developed broadcasting in this country. The White Paper expressed the view that, at times, the BBC tried to take on too much and that it should accept and embrace changes. I welcome the White Paper's view, so far as it goes, that the BBC should be subject to subscription and sponsorship, although the Government are moving too slowly towards a point where the BBC might have some form of advertising revenue support.

I accept that, at the beginning of British broadcasting, a licence fee to support the BBC was an obvious method of finance, and that system worked well for a long time. However, we have now reached the point when we should be taking a much closer look at the need to continue this kind of revenue support. Old-age pensioners in my constituency regularly tell me that they believe that the licence fee is too high. That applies even to pensioners who have only a black and white receiver, but they certainly believe that the fee for colour televisions is too much.

My pensioners consider what is available on the BBC to see what they are paying for. Why should an old-age pensioner's licence fee contribute to a programme like "Neighbours" on the public broadcasting network? That must be the kind of programme which could be paid for from advertising, sponsorship or a subscription service.

Pensioners also consider chat and variety shows. They are aware of the reports of the extremely inflated fees paid to presenters, especially those who chair BBC chat shows. They wonder why their licence fees should pay for the salaries of Mr. Wogan and his colleagues. I have nothing against Mr. Wogan—he is an extremely entertaining and skilful broadcaster—but it is odd that we should still have to fund his salary and programmes such as his from the licence fee.

Various negotiations are carried out for the television rights to cover sports events. I have a fairly intimate knowledge of that, having been a Minister responsible for sport. I never cease to be amazed at the fact that the BBC can use the licence fee to enter competitions involving many thousands of pounds for the rights to televise a

football match or an athletics event. It uses that money against the massed financial ranks of the independent companies, which have advertising revenue behind them. It is obvious that providing such sports coverage should logically be funded from subscription, sponsorship or advertising. As my right hon. and hon. Friends at the Home Department think about moving towards legislation later this year, I hope that they will give further thought to how the BBC should be funded.

Mr. Gale: Before my hon. Friend leaves that point, it is worth placing on the record the fact that, while the BBC thought it necessary to impose a 10 per cent. cut in the funding of some local radio stations, it could find £50 million at the drop of the hat to bid for some football matches.

Mr. Tracey: My hon. Friend is absolutely right; he has highlighted my point. He represents a more rural constituency than mine and he will appreciate the harm which has been caused by the cut in local radio station funding. I feel strongly that some of the economies imposed on broadcasting services even within Greater London should equally be criticised by the House.

I join many hon. Members in expressing concern and criticism about the White Paper's comments on independent franchises. I agree that there should be competition for independent franchises; there is nothing to replace that. However, the quality of the programming of independent companies may be damaged if we pursue tender from the highest bidder. After some years of working in broadcasting, I do not believe that television and broadcasting in general lends itself to that form of competition.

There should certainly be a range of competing companies offering themselves on the basis of the structure of their programming and their ability. However, I do not believe that the Government would be serving the viewing public if they agreed that the tender should go to the highest bidder.

I agree with a point raised most tellingly by my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) and also referred to briefly by my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) about the concentration of interests in the media. It is a source of great concern to me that the editor of *The Sunday Times* is also the chairman of Sky Television. Admittedly, the journalist in question is an old friend of many of us in this place. However, it is extraordinary that the same man should be the editor of a very well-respected and influential national Sunday newspaper and also the chairman of an emerging satellite channel. There may be great dangers there.

It is possible that a media company may own major national newspapers and a satellite channel and that it might advertise and report on the emergence of that channel. People must question whether the comments of a newspaper which owns a satellite channel can be entirely impartial. I do not believe that they can. The Government must consider the concentration of ownership across the media. I am sure that that will be the case, judging from what my right hon. and hon. Friends at the Home Office have said outside the House.

I welcome the work being done by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office in seeking guarantees of quality and decency across continental boundaries with the emergence of satellite technology. Last year, I was present at an international conference which expressed considerable concern about the possibility of beaming programmes, some of which were indecent or loaded with propaganda, from one country to another country which did not want to receive them. I hope that the Government will continue to press with all their energy for guarantees of quality through the Council of Europe, the European Commission, and even United Nations if that becomes necessary.

My final point concerns maintaining technical standards among the developing industry's employees. I have corresponded with my hon. Friend the Minister on the subject of an extremely useful paper by John Grist, a very experienced broadcaster and a former member of the BBC, who last year was the visiting fellow at Wolfson college, Cambridge. Realising the way the technology is developing and that the boundaries are being pushed out, Mr. Grist gave his views on the need for the Government to consider seriously the training of people entering the industry. He suggested that the Government should consider seriously a television training commission, which would be widely funded by all those involved in broadcasting.

In the past, training has been undertaken by the BBC and by the independent companies, but with the widening of boundaries across the industry, Mr. Grist is right to state that we should seriously consider establishing a training commission so that the existing standards of excellence are maintained in the future.

I welcome both today's debate and the continuing debate about the future of broadcasting in this country. I repeat that we owe a great debt to my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North for raising the subject this morning.

11.21 am

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) on initiating the debate. He has a distinguished record in television and radio broadcasting, and the way in which he advanced his views and made several important points this morning only adds to that distinction.

Today's debate has been most interesting, in stark contrast to the sterile debate on the broadcasting White Paper. I am entitled to make that remark because I took part in that earlier sterile debate myself. Many more ideas have been presented today, and I say that hoping that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett), who is to speak for the Labour party, will himself make a less sterile speech today than he did before. I shall try to do so as well.

I share the congratulations expressed to my hon. Friend the Minister on his significant contribution to the convention on transfrontier broadcasting. Demands for such a document were made in many publications last year, including that of my political friends in the Tory Reform Group. I am delighted that the convention includes many of the provisions that they sought. That is a significant step and forms the basis on which deregulation can take place.

I take a simple view of deregulation. It is not a matter of whether one wants or strives for deregulation, because it will come anyway as a consequence of new technology and because people wish to invest money in new forms of broadcasting and in new television channels. That

[Mr. Robert G. Hughes]

development requires a framework to ensure that we get the very best from that situation, and the agreement reached by my hon. Friend the Minister will be looked back on as an important part of that framework.

As to the future of broadcasting, it is clear that protectionism will not work. I hope that before any broadcasting Bill comes before the House, we shall hear less and less about protectionism and about defending the existing system from any innovations. That attitude will not ensure that we get the best out of broadcasting in the future.

I associate myself with the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) in respect of sports coverage and sponsorship. Although the BBC has limited resources, it is compelled to put up large sums of money to guarantee the coverage of certain sporting events on its channels. At the same time, because a duopoly exists, there is an artificial restriction on the amount of money that flows from television into sport. As a cricket fan, I would be devastated if cricket coverage were cut, because that would dent my viewing enjoyment. Why should so little money flow into what I regard as being our national game? Now that other programme makers will be bidding for cricket coverage more money should flow into it, which must be a good thing.

Another area that the White Paper does not address but which I hope we can debate when a Bill comes before the House is regional coverage. The regional structure of the BBC and of the ITV companies makes no sense other than in the minds of the people who created it. Rather than see regional television, which often involves pouring out programmes of little local interest enshrined in legislation, I would like to see it address the development of truly local broadcasting. The output of both BBC and ITV in the southern region, for example, can be described only as schizophrenic. The companies cannot decide from minute to minute whether they are serving Brighton or Southampton, and goodness knows what is thought of the service by people living in other towns in that region.

There is no reason why Brighton and Southampton should not have their own broadcasting service, which could incorporate network programmes such as "Coronation Street" and "News at Ten". But they could also transmit their own local news bulletins. That would be possible to achieve using cable, the multipoint video distribution system, or the spare broadcasting frequencies that are now available. Such truly local transmissions would help viewers in Liverpool or Manchester, for example, enjoy a genuinely coherent service with programming that meets their local needs.

As to Channel 5, I sympathise of course with Scottish viewers who wish to receive the service in their country. However, what is more important is that far too large a proportion of television programming is London dominated. It is important that Channel 5 is based well away from London. I suggest to my hon. Friend the Minister that certain northern cities also have a claim to be the home of Channel 5. Bradford has a claim and must be considered as a major bidder. It is geographically well-sited and already has the National Film and Television museum. It would be a good home for Channel 5 and I hope that it will be given the same consideration as Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Radio inevitably tends to be a minority part of our discussions. There are many programming strands to which I and my constituents would like to listen. Those strands may include programmes for ethnic minorities, jazz, different sorts of plays, more sporting commentary or different types of pop music. Many minorities need to be catered for. It is absurd and insulting to the intelligence of listeners that, particularly on commercial radio, several frequencies put out the same programmes on certain days of the week. That must not be allowed. We must make the best use of the frequencies available. There must be only one frequency broadcasting a particular programme, not three or four which is what occurs now, especially on a Sunday. We must meet as many of the programming needs as possible.

Unlike many hon. Members, I do not believe that the licence fee for the BBC has come to the end of its life. We must look for a new lease of life for the licence fee. I say that in the context of what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton. I agree with him that the BBC should take advertising. I do not agree that a public service broadcasting system should not show "Neighbours" or Terry Wogan and people like that. The BBC should broadcast a full range of programmes. However, why should that not be supported by advertising, particularly when, as I have said before—it has been confirmed to me—the standing instruction to the people doing the programme links at the BBC is to make them look as much like advertising as possible? Therefore, how can it be said that advertising would dent the quality of the BBC? It is irrational. Therefore, the BBC should, if necessary be forced to take advertising, and the licence fee should be used for something different.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): Surely the BBC already advertises. I was listening to Radio 2 in the car yesterday and I heard a link announcement asking for people to join the volunteer bureau of the BBC for which a payment was to be made. Is that not advertising? Why should it be concealed in that way?

Mr. Hughes: That is an important additional point and shows the nonsense of the campaign conducted by the BBC and others against the acceptance of advertising. It is already there. We should press our point and ensure that the BBC takes advertising properly and gains from the revenue that would come from it.

As I have said, the licence fee needs a new lease of life. We should ensure that we have the quality of public service broadcasting that we talk about in these debates. That is important. Also important are strands of broadcasting that may not attract a large number of viewers. Such programmes do not necessarily have to be shown only on the BBC. They could be spread across different broadcasting outlets such as the ITV channels, Channel 5, the cable networks or the satellite channels. We do not know how much the cable networks or satellite channels will grow. We know what has happened so far but we do not know what will happen in the future. Those outlets could provide programmes recommended by bodies such as the Arts Council or other organisations and could be financed from the proceeds of the licence fee. That would involve a large amount of money and could do a great deal of good. The licence fee is easy to collect and it is relatively cheap. We should not abandon it too easily.

ITV is running an expensive advertising campaign on its own network to the tune of "Just the way you are". ITV probably made a mistake and intended to use, "Who wants to be a Millionaire". It is not seeking to protect the viewer or to say, "We are offering viewers what they want and they should ensure that we can continue as we are." If that were true, the audience would not be decreasing year after year. The audience figure is much lower now than five or 10 years ago. If ITV was providing what the viewer wanted, it would not be worried.

My point has been illustrated in a speech circulated to hon. Members by the ITV Association. The speech was made by Richard Dunn, the managing director of Thames Television and chairman of the ITV Association. He lets the cat out of the bag and we are grateful to the ITV Association for circulating it. Far from seeking to protect viewers, it wants to protect its income. It wants to ensure that it is providing what the advertisers want. In his speech Mr. Dunn quotes Ray Snoddy the distinguished critic. In an article in *Media Week* Mr. Snoddy said that as a result of the auctioning of franchises and the separation of Channel 4

"the advertisers will get the worst of all possible worlds—fragmentation of audiences, increasing costs and possibly fewer of the right people watching commercial TV at all."

Who are the right people? Are not all people equal when they watch television?

Richard Dunn went on to say:

"The lighter, more discriminating viewers could certainly be lost to the BBC or to those of the new subscription satellite channels that are successful. In my judgment, the result of all this turmoil could well be a reduction in the size and quality of the audience available to advertisers."

That does not display much care for viewers.

Mr. Corbett: In all fairness, we should say that Mr. Dunn gave that speech to an advertising audience.

Mr. Hughes: I accept that, but I have seen nothing from the ITV Association or the television companies that contradicts the points made in the speech. ITV is more interested in its balance sheet and advertisers than in its viewers.

Much has been said about the BBC with which I concur. It has been called the cornerstone of quality for television and radio and we would be foolish to abandon it. We need the BBC. We would not have our high quality independent television without the BBC. Sky Television would not be broadcasting what most people accept is a reasonable news service if it did not have to compete with BBC and ITN.

The BBC needs to examine the way in which it is organised. There have been a series of strikes by BBC staff. It is easy to blame the staff who go on strike. As a former BBC insider, I have to say that the frustration of the staff is great. They are frustrated at the way in which the BBC is organised, the decisions that are made and the money wasted by employing too many people in some areas and cutting back while demanding more in areas that are already working hard. When the people at the top of the BBC are receiving enormous pay rises but the pay rise suggested for the staff is below the rate of inflation, their frustration is understandable, especially when one considers that they are already substantially underpaid compared with people working in the independent sector, or facility companies. I hope that the BBC board of governors will look closely at what is happening at senior management level before it blames staff for going on strike.

If one needs evidence of gaps in the quality of management at the BBC, one has only to look at the evidence that was given to the Select Committee which considered televising the proceedings of the House. That Select Committee, on which I had the honour to serve, would not have taken so long to come to its conclusions if the original evidence given by the BBC and ITN—but mainly the BBC—had not been inadequate, disingenuous, wrong, and scribbled on the back of an envelope before their witnesses went before the Committee. They led the Committee down a garden path down which it was not prepared to go. We had to take a long time to examine the best way of televising the proceedings of the House. Before editorial writers and broadcasters criticise what has been said by the Select Committee, they should look at the original evidence, as published by the BBC and the ITN.

An important point is not mentioned often enough. The deaf can neither listen to radio nor get much enjoyment out of television. The BBC and ITN have done well in increasing the amount of sub-titling, but what they have done is not enough. There needs to be substantially more sub-titling. The deaf have a right to access to news and current affairs programmes. Channel 4 already has sub-titling, and the BBC has promised that it will sub-title the 9 o'clock news. The deaf have an urgent right to such subtitling. Before the Bill comes forward, my hon. Friend the Minister should look at that important subject and decide the key to getting more sub-titling on television, of course, mainly through the Ceefax and Oracle systems. Do the Government have a responsibility to that vulnerable group of people and to allow funds to ensure that we can increase programme sub-titling? What pressure can we put on broadcasters?

Another matter is not for the Minister but for new broadcasters. If the BBC and ITV are moving slowly on the matter, can satellite broadcasters provide some of the sub-titling that is missing from other programmes and attract people to Sky Television or to British Satellite Broadcasting? We should have that important subject in mind when we consider the proposals in the Bill next year. If we say, "We hope that it will happen, but there is nothing that we can do about it," we will let down a vulnerable group of people who have no means of fighting back or of prosecuting their case. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will consider that point.

I apologise that I, too, will not be able to stay for the remainder of the debate, as I must go to my constituency. However, I welcome the debate and hope that many of the ideas that have been put forward will find their way into the legislation.

11.43 am

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Unlike my colleagues, who have apologised because they must depart before the end of the debate, I apologise for not having been here at the beginning. As you are aware, Madam Deputy Speaker, there are medical reasons for my absence. Nevertheless, I wholeheartedly welcome the debate as an opportunity to continue the little campaign to which some hon. Members have subscribed from time to time, which is taming the BBC and abolishing the licence.

[Mr. Richard Holt]

Some of my distinguished colleagues have spoken from great personal knowledge. I cannot claim to have their depth of knowledge, but, when I worked at the BBC in the 1950s, technology was not quite like it is today. We broadcast programmes live, and we were not subjected to competition from ITV because it did not exist. Nor did we have quite the same freedom. When I appeared in the very first soap opera, "The Grove Family", we made certain that there was no advertising in the sets that were being used. For example, the word "Kellogg" on the cornflakes box was cut out, and the label on the coffee bottle was scratched so that one could not read the word "Camp". Viewers used to sit at home and say, "I wonder what they are cutting out." Of course, common sense ultimately prevailed; we did not have to cut out or mask such words, and the Kellogg cornflakes box stood on the table. I am sure that there was a dramatic effect on Kellogg's sales.

I recently achieved in a pyrrhic victory in the form of a television licensing concession as it related to aged persons. It sounded marvellous. Judging by the way is was written up by *The People*, one would have thought that I had rediscovered the wheel. I want the result to be clarified in *Hansard* so that my colleagues who have not written to me need not bother to do so.

We opened a new old people's complex, and the housing association did not classify it under the category 2 regulations. It admitted some elderly people who, under the law, did not qualify as aged as such. They ranged from 55 to 58 years of age. As a consequence, everyone was disqualified from holding a concessionary licence. After listening to my pleas or reading the small print—perhaps it found that it had a heart—the Home Office changed its view. Those pensioners who had moved from another old people's home were able to take their privilege with them.

All that means is that there is an unhappy old people's home. Those who are receiving the concession are unhappy—they do not see why they had to fight for it in the first place—and those who are not receiving it are even more unhappy. I have been surprised at the great amount of post that I have received on the subject. Hon. Members have known for a long time that it is a touchy matter. Ultimately, the Government must grasp the nettle and abolish the method of payment for the BBC through the licensing system.

A few days ago, I saw what is called a "veteran disc jockey" on television. Only 25 years ago, that same veteran disc jockey was described as a pirate—someone who was outside the law.

Mr. Gale: It was me.

Mr. Holt: I was not mentioning names.

That disc jockey was regarded as someone who would never be a member of the establishment.

Mr. Gale: Simply on a point of information, it is fair to say that those of us who were involved in offshore broadcasting in the early 1960s were not engaged in an illegal operation, because we took part in that before the Marine, &c., Broadcasting (Offences) Act 1967 was passed.

Mr. Holt: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, because that makes my point even better. Having discovered a bolthole, the Government had to try to stop it because the people who were listening to the radio were not paying for it. They did not pay either the BBC or the Performing Rights Society although they enjoyed the broadcasts. The BBC got all huffy about that and the Government of the day brought in legislation. Why did it ultimately fail? The answer is that it failed because the traditional idea of one steam radio activated by an accumulator, which was about right at the time when the law was introduced, had been superseded by modern techniques. Youngsters had radios in their earrings—both boys and girls—but they did not pay for them through a licence.

Ultimately, therefore, the BBC's funding of sound radio was changed by the Government; one does not pay directly for sound radio now. If one has only sound radio, one does not have to have a licence for it. The funding comes from those people who have a television receiver. Therefore, if one is among the 3 per cent. of the population who do not have a television set—97 per cent. now have one—one is part of that parasitical outfit.

No one ever sat down and said, "My goodness, there's going to be a thing called radio and perhaps even a thing called television. How on earth should we pay for these two phenomena?" All that Baird was interested in was payment for the sets that were being sold. He could not have cared less whether anything came out of them. However, someone somewhere devised a thing called a licence. I suppose that in its day it was a reasonable thing, but today the licence is a tax. Indeed, it is a regressive tax because it impinges on rich and poor in exactly the same way. To somebody on a fixed or small income, £66 is a large sum of money, but as my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) said, £66 is cheap to someone who can afford it. The argument is cheapened by those who say it is only fourpence-farthing an hour because it is still £66 when you have to pay for it, and that is a large sum of money.

We are talking today about developments in satellite and about integrated choice. What about those people who do not want the BBC? They still have to pay for it even if they never watch it. Even if their television set has all the BBC channels blanked out, they still have to pay for it. The whole system is absurd.

I had a letter recently from a constituent who told me that he has a black and white television set and pays the black and white licence fee in the normal way. Then he bought himself a video. In case my hon. Friend the Minister of State is not aware of this, one cannot buy only a black and white video; all videos are for colour receivers. As a consequence, my constituent received a letter from the licensing authority telling him that he could no longer have a licence merely for a black and white television, but that he had to have one for a colour television, even though his receiver can show only black and white. I do not know whether that is ironic or who had the last word, but my constituent is completely blind; and cannot see programmes in either black and white or in colour. However, as other members of the household can see the programmes, they have to pay for a colour although they have only a black and white receiver.

To all intents and purposes, television licensing is nonsense and it is harsh for many people. We should be totally out of tune with public opinion if we failed to take note of the fact that television today is not merely an odd ball means of entertainment. It is the sole companion of many people—and not merely of elderly people: many people who are confined to their homes because they are

disabled or who are simply afraid to go out at night now have the companionship of the television set. Of course it informs and entertains, but——

Mr. Corbett: The hon. Gentleman has raised an important point. Will he make it clear whether he is objecting to the principle of the licensing of a television set —that is what it is—or to the use to which that money is put—in other words, to fund the BBC?

Mr. Holt: I am objecting to both in a different way. I have not yet reached the BBC. I am objecting to how the licence system works, and I am considering satellite development.

To take a business about which I know a little, one must have a licence to run a betting shop. If one owns a television set, one must have a licence. If one owns a bank of 12 television sets which receive satellite television, one still needs only one licence. The licence goes not with the set but with the premises. That brings me back to my earlier complaint, that elderly people who found themselves in a new old people's home lost their privilege.

The Government provided the concession because at that time some elderly and disabled people lived in a complex where there was only one communal television in a main room to which they went during viewing hours. Moreover, the Government did not see how they could collect licences from everybody. Times have moved on since the highly expensive one-off television in the common room. Now, most people in a complex have their own television set in their own room. That is why the Government are making people pay, although they live in a complex or accommodation with a warden. That, in turn, is simply because housing associations have not designated such accommodation as category 2.

The average person in the street does not understand that, and does not want to understand it. He cares only that he has a television set and pays too much for the licence. Many people feel that they are not getting full value, whether from the BBC, ITV or a satellite company. They feel that £66 is in excess of what they should pay.

The licence fee is a tax; let us make no bones about it. It must be paid by law and people are fined for not paying it. Many elderly people struggle to pay that £66. I am amazed by the volume of mail that I have received about it.

Mr. Renton: While I understand my hon. Friend's concern for his elderly constituents, may I correct him about the new definition of who gets a concessionary licence?

The concessionary licence which was only 5p a year became a substantial concession as the price of the licence increased. It was originally intended for elderly people who lived in purpose-built and discrete accommodation specifically designed as sheltered accommodation for the elderly with an effective full-time warden. Two or three years ago, a court eventually judged that, providing that any communal service was provided, the concessionary licence fee of 5p a year should apply.

Consequently, a great many councils said that they provided one communal service. It could be one person visiting for one hour a week, even if only to collect the rent and see that everyone was all right. Councils saw the court's decision as a means of liberalising and extending concessionary licences. For that reason only, we had to reconstruct the rules to return to the original intent of some 25 years ago when the concession was introduced.

I agree with my hon. Friend that it would make much more logical sense to get rid of the concessionary fee altogether, because there are anomalies. We did not do that, because we felt that it was too unfair to remove it from those who already had it. It is a compromise. The present system was given a great deal of thought. It was intended to restrict the scheme to the original proposal and to continue giving a concessionary licence to those who had one, so that their fee did not increase from 5p to £66 a year. If there is a particular problem in my hon. Friend's constituency, I hope that he will come and talk to me about it.

Mr. Holt: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that explanation, which will have been heard by many people outside of the Chamber. I will not go to see him at present with the immediate problem, because I did take it up with his Department. His official kindly dealt with it and made a decision, but was subsequently moved to another Department. I would not wish to inflict such an end on my hon. Friend.

The Minister's intervention highlights the problems and the complexity of the matter. The moment that a concession is given to one set of people, whoever they are, one is immediately confronted with other people who want concessions, too. I believe that, in the same way as the steam radio licence went out of time, so, ultimately, will the licence for the BBC.

Many of us who had our childhood during the war believed implacably that every word emanating from the BBC was the complete truth. We shot down the German air force 67 times in the first year of the war. We believed it because it was the BBC, and that mythology has gone on in perpetuity. However, the BBC has changed. I was delighted recently to receive not one but two letters from the chairman of the board of governors of the BBC apologising to me for the political bias that had been introduced into two programmes. I am not springing this on my hon. Friend the Minister, because he knows that I put down an early-day motion. The BBC is biased.

Many words in the English language have, over the years, changed their original meaning. At an Edinburgh festival television fringe meeting a few years ago, I made the point to a television audience of all the eminent people in the profession that, if one talks today about the BBC and bias, everyone knows that one is talking about Left-wing bias against the Conservative party and the Government. Bias never means bias the other way round.

I challenged all the worthies of the BBC for one of them to get up and tell me when there had been not a Left-wing but Right-wing bias in a play or a public opinion programme. There has not been one. All the eminent people, from the director-general down, sitting in the audience, failed to respond. I was told afterwards privately that the reason none of them responded was that the BBC has a strict rule on pecking order, and, in any audience, the only person who is allowed to respond on behalf of the BBC is the most senior person present. As the most senior person had only been with the BBC one week at that time, no one responded. That is a plausible explanation for no one from the BBC responding to my challenge of the day

[Mr. Holt]

and telling me why it had refused to put Iain Curteis's play on, when it had asked for that play to be written and had spent much money producing it.

Satellite television will be a revolutionary development in many ways, and I do not know whether the Government will be able to cope with it. I am not sure whether they have the facility to cope with it. I do not know how they will deal with the situation when we have horse racing beamed in 24 hours a day through the Satellite Information Service to television sets in this country, which at present is received in the betting shops. Anyone with a credit facility will want that system.

People's television sets will be quickly adapted to carry 24 knobs, one of which will bring in different sports from all over the world. At the moment, horse racing is almost a monopoly organised by those who run it, bet on it and broadcast it. With the advent of satellite television, things may go out of control.

How will the Government react to inter-country beaming in of satellite television of all varieties? Will it be censored? Will we be banned from seeing things that the Government do not want broadcast, or will we have a system of deregulation and freedom in accordance with the basic philosophy of the Government?

At the heart of this we must remember my constituents, the elderly ladies, the disabled and the disadvantaged—unemployment levels are still high in the north-east of England—will still pay the full television licence to have the privilege of receiving the BBC, should they want to view its channels. In future, why should society continue to pay for the BBC in that way? Surely we should recognise that, today, television is as important as a damp course or a roof on a house. Once someone buys a television set, they should be able to see programmes without any further direct cost to them. The television licence fee is £66, but it will increase.

We must accept that that licence will die the moment everyone says they will not pay, but will its death be regulated? If the BBC received no direct income from licences, the Government would soon find the money from taxation. Yesterday, the Government found £6 billion to improve the roads. I cannot imagine why they cannot find £174 million so that some people do not have to buy a television licence. I believe that it would be useful if the Cabinet reflected on that.

We all know that television is powerful. Once programmes come in from all sorts of countries, do the Government know whether they will have make some payment for additional services? For instance, I do not know how money will be collected for the Performing Rights Society for beamed-in operations. The BBC is able to monitor everything that goes out and it pays the correct proportions of money owed.

I asked the BBC to follow the practice of Tyne Tees Television, which issues a regular schedule of the programmes in which politicians appear to show that there is a balance in its programmes. The BBC, however, told me that such a schedule was beyond its capabilities.

I am struggling to see the time. This week, I have sought six times to catch Mr. Speaker's eye—I was successful once and I was told that I could speak for five minutes, but then I had to sit down. This morning, however, I was told that I would be on my feet for at least three quarters of an hour and that I could keep going.

Mr. Tony Durant (Vice-Chamberlain of Her Majesty's Household): My hon. Friend is all right.

Mr. Holt: Well, in that case, I shall conclude by saying that the power of television is its ability to change things dramatically. When I was a youngster and played tennis, the rules of the game said that play should be continuous and that one should change ends continually. Fred Perry and all the other great players did just that. Then, however, television came along and players were forced to rub themselves down for two minutes between changing ends so that the cameras could beam in. Television cameras beam in—I may seem to be advertising here—on the name Robinson's, for example, so let us not kid ourselves that the BBC does not have advertising.

Every time my sport of horse racing is on BBC television, I can guarantee that the cameras show the William Hill horseshoe when it is a William Hill race, and the Ladbroke horseshoe when it is a Ladbroke race. None of that was allowed, and the law has not been changed to allow it, but simply because the law could not be enforced, it has happened. I hope that, ultimately, the same will be true of television licences. Advertisers now have the freedom to put hoardings all round football grounds and race tracks. I hope that that same freedom will come into being for television and that television licences will become a thing of the past.

12.10 pm

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): I welcome the support of the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) for our long call that the BBC should be funded out of general taxation. I accept what he says about the present licensing system being nonsense, if for no other reason than that it is expensive to collect and for no good purpose.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) on raising this issue. It will come as no surprise to him that the words of his motion, especially when it calls on the Government

"to pay particular attention to the need to continue to stimulate quality programming and maintain diversity of ownership and choice",

are warmly welcomed by the Opposition, so to that extent nothing lies between us. He has provided an opportunity not only for the House, but for the Minister and the Government, to think again more clearly and deeply about what they plan to do to our broadcasting.

The one issue that separates us—I acknowledge that the Minister himself is having some further thought on this—is that the White Paper is founded on the principle that the deepest purse should be able to buy its way into television and that considerations of quality should come a poor second.

The voices of experienced broadcasters, viewers and listeners have been missing from earlier debates on this topic. That is no longer the case because, as the Minister will know better than I, his Department is knee-deep in responses to the White Paper. I hope that the Minister will consider the range of opinions most carefully and be prepared, even at this stage while, no doubt, the Bill is being drafted, to change his mind.

We should be clear that no one is opposed to changes in our broadcasting system, but the Government do not seem to understand that changes need to be based on the success of the present system. It has been a success because it has been built in an evolutionary way, in which one development has complemented another. That was certainly the case with the development of BBC 2 and with the start of Channel 4. The aim of those developments, under more sensitive hands, was to enhance the range and quality of programmes, to widen horizons and to feed and stretch the imagination. Game shows and quiz shows—the Home Secretary's favourite Saturday evening viewing—have a place on the menu of television, on whatever channel, and are a proper part of what is on offer, but they are only a part.

I suspect that the gap between the Government and the Opposition is over whether listeners and viewers should be treated as increasingly discerning and sophisticated, as other areas of their lives expand, or whether they are to be regarded simply as customers and consumers, bid for and bought by those rich and strong enough to buy a franchise. It is false for the Government to claim that they merely want to widen choice. That is not possible without a policy which actively and openly protects, upholds and enhances standards of quality. What the Government propose is more likely to lessen real choice by the gradual reduction of high quality in the chase for ratings and by maximising audiences for advertisers. The blind belief in customers will replace concern for people as intelligent listeners and viewers.

We certainly embrace and welcome the changes that the new technology is making possible, but we insist that they be harnessed to combine greater choice with higher quality. In many senses the debate is about whose finger is on the button. We know that the finger belongs to the viewer and listener, but there is also the question of what he or she has the choice of switching on or off. The Government seem to be saying that the finger on the button should belong to the person with the thickest wallet. We are more worried about quality than cash.

There is no real extra choice in being asked to choose between a selection of equally trivial programmes; it is more choice in one sense, but only a choice of more of the same. There should be a choice between different, not similar programmes.

By quality I do not mean only expensive highbrow drama productions or documentaries, important though they are. The protection and promotion of regional television has just as much to do with quality. A number of hon. Members have made the point that less of our television should be London-based and oriented. The Government seem unaware that their proposals are likely to make that problem worse. The largest audiences with the most money are in London and the south-east.

In earlier debates the Minister has as good as admitted that under his plans fewer regional television stations are likely to serve larger areas. That can only dilute regional flavour in news and current affairs as well as in drama and documentaries. It is difficult enough to find that flavour now, but the position can only worsen under the Government's proposals.

Mr. Renton: I do not know the context in which the hon. Gentleman is quoting me, if that is what he is doing. I have said all along that I believe that under our proposals there will be an increase in the number of regional and locally-based services, not only because of the additional number of satellite channels but because of local cable and multipoint video distribution system television. So I am surprised at what the hon. Gentleman has said—I have always said the opposite.

Mr. Corbett: I did not mean to imply that the Minister had said that, and I acknowledge his point. He has caught me out—I should be able to reach into my handbag now and produce a bit of paper, but I cannot. The point that I was, perhaps clumsily, trying to make was about the number of regional television franchises. I understand the Minister's argument and I hope that was what he says is true, but my principal concern is about the number of regionally-based television stations.

I have deliberately dealt with regional stations first because they are extremely important in ensuring a better balance between national and regional programmes. Like everything else, this will turn on cash as the bidders line up to buy the franchises. The higher the price—at the moment the proposition is that the highest bidder must win—the greater the threat to quality, because the pressure will be on owners to recoup what they have laid out. That is what their shareholders will demand, which is why it is so essential that guarantees of quality be built into the bids. Bidders should be required to submit detailed budgets, specifying what they plan to spend on how many hours in each sector—on news and current affairs, documentaries, drama, game shows, children's programmes, religious programmes, sport, and so on. Unless a price tag is demanded in that way, there can be no effective guarantee of proper quality standards in the range of programmes.

Mr. George Russell, chairman of the IBA, spoke the other day about the "quality of money", meaning that the IBA's successor body should have powers to decline to give the franchise to the highest bidder if there were doubts about quality standards. The Minister knows that that is practically a universal view in the industry. The policy of "Never mind the quality, feel the width of my wallet" runs the real risk of a speedy slide into low-budget, low-quality programmes and programming.

Mr. Holt: I should like to extrapolate a little from that point. In America there has just been the most expensive flop of all time, a sequel to a programme that was very successful. The sequel cost a fortune but it has been dropped because people will not pay to advertise on a programme that audiences will not watch. If it had been a BBC programme, people would have had to watch it through to the end of the series—like it or not.

Mr. Corbett: I do not think that that necessarily follows. My hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) said that companies have to have enough cash to take risks and to accept that some programmes will fail. If they do not do that, we shall get only safe programmes. In the chase for audiences nobody will take risks by saying that certain programmes should be made and shown. If a programme is properly made it should be able to earn itself an audience.

Mr. Holt: I am saying that money does not mean quality.

Mr. Corbett: I entirely accept that and I shall deal with it in a moment. It depends critically upon the quality and standards of people in the industry. That includes people who develop the scripts right at the start of a programme

[Mr. Corbett]

—my wife has a small hand in such affairs—right through to the people who make the programme. Money is of some importance in the context of staff.

I think it is accepted by all hon. Members that Channel 4 has been an undoubted success. That is because it has commissioned programmes of intelligence and daring. Under the umbrella of the ITV companies—this is an important distinction—there has been what I would describe as friendly rivalry rather than bare knuckle competition. That has served both partners well and it is probably that which led the Select Committee on Home Affairs and others to come up with the option that has been suggested.

The Minister will be as aware as I am that hawks in the Cabinet seem to be siding with that rough lot in the Department of Trade and Industry rather than the Home Office and that they seem hell bent on making Channel 4 totally independent and insisting that it compete head-on with Channel 3. That is not what wiser heads want and it is not in the best interests of Channel 4. Channel 4, which ought to know a thing or two about the business, and the Select Committee on Home Affairs say that it would be best if Channel 4 became a subsidiary of the proposed Independent Television Commission. While selling its own advertising it would have the safety net of money held by the ITC in case revenue did not match needs or expectation.

That is not some form of latter-day feather bedding. It is an attempt to recognise the special nature of Channel 4 and how the unrestricted harsh winds of fierce competition between Channel 3 companies and between them and satellite would imperil the programming and purpose of Channel 4. I hope that the Home Office wins this argument. The fact that it needs to take place illustrates that the Government do not understand what they are dealing with, and that because of the special nature of our broadcasting special steps need to be taken and special arrangements need to be made.

The narrowness of the Government's view is demonstrated by their blinkered proposals for a BBC world television service to extend and complement its radio equivalent. I thought that it was common ground between us that the BBC World Service is a vital part of our cultural and diplomatic effort around the world. The hon. Member for Langbaurgh spoke about that. It has rightly earned widespread respect, trust and authority. The Government have refused to assist the BBC in its development into world television, at a time when other nations—I suspect, through back and side doors—are assisting their national companies in that respect.

Mr. Gale: I do not wish to contradict the hon. Gentleman, but he should be aware that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has said to the BBC World Service and Mr. John Tusa that if the BBC World Service can come up with a commercial package that would allow a world television service to be commercially funded, he will give that serious consideration. Discussions are taking place and we hope that that will happen.

Mr. Corbett: I know that, but such a proposition would be made easier if the Government were prepared, even if only to a limited extent, to assist with start-up expenses, because such expenses are heavy.

I have a great suspicion that the development of world services involves Government money in at least one case. Cable News Network is now available around the globe. I am not knocking the quality of that service, but the important point is that it gives the American point of view. There is an American flavour and an American bias about the way in which it handles its programmes.

The ambition of the BBC is to have a world television service apart, and I strongly support that, but even the BBC world radio service is under threat from the Government. It broadcasts in 37 languages around the world and is at risk at a time when we should be thinking of expansion—and all because there is a cash crisis. Mr. John Tusa, its distinguished managing director, has warned that grave problems will have to be faced in 1990-91. He mentioned high inflation, rent rises at Bush House, extra rates and staff pay awards. He said:

> "I don't think these continuous unplanned-for pressures on spending are things we can take without damaging the product we deliver."

The three-year funding package announced in November 1987 was based on an inflation rate of 5 per cent., with no allowance in it for the inflation figure announced today of 8 per cent. In any event, the annual rate agreed is cut by 1·5 per cent. for so-called efficiency services.

Any fool can go into business and make savings, but that has to have an impact on the quality of service and its ability to expand to meet known needs—to say nothing of the morale of its staff—as elsewhere in the BBC. I greatly welcome the support of the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) for those in the BBC who are trying to get a decent pay rise, but the current discontent at pay levels runs the risk of forcing experienced and dedicated broadcasters out of the door and making recruitment, against pay levels in sectors from which the BBC would normally expect to attract staff, even more difficult.

While the Government wax lyrical about the so-called potential for subscription television, which would mean loss of access for all for the payment of a licence fee, they say little or nothing about the future financing of radio in this climate. That is left open, which raises a suspicion that the Government simply are not concerned with the maintenance of the BBC in its present form, which enables it to provide such an impressive range of quality programmes in both television and radio.

As to satellite, Sky Television has found that there is no pot of gold atop the clouds and has even fallen out with Mickey Mouse. BSB knows the problems that it faces in its autumn launch. The development of satellite will be a long, hard road—needlessly so, but certain because of the Government's stupidity. Here, I am happy to agree again with the hon. Member for Thanet, North, although for different reasons.

I say that because the Government passed up the chance to cable the country through British Telecom when it was in the public sector. That would not just have aided the development of satellite and been environmentally more acceptable, but would have made better national sense as it could have given better access to services other than television which could have been delivered to virtually every home in the country. However, a short-term, narrow view was taken, for which we shall pay

a very heavy price as the years roll on. It would have been well justified investment, which could have been done only by the public sector with the promise of proper returns through selling the various uses of the cables. Now, at best, cable will be developed in a haphazard, unplanned manner and only where those paying for it envisage the prospect of a fairly good return on their investment. It has nothing to do with choice, range and access, and everything to do with cash.

There are important matters of cross-media ownership —I was glad that the Minister is thinking again about that —the new charter for the BBC, the way in which its governors are appointed, the way in which advertising is controlled, and much much more. In that sense, the debate is a dress rehearsal for next Session's broadcasting Bill. We look forward to that and will approach it constructively through our twin aims of matching greater choice with guarantees of high and rising quality. I say again to the Minister that those changes are best based upon the success of the present system. Someone once said, "If it is not broken, why try to mend it?" I commend that approach both to the House and to the Government.

12.31 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I apologise to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and to the House for arriving so late in the debate. The hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) asked me to put on my jacket——

Mr. Holt: Mr. Speaker ruled recently that hon. Members would not catch the Chair's eye unless they were properly attired in a tie and jacket—with the obvious exception of lady Members—as we do not wish to deteriorate to the level of Italian standards.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) sought my permission to remove his jacket. He arrived post haste, in a distressed condition and asked if he could take off his jacket. I gave him authority so to do. However, I must point out that the air conditioning in the Chamber is in good enough working order for hon. Members including myself, to keep on our jackets.

Mr. Banks: I am gratified to know that such important matters still occupy the mind of the hon. Member for Langbaurgh. As he has chosen immediately to pick me up on a matter that is somewhat tangential to the subject that we are discussing, I must correct him. Mr. Speaker ruled that if an hon. Member was attired in a short-sleeved shirt with a tie, he could remove his jacket. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman checks that with Mr. Speaker's office. If that level of pettiness is symptomatic of the hon. Gentleman's contribution to the debate, I am jolly glad that I missed it.

I apologise to the House for arriving late in the debate. I had already explained the reason for that to the hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) and to Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Holt: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West, not having been present throughout the debate, may well claim that I am nitpicking in suggesting that the way in which Members of Parliament attire themselves in this Chamber is of consequence. However, the general public do not share his view. Perhaps the lowering of standards in this country goes a long way towards vandalism, hooliganism and the other deteriorations outside the House, where people expect a lead from Members of Parliament.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I cannot add to the ruling given a few moments ago by Madam Deputy Speaker. It might be best if I, as a mere male, advised the House to continue with the debate.

Mr. Banks: I would say that the hon. Member for Langbaurgh is a fool, but I suspect that God got there first and made him one. I shall put on my jacket as the matter obviously causes him such great concern.

I was late arriving at the debate because I was launching a poop-scoop campaign in Newham. In the light of the contribution of the hon. Member for Langbaurgh, I was obviously involved in a most approporiate activity.

I thank the hon. Member for Thanet, North for introducing this subject for debate. I know from experience what his contribution would have been to this subject. I must also declare an interest. I act as a parliamentary adviser to the Broadcasting and Entertainment Trades Alliance, the union for which I used to work before I became a Member of Parliament. BETA is the major union in the BBC. Unfortunately at the moment, together with the National Union of Journalists, it is engaged in an industrial dispute. I gather from what my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) said that the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes), a former member of Association of Broadcasting Staffs referred to the dispute.

I draw the Minister's attention to early-day motion 849 which stands in my name. It sets out the details of the BBC dispute which is about comparability within the BBC and commercial broadcasting. That is why an increase of 16 per cent. is being sought by BBC workers.

The comparability argument is strong. In a recent letter to the *Daily Express* the director-general of the BBC defended the 30 per cent. increases involving £20,000 pay rises which he and the deputy director-general Mr. John Birt had managed to gain from the governors. He defended the rises on the ground of comparability with the commercial sector. If it is good enough for those at the top, it is good enough throughout the BBC work force.

It is somewhat irksome for members of staff at the BBC to discover that the corporation's 140 top managers were given generous wage increases, cars and private medical facilities while the corporation management was trying to impose a pay cut on those who make and produce the programmes that we all enjoy on radio and television.

BBC workers are very angry about the proposals. The dispute also reflects their anger at the Government's attempt to impose political interference within the corporation. Despite my criticism of the management's approach in the BBC, the unions and I remain wholly committed to the integrity of the corporation as a cornerstone of public service broadcasting in the United Kingdom. It is a tribute to BETA, the NUJ and the Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians that those unions have launched a major campaign to defend public broadcasting in this country.

Our broadcasting is admired throughout the world. BBC radio and television, the World Service, the IBA and commercial television and radio sectors constitute one of

[Mr. Banks]

the finest broadcasting systems in the world in terms of quality, variety, efficiency, impartiality and consumer availability.

There are very few areas of activity in which this nation excels these days. It certainly does not excel in respect of our consumer goods or in our standards of political and social behaviour. However, in our artistic creativity we have much that is prized around the world. Unfortunately, such creativity is little regarded in this country.

Public service broadcasting is a crucial element in terms of artistic creativity and it is also the life blood of our democracy. Democratic values in Britain are better served by public service broadcasting than by the present authoritarian and intolerant Government or by the cheap and vicious end of the popular press.

The values of liberal democracy in Britain have been undermined to the point of destruction by the bigoted ideologues and mendacious second-raters who currently run the country. Nowhere can one see that proved more amply than within the terms of the White Paper on the future of broadcasting. That White Paper sums it all up.

The White Paper is not about efficiency, extending choice or reinforcing standards of excellence. Plainly and simply it is about ideology and the hatred of any institution located in the public sector.

The BBC is particularly despised by many Ministers and Conservative Back Benchers, but not necessarily those present in the Chamber now. One has heard many vile things said about the BBC since 1983. The Prime Minister gives the lead because she believes that the BBC is rather like the Church—in the hands of dangerous subversives. The Prime Minister has reached such a state of arrogance that, in her eyes, anything short of slavish obedience is treachery. The BBC has endured a long-running campaign of abuse and vilification from many Conservative Members. The Prime Minister has done her best to stuff the higher echelons of the corporation with Tory party loyalists, but clearly she is not satisfied that the BBC is yet as impartial and as high minded as the *Sun* and *News of the World*. She is set on a course to disable the BBC with a combination of privatisation, break-up and cash starvation.

The Government are determined to exploit new technology, not to improve real choice and achieve greater quality, or to allow greater access by ordinary people to broadcasting, but as a weapon with which to destroy the whole concept of public service broadcasting. National deregulation of broadcasting together with the opportunities presented by satellite coverage will inevitably lead to the Americanisation of British broadcasting in terms of both programme content and of standards.

The concept of subscription financing for the BBC is wholly incompatible with the concept of universality on which British broadcasting has hitherto been based. On a recent visit to the United States, I saw what subscription television is all about. It is an appalling concept. Although good programmes are shown on Channel 23—WTV—they are constantly interrupted by people coming in front of the camera and making appeals for cash, saying "Send your $60 to us if you want to go on seeing programmes like this one"—then reading a list of people who had made donations. That cannot be, and must not be, the future for the BBC. It should not have to use programme makers to go before the cameras and make cash appeals—holding out the begging bowl in front of a camera. That is what subscription television is all about. Conservative Members would do well to study closely the direction in which American television has gone. I cannot believe that anyone concerned with quality broadcasting wants British broadcasting to go the same way. Subscription funding of the BBC is a repellant notion and one that we steadily and firmly reject.

My right hon. and hon. Friends and I defend public service broadcasting not because we believe that there is an anti-Thatcher bias within the BBC—that is only the Prime Minister's paranoia feeding its way through the Right wing of her party. We defend public sector broadcasting because we recognise its inherent value. We believe implicitly in maintaining high technical and programming standards.

It is nonsense for the Government to talk at one point of deregulation, which we know will lead to a lowering of standards, and at the same time to establish the Broadcasting Standards Council in an attempt to preserve the very qualities that their policies are certain to erode. What sort of matters will concern the Broadcasting Standards Council? No doubt it will be outraged by the flash of a bum suddenly appearing on television. No doubt also Mrs. Whitelaw and the Prime Minister will go purple in the face and get very upset when they hear the "f" word used. But in this case, the "f" word is freedom—the freedom to criticise, the freedom to create, and the freedom to castigate.

That is why Conservative Members and the Prime Minister in particular do not like public service broadcasting. They dislike it because it dares to criticise the Government's policies in certain areas, and simply because it is within the public sector. The two combined stir up every base feeling that the Prime Minister has within her body, and which her Ministers are then expected to reflect in legislative proposals. Hence the ridiculous and damaging White Paper and the Bill that will no doubt follow it in the new Session.

One aspect of the White Paper that has received insufficient attention but which characterises the political ideology behind the proposals is the transmission systems in broadcasting. I should like to place on record my tribute to two former colleagues in the Broadcasting and Entertainment Trades Alliance—Mr. Brian Marsh and Mr. Doug Smith—who have been doing sterling work writing letters to newspapers and producing press releases pointing out the problems associated with the Government's proposal to privatise the BBC and IBA transmitters.

It appears from the proposals that we saw last November that the Government want to detach the transmitters from their respective parent organisations and put them into the private sector. They said originally that there should be competing transmission companies in different regions of the United Kingdom. That is privatisation for the sake of it. It makes as little sense to privatise the transmitters as it does to privatise water. It is undiluted ideology and has nothing to do with broadcasting standards or even good economic sense within the broadcasting system.

One has only to look at the figures. At present, the engineering system of transmission and transmitters reaches 99·4 per cent. of the British public with a reliability of 99·8 per cent. If the Government could get their

campaign to lower inflation correct to the tune of 99·8 per cent. or even 99·4 per cent., it would be a miracle. When we talk about privatising the transmitters, are we talking about trying to reach 100 per cent. of the population? Does any Conservative Member believe that that will be possible?

Mr. Gale: The hon. Gentleman was extremely courteous in informing me that he would not be able to be present for the early part of the debate and I imply no criticism when I say that he did not hear me refer to that subject. My impression is that the IBA engineers would welcome the opportunity to enter the private sector as long as it was done as an entity, and not in a piecemeal way. They would welcome the opportunity to involve themselves in the transmission of not only television but data and voice telephony.

Mr. Banks: I accept that point, together with the gentle tap on the wrist. I am not directing my comments to the hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) who is fairly progressive in this area. I am directing my comments to the Minister. The hon. Member for Thanet, North is correct, given the options facing engineers in the BBC and IBA. It is better to privatise as two lumps than to have the ludicrous idea of competing transmission companies in different parts of the country. That is what the Price Waterhouse report—I understand that the Minister has a copy—seems to suggest. Engineers within the BBC and IBA are choosing what they see as the least invidious of the proposals.

There would be no argument about using BBC and IBA transmitters for additional work with, for example, Cellnet and radio telephones or information technology generally. That can be done within the public sector now. It could be an extension of BBC enterprises. Therefore, Opposition Members have no ideological objection to the BBC or the IBA using their transmitters in combination with private interests. However, there is clear objection at the Dispatch Box to the concept of the transmitters staying within the public sector. That is why I take issue with the Minister, not the hon. Member for Thanet, North.

One can look at the coverage presently gained through the transmitters and realise how extensive and efficient it is. There is no earthly justifiable case for privatisation other than the Government's ideology. We are not arguing about efficiency or coverage, just ideology. Lord Thomson was chairman of the IBA when the White Paper was released. In his Robert Frazer lecture, he said:

> "Public broadcasting is a drab phrase, but in its essentials it has contributed crucially to the quality of life in Britain. What are these essentials? Two are particularly important. The first is universality of reception whether it takes one transmitter to cover ten million Londoners and six main transmitters and 150 relay stations to reach nearly three million Welsh. To achieve that universal reception you have to be ready for the London contractor to cross-subsidize the Welsh contractor, and in the White Paper's proposals for engineering it is not at all clear to what degree cross-subsidy will survive."

I should like the Minister to give more details, particularly of the Price Waterhouse report, which I know he has, and on the various points that I and Lord Thomson have made. It appears that, in the section of the White Paper dealing with transmitters, the Government declared first and thought subsequently. Price Waterhouse was commissioned to work out the best way to privatise.

From an authoritative leak by Raymond Snoddy in the *Financial Times* of 15 May, it appears that Price Waterhouse has advocated two options. The first is the creation of two national competing private sector transmitter companies based on a geographical split of the United Kingdom. At present, as the Minister knows, the BBC and IBA share the same hill sites, but maintain their own transmitters and have arrangements to co-operate in times of emergency. What could be better than that? I wait to hear what the Minister can propose. Price Waterhouse's first option would have high initial costs and involve considerable re-engineering of existing operations. What earthly justification can there be for implementing such a proposal?

Price Waterhouse's second proposal merely indicates the privatisation of BBC and IBA transmission systems in their existing form. The hon. Member for Thanet, North referred to this point. I can see no obvious benefit to viewers and listeners after privatisation, but I can see numerous obvious dangers. In large parts of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and in some remote parts of England, it would be wholly uneconomic for any private company to maintain the hundreds of remote transmitters that the BBC and IBA currently maintain for the public. Among many other ludicrous proposals, that proposal in the White Paper amounts to the lunatic end of privatisation.

New technology, as specified in the motion moved by the hon. Member for Thanet, North, offers wonderful opportunities for enhanced choice and access in broadcasting, but not in the hands of this Government, who cheapen and pollute everything that they touch. As my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) said, it will effectively be for the coming Labour Government to realise the full potential of broadcasting technology, not in the interests of those with the fattest wallets but in the interests of all people in this country.

12.52 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Tim Renton): This is a good moment to take stock of where we stand in the changes that we propose in the broadcasting world. Like other hon. Members who have spoken, I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) for using his good luck in the ballot—it does not come along very often—to give us the opportunity to take stock today. I was impressed by his perceptive remarks which mirrored his great experience in broadcasting. In addition, he has added a great deal to the deliberations of the Select Committee on Home Affairs, as its Chairman, my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) said.

It has been an extremely interesting debate. I am sorry that it has not been better attended, but there have been useful contributions. The hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) mentioned newspaper ownership and his fear, which I well understand coming from a Scottish hon. Member, that London and the south-east might have an excessively dominant position in the new broadcasting world.

My hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North referred to cross-ownership and made the real point that television is a United Kingdom subject and should be treated as such. My hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton

[Mr. Tim Renton]

(Mr. Tracey) referred to the BBC licence fee and to the need for training. My hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) also mentioned the licence fee and spoke movingly about elderly people's need for television and about the particular problems of some elderly people in his constituency. My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) touched on the question of local as opposed to regional television and referred to the needs of the deaf. I hope to cover many of those points in the remarks that I am about to make.

However, first I must advise the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) that he greatly lowered the tone of the debate. He appears to have come into the Chamber determined to have an argument about something. He gave us a speech that was blind, bitter and bigoted. I thought that he had a reputation as a Member with some vision, but I did not see any vision whatsoever in the diatribe that he delivered to the House. If his speech was written for him by his union, the Broadcasting and Entertainment Trades Alliance, I can only suggest that he tells it to employ a better speech writer——

Mr. Tony Banks: I wrote it entirely by myself.

Mr. Renton: Well, the hon. Gentleman should not take any credit for it. As for the suggestion that the BBC is stuffed with Tory party supporters, that is not the view of the top management of the BBC. What about the vice-chairman of the BBC, Lord Barnett—a Labour peer and an ex-Labour Treasury Minister? The hon. Gentleman seems to have come into the House with no vision, but simply in a hot sweat. That is why he took his coat off. I can assume only that he had a bad time with the poop-scoop and that he needed to get some of the bile out of his system. It was a great pity.

Before moving on, I should like to echo the tributes already paid to all the work that has been done on the subject of broadcasting by the Select Committee on Home Affairs. It has been extremely useful in the past months in that it has not only produced an extremely interesting paper on the broad subject of broadcasting and on how the broadcasting colleges should develop in the years ahead, but more recently has also produced a paper on the more particular subject of the ownership of Channel 4. Its contributions have added a great deal to the Government's thinking on those matters.

Since the White Paper was published in November, the technological revolution in broadcasting, advertised for such a long time, has finally arrived. The spring witnessed the launch of a number of new television services delivered from the medium-powered Astro satellite direct to receiving dishes in individual homes throughout Western Europe. By the end of this year, across the United Kingdom and France pictures will be received from the high-tech, high-powered DBS, launched and operated in the United Kingdom by British Satellite Broadcasting and in France by TDF 1.

It was the advent of the new satellite channels that persuaded Governments of other member states of the Council of Europe to follow the more liberal line that we had always wanted in the Council of Europe convention. At the Stockholm conference last autumn there was a strong appreciation of the need to get the convention agreed before the satellite channels multiplied over Europe, but there was also a general understanding that if those countries that had wanted a much more protectionist, inward-looking convention maintained their attitudes, a text was never likely to be finalised.

The United Kingdom has been in the lead all along in pressing not for a protectionist convention, but for a minimalist set of rules that would establish programme standards for all television services capable of being received across national borders. These rules require, for example, that programes shall not be indecent, contain pornography or give undue prominence to violence. But we always insisted that there should be a reasonable means of enforcing these rules. That point obviously worried my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh. I understand his anxiety on that point and we now think that there should be a phased process for enforcement to ensure that those minimal standards are agreed to, maintained and enforced. Obviously, it is over the years ahead that we shall have to see how effective these methods of enforcement will be. I share my hon. Friend's anxiety. We had it in mind in the finalisation of the convention.

We were finally able to reach agreement on the proposals and the convention opened for signature earlier this month. It has already been signed by 10 countries, including the United Kingdom. I thank my hon. Friends the Members for Thanet, North and for Westminster, North for their kind words about my part in reaching decisions on the convention. I add my thanks to the small but dedicated team of Home Office officials who weaved their way through a labyrinth of difficulties to reach an eventually successful conclusion.

Throughout the negotiations our main objective was to secure agreement on a convention that would work and was enforceable, without damaging the interests of British broadcasting. Some degree of compromise was necessary on our part and that of other countries, otherwise agreement would never have been possible. The outcome is satisfactory for our own broadcasting arrangements. A case in point is the provision on the insertion of advertising, about which there was a great deal of discussion. Some countries, for example the Federal Republic of Germany, favoured grouping advertisements between programmes, rather than inserting them in natural breaks, and wanted the convention to reflect that preference. We have secured provisions in the convention which will not require us to alter our present well-tried and tested arrangements in any significant degree.

We plan to implement the convention in United Kingdom law through the forthcoming broadcasting legislation. It will come into force internationally once seven states have ratified it, which we hope will be before the end of 1990.

Work on the convention has proceeded in parallel with consideration by the Community of a draft EC directive on broadcasting covering broadly the same ground. The European Council in Rhodes last December agreed that future work on the directive should be carried out on the basis of the principles of the convention. That was a great step forward. Since then, after extensive discussions, the Council of Ministers of the Community agreed a common position on the text of the directive on 13 April, very much in line with the text of the convention. Now that that common position has been adopted, the directive will be further considered by the European Parliament under the

co-operation procedure introduced by the Single European Act. I shall spend a little time on that, although the subject has not been raised in depth during our debate.

I am aware that the Select Committee on European Legislation recommended that a debate be held on the directive. I regret that, given the timing of the recommendation, it was not practicable to arrange a debate before the meeting of the Internal Market Council, at which the common position was adopted. I have written to the Chairman of the Select Committee to explain the Government's approach to this matter. We believe that the council's common position represents a satisfactory outcome. We have successfully resisted the arguments of some member states for protectionist measures which would have imposed greater restrictions on European broadcasters. We have instead achieved a substantially deregulatory text fully in line with that of the Council of Europe convention.

Before I leave the subject of trans-frontier broadcasting, I shall deal with the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North on the 500 million people waiting for pan-European television. I agree with him on the potential importance of trans-frontier, trans-European television. It was a reason why I was so keen to reach agreement on the convention. If any means of spreading information is to be the most likely instrument for rolling back the iron curtain and bringing western and eastern European countries together, it will be the satellite television channel, whose footprint knows no frontier. It is by satellite that we are receiving such extraordinary pictures of the Chinese students in Tiananmen square. Increasingly satellite signals will be picked up in Eastern bloc countries just as radio signals now are.

Astra and the Eutelstat series of satellites, and others to be launched over the next few years, will spread a western view of news and current affairs over the whole of Europe. In some measure they will take on the characteristic of a world service. The family in eastern Europe will increasingly be made aware not just of a western view on multi-lateral disarmament, but of the great difference in standards of living between Prague and Bonn and between Bucharest and Birmingham.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will they be seeing pictures of all our homeless people sleeping in the streets?

Mr. Renton: Yes, and they may even occasionally hear speeches from the hon. Member for Newham, North-West, in which case they too, may, wonder about the bitterness and lack of vision about which I complained earlier.

Two years ago, when I was in Moscow, I was told that the Russians were becoming adept at turning dustbin lids into satellite receiving dishes. That may become the fastest growing cottage industry in the eastern bloc.

Sir Alan Peacock who chaired the committee on the financing of the BBC, which produced the Peacock report in 1986, said in an article in *The Independent* last November:

"The White Paper is a challenging and well reasoned document. It is significant that . . . it has not so far been preceded by a sensible set of alternative proposals."

That statement holds good. I would add to it that six months later it has not been followed either by any sensible set of alternative proposals. The enabling framework and principles laid down by the White Paper have held good. We have been pleased to receive more than 3,000 responses to the White Paper, the vast majority from individual viewers and listeners, and from organisations such as The Voice of the Listener and the Consumers Association, which represent the views of ordinary average families. More than 500 letters have been forwarded by hon. Members and more land on my desk each day, where they make a pleasant and interesting contrast to the letters on immigration matters.

We attach a lot of weight to the consultation process. The White Paper says that we place the viewer and listener at the centre of broadcasting policy. We have therefore been anxious to hear and to consider what they have to tell us. Most people have welcomed the general thrust of our proposals, but there is an understandable concern, which I share, that the best features of our current arrangements should not be lost. In among 3,000 submissions, we have had an infinite amount of advice about specific details—on competitive tender, on training and on the precise prescriptions for programming, with suggestions that we should, for example, require in law so much religious programming a week or so many programmes devoted to the Third world or to social action or to children or to Gaelic or to the disadvantaged position of the deaf. That advice is to be welcomed and expected. In my judgment, the pillars of our White Paper remain intact while we analyse the mountain of responses to see whether the detail on cornice or pediment could be improved by a minor change. Such change, as many hon. Members will know, we have already made in relation to cable and MVDS.

Local delivery systems, whether based on cable or microwave, or a combination of the two, will also open up opportunities for locally originated programming, and for programmes aimed at clearly defined sectors of the population, for example the ethnic minorities.

I say to my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West that MVDS, perhaps allied with cable, could be especially suitable for the local programmes that he especially wants to see. As I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North, the passage in the White Paper in which we discussed the new framework for local services was couched in terms that made it clear that we had not yet reached a final view on all the details. We promised a further statement, which was made by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary in a written answer on 27 April. We then made clear that we had decided to maintain the main proposal for a new, flexible framework for local services, leaving operators free to decide upon the best mix of technologies to use. However, in the light of the comments put to us, we made some adjustment to the original proposals to meet particular points of difficulty. Especially, we have not insisted on the divorce between delivery and retailing of local services. We have also proposed a significant, though not total, liberalisation of satellite master antenna television systems—commonly known as SMATV. That should inject a measure of competition into the delivery of services at the local level. We have placed in the Library a note which details the modified proposals which we intend to recommend to the House.

At the moment, interest in cable is running at an unprecedented level. It is not, as the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) suggested, being expressed in a haphazard, unplanned manner. Whether that interest is related to the growth of direct to home broadcasting by satellite is unclear. I noted with interest that my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North talked

[Mr. Renton]

about the complementary development of cable and satellite systems. The other day I visited Croydon Cable with my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Malins) and the people who run that organisation clearly see their development as being complementary to the satellite systems.

Following a success in Stockholm, my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North suggested that I might take on the job of trying to sort out some of the current difficulties and disagreements between the satellite companies about channels and programmes. Yesterday those difficulties were described to me as Bambi having a fight with Godzilla. I am not certain whether I am ready to cast myself in the role of Mowgli, or that any ministerial Mowgli coming along to sort out those problems would be welcome. Commercial battles must be fought out but, obviously, they could be expensive. In the long run it is important that there is some clear agreement on the technical standards, particularly with the advent of high definition television in the 1990s.

Mr. Gale: The extension of my hon. Friend's argument is that unless there is some sort of agreement money will not only go into failed hardware systems that could otherwise be usefully used to make good programmes, which would be commercially expensive, but that we are likely to find ourselves with a plethora of different sized dishes on almost every roof in the country. Therefore, it does make sense to have one super-astra 80 channel satellite carrying the programmes, obviously on different transponders, of all the companies involved.

Mr. Renton: I am certain that the board and management of the two large companies involved will listen with great care to what my hon. Friend has said.

It is interesting to me that the Cable Authority has awarded 39 franchises and advertised a further 20 just at the moment when the new satellite channels are with us. Together those franchises will cover a total of 8·5 million homes. Cable systems currently pass 1·5 million homes, of which about one third have access to the new broadband cable networks, 280,000 people receive their television pictures through cable, and about 65,000 of those are broadband cable subscribers. Who would have forecast such promising figures this time last year? Those very encouraging developments serve as a further illustration of the potential for increased viewer choice.

Mr. Worthington: Some aspects of the cable authority's work are extremely puzzling. Recently in the greater Glasgow area there was an invitation to tender for the franchise. At the moment half of the city is served by Clyde Cable, which was the only tenderer. The cable authority, however, turned down its submission, but no explanation was given. I am utterly puzzled about the non-accountability of that authority.

Mr. Renton: The hon. Gentleman, together with representatives from the tenderer, might like to discuss that matter with the director-general of the cable authority. The decision about to whom cable franchises should be awarded strictly lies with that authority, and I am certain that the chairman or the director-general would like to explain to the hon. Gentleman the difficulties of that particular case.

The question of night hours has always interested my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North and he mentioned it in his interesting remarks today. As my hon. Friend will know, the Peacock report recommended that the BBC should lose both sets of night hours in order that they could be used to introduce more competition in broadcasting. In the White Paper, we accepted the case for removing one set of night hours to allow a new player onto the field, but, at the same time, we accepted that to remove both sets would hamper the BBC's plans for offering night time subscription services in a way that promised to enlarge viewer choice and to establish a firmer base for subscription technology.

We have, as my hon. Friend knows, approved the BBC's medical downloading service, which now has over 3,000 subscribers receiving the service, and arrangements are in hand to supply the necessary decoding equipment to 4,000 more. The BBC has now indicated its interest in developing further such services. I am pleased to tell the House that we have agreed, in principle, to the BBC introducing a similar downloading service for the business community, which will be a nightly, hour-long service of business and financial information, put together by Broadcast Communication plc. That approval is subject to our being satisfied that proper arrangements are devised to regulate the content of the advertising, which will be carried on the service to reduce the level of the subscription fee. Those medical and business services represent a promising start on which we hope that the BBC will continue to build to develop the market for subscription services generally.

We are, in the meantime, giving serious consideration to the arguments that the BBC, my hon. Friend and others have put to us for allowing the corporation to retain both sets of night hours. However, the Government share the view of the Peacock committee that there are strong arguments for using that part of the broadcasting clock as a means of introducing new competition into the scarce UHF frequencies.

Mr. Gale: Before finally going down that road, will my hon. Friend consider that if the subscription services are being developed well now—which is encouraging, and the news he brings us today is especially encouraging—the BBC will need the other night hour channel if it is to provide public service in, for example, election coverage —a matter of small consequence to this House—when events taking place late at night require air time for their broadcast.

Mr. Renton: I understand that point, which is at the heart of the BBC's case about why it should be allowed to retain both sets of night hours, and I can understand that it is anxious to get on with the process of introducing more subscription services to convince us of the force of its arguments.

Media ownership has been a matter of great concern to the House ever since the White Paper on broadcasting was published in November. It has been raised today by my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North, my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North and the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie. The White Paper made clear our determination that ownership in the independent broadcasting sector should remain widely spread, and that unhealthy concentrations of ownership and excessive cross-media ownership would be prevented.

The White Paper set out general principles on which new ownership rules might be based and we have considered carefully the many comments we have received on the subject.

In a written answer this morning, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has announced our detailed proposals for ensuring effective ownership controls. The House will want to study my right hon. Friend's announcement in detail. However, I should like to draw particular attention to these main points. The essence of the Government's approach is that the Independent Television Commission and the Radio Authority should not be given discretionary powers for dealing with ownership questions. Instead, there should be clear rules, which they will be given the power to police and enforce effectively.

Among those rules will be the following. First, no company or group will be allowed to hold two large or contiguous regional Channel 3 franchises, and powers will be taken to introduce further restrictions, if necessary, by reference to audience share. There will be a clear definition of what is meant by a "large" franchise.

Mr. Holt: How big is large? We have a relatively small one in my region and we would not want to lose it.

Mr. Renton: That will eventually be decided by Ministers; it may be included in a statutory instrument, and we shall be ready to listen to representations about how large "large" is.

Secondly, national newspaper proprietors will be debarred from holding more than 20 per cent. of any DBS, UHF TV or national radio franchise; and national newspaper proprietors will be prevented from having a signficant financial interest in more than one such franchise. These limits will also apply reciprocally to the holders of such franchises investing in groups controlling national newspapers.

Thirdly, no operator of a non-DBS satellite service receivable in the United Kingdom will be permitted to have more than a 20 per cent. interest in a DBS, UHF TV or national radio licence and cross-interests exceeding 20 per cent. between DBS, UHF TV and national radio licensees will not be permitted.

Fourthly, advertising agencies will be precluded from holding commercial television or radio licences, as will local authorities and bodies whose objectives are wholly or mainly of a political nature.

Finally, we intend to abolish the rule which has hitherto precluded non-EC ownership of local delivery operators; no other ITC or Radio Authority licences will, however, be able to be held or controlled by a non-EC company or individual.

Mr. Tony Banks: The Minister is making an important annoucement. As I understand it, it has been released in the form of a written reply by the Home Secretary. Is it now available in the Library? If so, would it not have been more appropriate for the Home Secretary to release the answer in a statement to the House during prime time?

Mr. Renton: The hon. Gentleman has an extraordinary ability to carp when the Government have gone out of their way to try to be helpful. We heard only a few days ago that my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North had won this debate on broadcasting and we worked with great speed to prepare the details so that the question could be asked yesterday and answered this morning, and so that I could make this speech today. Just for once, the hon. Gentleman should get rid of some of his bile and be thankful to this co-operative Government for bringing forward these proposals for discussion in the House—*[Interruption.]* I suggest the hon. Gentleman goes back to the poop-scoop if that is all that he can think about.

These rules, which build on the broad principles set out in the White Paper, should ensure that ownership in the independent sector remains widely spread. This will help to keep the market open for new entrants, and should be a shield against editorial uniformity or domination by a few groups.

Mr. Wheeler: Most hon. Members here today would agree that we have had an extremely informative and constructive debate, in which most of us have taken part and in which we have discussed in detail the vital issue of ownership. My hon. Friend the Minister has, in this debate, and in the written answer that he has made available, answered the concern that many of us felt about this matter. It is a cause of great regret that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), who has just bounced into the Chamber, should approach the subject in this way.

Mr. Tony Banks: Have a care.

Mr. Renton: I wholeheartedly agree with my hon. Friend. My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North asked me whether a national newspaper would be able to own a substantial position in more than one television franchise, and the answer is no. The statement says:

"We ... see a strong case for debarring national newspaper proprietors from having a significant financial interest"

—ie 20 per cent.—

"in more than one such franchise."

Mr. Worthington: This is a complicated statement, as it inevitably must be in a matter such as this, and I shall want to study it long and hard. I understood the Minister to say that a newspaper owner would not be allowed to own more than 20 per cent. of any terrestrial channel. However, that leaves out the fact that, increasingly, channels will be satellite as well as terrestrial. If I have understood the Minister correctly, would it not be better to bar those who control satellite channels from any kind of influence on terrestrial channels?

Mr. Renton: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's slight difficulty in fully following a detailed elaboration of the question answered by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. No operator of a non-DBS satellite service receivable in the United Kingdom will be permitted to have more than a 20 per cent. interest in a DBS, UHF television or national radio licence.

No Government can stop British newspaper proprietors buying into overseas transmitters that have been linked to non-DBS services that are not controlled by this country. If a national newspaper proprietor in Britain has a more than 20 per cent. interest in such a non-DBS satellite service receivable in the United Kingdom, it follows from what I have said that he would not be able to acquire a 20 per cent. interest in the United Kingdom licence. That is the connecting route.

Mr. Corbett: The point that my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) sought to make was on, as the Minister has acknowledged, an

[Mr. Corbett]

extremely important matter. While the House is grateful to the Minister for using the oppportunity of the debate to make the statement, it would have been of greater assistance if we could have had the written statement at some stage during the debate. That was the point that my hon. Friend was trying to make.

Mr. Renton: It was not my impression that that was the only point that he was trying to make. The question was tabled yesterday and answered at 11 o'clock, which is the normal time for answering questions on a Friday.

I was asked whether, under the new ownership rules, a local paper will be able to own a local community radio. I think that it was my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh who asked that question. No regional or local paper will be allowed to have more than a 20 per cent. interest in any regional or local ITC or radio authority licence with whose area it overlaps, and vice versa. There will be no restriction on out-of-area ownership by papers of local radio stations. For example, if a local newspaper wishes to develop its expertise in local news gathering by becoming interested in local radio stations in areas that are not contiguous with the area of the paper, it will not be barred from doing that. That is in line with the principles announced today by my right hon. Friend.

I shall now turn to the issue of quality. The clear restrictions on excessive concentration of ownership or of cross-media ownership that we have announced today, will be welcomed by all those who want to see diversity in our broadcasting system. They certainly show our determination to be serious in deed as well as in intent on the question of choice.

I say clearly to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington that the question of quality has always been at the heart of our thinking. We want to see quality not just on Channel 4 but on BBC and Channel 3 as well. The main strands of our thinking about Channel 3 are well known. There are requirements for news and current affairs, for a diverse programme service, and for authentic voices from all the United Kingdom regions so that there will be programmes not just of regional interest, but programmes produced in the regions as well.

We are determined that quality will still be the hallmark of much of British television in the 1990s, preferably more so than now. But quality, of course, means different things to different people. To some the quality of the series of programmes on the gnostic gospels produced by one of the smallest of the ITV companies, Border TV, was extraordinary. To others such programmes would be boring and to them quality might mean an ability to choose between four different films or four different American soap operas. Perceptions of quality are subjective and it is humbug to pretend otherwise.

I was struck by an article in the bulletin of the Independent Programme Producers Association of spring 1989, which reads in part as follows:

"A lot of people in Britain do choose to watch programmes that do not attract mass-majority audiences. It would be a diminishing of choice to eliminate such programmes, or to make it costly to view them, or to substantially reduce their number, frequency, range, diversity, appearance in reasonable viewing hours, funding and so on. The logic of choice as a political ideal is to ensure the healthy survival of those TV organisations and companies which do provide nationally, at low cost to the individual viewer or family, just such programmes."

Those are sentiments with which I have much sympathy.

Our commitment is that more choice and better quality shall go hand in hand with greater competition. Thus, we are committed to maintaining the remit on Channel 4, including the commitment to innovation and experiment, and we fully understand the case for not putting that remit at risk while encouraging a greater freedom and independence in Channel 4 by requiring it to sell its own advertising. Together, those commitments to the remit and to the growing amount of orginal drama and other work from the independent producers—the companies that are not controlled either by the BBC or by ITV companies—mean that we are clearly committed to a concept of diversity and variety that goes beyond the status quo of today, and that certainly does not confuse choice with a simple proliferation of more of the most popular types of programming.

In this context, the BBC is, I am sure, planning its strategy for the 1990s. Apart from the nudge towards subscription, encouraged by the announcement that I made a few minutes ago, and the proposal for the removal of one set of its night hours, the White Paper does not aim to set out an enabling framework for the BBC in the 1990s as it does for the whole of the commercial broadcasting sector.

My hon. Friends the Members for Surbiton and for Langbaurgh asked about the future financing of the BBC. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has said that the licence fee cannot be regarded as immortal, and that is a matter that should be considered for both television and radio, but not now. It will be considered early in the 1990s, when the charter comes up for review.

In paragraph 3.2 of the White Paper, we agree with the Select Committee on Home Affairs that the BBC

"is still and will remain for the foreseeable future the cornerstone of British broadcasting".

However, we have said that this does not mean that the BBC has to involve itself in every aspect of broadcasting or that it should be insulated from change. I hope that those sentiments will be echoed by the BBC management, by the BETA, and by the work force, and that they pick up the comments made earlier today by my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West.

I note that in a talk recently given to the BBC's board of governors and board of management conference at the end of April, Dr. Veljanovski said:

"The BBC must define the distinctive parts of its product. This will be a matter for conscious choice by management in the light of the competition. But the definition of the BBC's output cannot be solely a reaction to competitive threats. It must cast itself in the role of the quality broadcaster—the IBM of broadcasting."

Interesting and provocative words, I thought.

I said earlier that the 3,000 submissions that we have received in answer to the White Paper were generally interesting and full of ideas. However, the exception that proves the rule is the Labour party's submission, which is deeply negative and depressing. All it appears to offer is the need for more regulation and a pessimistic fear of the future. I have read it three times and I know that its simple message is, "Stop the satellite, we want to get off." There is no policy, no vision, not even any speculation.

As to quality and negotiations for the new franchise, the kindest thing to say is that the shadow Minister who wrote that submission had not read the White Paper. The shadow Minister who wrote the paragraphs on broadcasting in the Labour policy review published

yesterday did something different. Rather than not reading the White Paper, he has lifted paragraphs from it. Paragraphs 108 and 109 of the Labour policy review are all about the reward of franchises. After substantial assurances about the range, content and quality of the programmes offered, they use what those who have served on the Select Committee on Home Affairs will recognise as the precise words of paragraph 6.17 and 6.19 of the White Paper. I am, therefore, somewhat puzzled about which shadow Minister is responsible for the media. When we debated the Right of Reply Bill, the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) said that a future Labour Government would establish a Ministry to deal with the arts and the media; that there would be a media Minister. We have heard nothing about that since then, including in today's debate. Is the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington or the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central in charge? Perhaps there is someone in charge called the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Erdington.

The whole vision of the Labour party consists of two inquiries, one into the financing of the BBC and the other into the availability of advertising to finance the extra broadcasting services. It is no wonder that the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) prefers his slot on the Sky news channel.

The Government's policy is one of choice, quality and vision in a difficult, fast-moving world in which a whole series of decisions inter-react. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North for initiating a debate that has enabled us to consider some of the challenges ahead.

1.36 pm

Mr. Gale: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank the 11 hon. Members on both sides of the House who have taken part in the debate and have brought to bear the weight of a considerable amount of professional expertise on a subject that is of increasing importance to everyone in the United Kingdom. I especially thank my hon. Friend the Minister and his team of officials, who were given notice of the motion only on Wednesday and who have worked hard to provide the answers to the points raised today. I, at least, appreciate that.

My hon. Friends the Members for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) and for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) are anxious to begin the debate on the Territorial Army and so, without further ado, I conclude this debate.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House welcomes the communications opportunities offered by technological developments in terrestrial and satellite broadcasting and cable distribution systems; urges Her Majesty's Government, when creating a legislative framework for the future of radio and television broadcasting and interactive services, to pay particular attention to the need to continue to stimulate quality programming and maintain diversity of ownership and choice; and further calls on Her Majesty's Government to establish a coherent policy for the promotion of United Kingdom and pan-European satellite services.

The Territorial Army and Reserve Forces

1.37 pm

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): I beg to move,

That this House, in view of the demographic downturn in the number of people eligible for military service, recognises the growing importance of the Territorial Army and reserve forces as an important back up to the Regular Armed Forces of the Crown; and calls upon employers in the public and private sectors to make it possible for their employees to volunteer their services to meet the defence needs of the nation by providing the time for them to fulfil this important patriotic public duty, recognising that the training and service experience can be beneficial to both employees and employers.

I wish to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Territorial Army and to the reserve forces of the Royal Navy. I am sure that I express the opinion of hon. Members on both sides of the House in saying that we have the deepest respect and admiration for the quality of those services. I am glad to see my hon. Friend the Minister in his place.

None of us should be in any doubt about the important role of the reserve forces. The defence White Paper, published only a few weeks ago, shows how the nation's defence depends upon a steady flow of volunteers to reinforce our regular armed Forces. The White Paper emphasises—this is a digest of some of the highlights of the role of the reserve forces—that they are an integral part of the forces that would be called upon in times of emergency, not a follow-up force separate from the regular services. The Royal Naval Reserve provides much of the Navy's wartime mine counter-measure forces, personnel for naval control and reinforcement and resupply shipping, medical and dental teams. The auxiliary service would help to defend British ports and anchorages, and reference is made to the Royal Marines Reserve that would enhance 3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines in defending NATO's northern flank in north Norway.

The Territorial Army includes reinforcements from ex-Regular service men. It is planned to provide 58,000 men in formed units as an integral part—and this is the important aspect—of the reinforcement of BAOR. In addition, 29,000 TA soldiers, including the Home Service Force, and 45,000 ex-Regulars would have home defence roles guarding installations, undertaking reconnaissance and providing communications. I should also mention the role of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force which would provide personnel to augment operations, intelligence and communications staff in maritime headquarters units. The Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve would reinforce regular units in intelligence, photographic interpretation, interrogation and public relations duties.

I could continue, but I believe that I have said enough to emphasise the fact that the TA is an integral part of our forces and that the reserve forces are absolutely vital to the defence of the nation. The TA plays a most effective part, when necessary, of the North Atlantic Alliance.

My description of TA duties also underlines how necessary it is for us to have sufficient volunteers if we are to fulfil our defence commitments. In addition, the duties which the TA is expected to perform show how essential it is to have people of the right calibre who can achieve high professional standards. It also shows how lucky we are to have people in this country who are dedicated to achieving those standards.

[Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith]

I recall standing by General Rogers, the retired United States commander of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, after he had witnessed an exercise in western Europe during which a parachute landing had taken place in what he believed were extremely hazardous circumstances. He was staggered to be told that the drop had been performed by Territorial Army parachute units. General Rogers told us that he was impressed by the TA's skill and added rather wistfully, "I wish we had more of them."

Hon. Members will be aware that as chairman of the Defence and Security Committee of the North Atlantic Assembly, I see and hear a lot about the forces of our NATO allies. Without exception, General Rogers' view would be reinforced by our allies. A number of my colleagues in the North Atlantic Assembly have told me how impressed they are by the high state of efficiency of both our Regular and reserve forces.

However, my colleagues sometimes develop a point made by General Rogers. They point out that they have conscription which calls for sacrifices from their young men. They expect us, the only nation in the Alliance apart from the United States to rely exclusively on an all-volunteer force, to make up in quality what we lack in numbers. Therefore, I have included the issue of numbers in my motion and I want to consider it in this short debate.

If the numbers are allowed to drop and we fail to reach our goals as declared in the defence White Paper, our allies will question our reliance on the voluntary principle. Below a certain threshold, as we know from many a gallant fight in British military history, quality alone cannot always make up for the lack of numbers.

Last autumn, the Government to their credit embarked on a recruiting campaign. I am aware of the personal interest shown by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces in that campaign which was intended to attract young men and women into our reserve forces. It was helped by the National Employers Liaison Committee under what I am told is the admirable and inspiring leadership of Mr. Tony MacPherson.

I look forward to my hon. Friend the Minister telling us about the details of that campaign and its progress. Without in any way diminishing the Government's initiative, because I know that they are committed to strengthening the reserve forces, I want to dwell on the two problems which stand in the way of success.

The first problem relates to the decline in the number of young people of eligible military age. The second problem is the possibility of a change in the perception among our people of our future defence needs in the light of the current arms control talks and the thawing of relations between the western democracies, the Soviet Union and the Warsaw pact and particularly the perception of the young men and women upon whose talents and spirit of patriotism we wish to draw in the 1990s.

With regard to the first of those problems, I am not convinced that we appreciate sufficiently the full impact of the downturn in the number of young people in our society. The problem is not simply a question of numbers. It is a question also of increasing the demand for young people having initiative, the necessary skills and the required educational standards. They are the same people who increasingly are in demand by the reserve forces—and happen to be the same people whose services are increasingly sought also by modern industry and commerce.

The people we require as reserve force volunteers will be able to pick and choose more than any previous generation what they want to do. There is certainly no lack of suitors. Those people would be less than human if they did not exploit that situation to some extent, to their financial advantage. Market forces are respected by the Government, and so they must appreciate that market forces prevail in this sector as in others.

The Government cannot rely on financial measures alone to attract young people to the reserve forces, for they are basically asking our young people to recognise that there is satisfaction in serving one's country voluntarily. However, I suspect that patriotism will not of itself be enough, because that emotion is not easy to arouse in peacetime. The people to whom we appeal belong to a generation that is less diffident than its predecessors, less afraid of authority, less tolerant of bureaucratic folly, and less patient of delays in rectifying inefficiency. If we do not put the welcome mat on the floor and pave the way for them to get stuck into what it is we expect them to do, they will be off. That may be one reason why the wastage rate is still too high in our reserve forces. I am not advocating that we pander to their every whim and mollycoddle them. I am saying that if we want to attract suitable young people, we must give them a fair deal and one that eliminates the unnecessary pin-pricks that niggle so and eventually turn people off. The best firms in industry know that to be true, as do the best regiments and the best units of Her Majesty's forces. It especially holds good for the volunteer in the reserve forces, who can be off like a shot because, in most cases, he will have a job to go to.

It is with those points in mind that I turn to a list of irritants or grouses. Some may not have as much substance as others. I emphasise that the list is not one to which I subscribe in every detail, but it is culled from many different sources. I am mindful that even if every irritant on the list is overcome, nothing is so attractive and calculated to give satisfaction than to be a member of a reserve force that offers interesting and challenging training using up-to-date equipment, rather than one featuring too many return visits to that bleak place in England known as Salisbury plain.

Would not the Royal Auxiliary Air Force give its eye-teeth for at least a few workhorse aircraft—such as those produced by Short Bros for the United States national guard—rather than none at all? My hon. Friends the Members for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) and for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne), who until recently was a commanding officer in the Territorial Army, have much more practical experience of training matters than I do, for my experience came to an end in 1947 after a few years' war service—so I am regarded by my hon. Friends as an old veteran.

I begin my list with the mundane subject of pay. The present recruiting campaign attempts to attract recruits to the reserve forces while at the same time emphasising their importance in time of war. The reserve forces are being told that together with the Regulars they made up one force; they are all in it together as professionals and part-time professionals. Surely, some consideration should be given to parity or near parity in pay rates. At present, all ranks in the reservists are paid the minimum scale for the rank they serve and never go higher. That cannot be

reconciled by serving members with the overall message of one force or, in the case of the TA, one Army. I know that the reservists fully understand that the X factor which applies to the regular forces could not apply to them. There is a cost in that suggestion and it would be interesting to know how big it would be.

The universities used to be a valuable source of recruitment. With the growing technical demands of the reserve forces we need to tap their resources. Will my hon. Friend the Minister reassure the House that every effort will be made to do so?

The Government are considering plans to attract more women into the regular forces. They have recently published an imaginative document. I have a suggestion for attracting women to the Territorial Army. In certain types of unit—I am excluding those which perform hazardous duties in forward areas—we should tell young women that if they want to be promoted after volunteering, they will be considered on the same basis as the men.

A person on unemployment benefit loses his benefit when he trains on a Saturday or attends a 15-day camp. If one is a lifeboat man or a part-time fireman, one is not subject to the earnings rule if one attends a 15-day camp. Also, I understand that the travelling and training allowance is now included as income. It was previously excluded.

On the meals allowance, a company may have its platoon scattered in different places, perhaps 10 or more miles apart. When the platoons get together for company training, one platoon may fall within the radius to qualify for the free meal but the other platoon may not. That must be irritating.

Could the tax free bounty be increased to a minimum of £1,000 per annum after a four-year term of service with the armed forces? Would that not help overcome wastage problems among more experienced personnel? It is suggested that a better pension scheme might also help to reduce the ravages of wastage, especially among the more experienced personnel. Why not make pensions payable after 15 years in the TA reserve forces comparable with the Regular Army on a pro rata basis?

I know that there is a campaign to encourage companies to release men to serve in the reservists. What consideration has been given to providing some modest financial compensation to companies, especially small companies, as an incentive to release an employee for training?

My hon. Friend the Minister will be glad to know that that concludes the inadequate shopping list. I could go on, but it might become a little bizarre. I recognise that the proposals are not of equal merit and I want my hon. Friend to understand that I do not necessarily endorse them. However, some of them are worthy of serious consideration. They may raise fresh problems, but it would be interesting—if not today, then at some future time—to have some communication from my hon. Friend the Minister as to the Government's view.

The price may be too high, given the present position of the defence budget, but the turnover of the reserve forces is also too high. We lose 30 per cent. in wastage rates in a reserve force intended to provide 40 per cent. of our total forces. Compared with our NATO allies, our overall reserve strength is not good enough. We cannot take risks. However, if we can get reductions in weapons as a result of the arms control talks, I have no doubt that the Ministry of Defence will have an opportunity to switch its resources to paying more for its manpower.

I should like to leave my hon. Friend the Minister with two thoughts that suggest that expenditure on the reserves is very good value for money. I said that 40 per cent. of our total forces are supplied by the reserve forces. That cost will be just over 5 per cent. of the defence budget. Their training is cost-effective. In answer to a question about

"the current cost of a Regular Army soldier and of a Territorial Army soldier"

the Minister of State for the Armed Forces said:

"The estimated annual cost at 1987-88 prices of a Regular soldier is £14,100, and of a Territorial Army soldier £2,500." —[*Official Report*, 12 April 1989; Vol. 150, c. *611*.]

The second problem, which I mentioned at the beginning of my speech, is the attitude to this generation of recruits to defence in the context of detente. It is a vast subject, but I assure my hon. Friend that I will deal with it expeditiously. As we secure further reductions in nuclear weapons and conventional arms, it will be only to easy for people to assume that the danger of war is over and that we can relax and turn our swords into ploughshares. Such a euphoric reaction ignores all the lessons of history, and certainly those of recent history. However, the Government and the Ministry of Defence in particular will face a serious challenge. They will have to explain again and again why defence forces are required not so much to wage war or to prevent one but to restrain those who misguidedly attempt to believe that they can gain by force rather than by negotiation. There are still quite a number of rather wicked, acquisitive people in the world.

In countries in which national service is obligatory, it is possible for successive generations to share in the experience of serving in the defence of their country. Through such service, the link between society and the military is maintained. If we want to avoid conscription, it is important to keep that link through our system of reserve forces based on voluntary principle. As we strive for and, I hope, achieve security at a lower level of expenditure, the continued presence of the TA reserve forces will remind successive generations that we do not take peace for granted and are willing to pay the price for it. After all, military security is the precondition of peace.

1.57 pm

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) on choosing this subject and on the way in which he has presented the debate. He has done an extremely valuable and comprehensive job. As time is limited and as four speeches may have to be made in half an hour, I shall keep my remarks short.

I wholeheartedly agree with my hon. Friend that it is important that the TA is given every encouragement. To a large extent, other NATO countries have national service. Therefore, a substantial number of their young people are trained, whereas ours are not. It is much more important that our youth get such an opportunity through volunteering for and serving in the reserve forces. We must give special encouragement. As my hon. Friend said, the bounty should quickly rise to a figure in excess of £1,000 a year. That is a sensible suggestion. It needs to be of that order not simply to satisfy the members of the reserve forces, but to encourage their wives to want them to continue with their service once they are married and while

[Mr. Neil Thorne]

they are raising a family. Unless some positive benefit to the family can be seen from the husband's involvement in the reserve forces, we cannot expect people to continue to give that service.

In the same regard, the Territorial Army must give a special welcome to the women folk, not only to those who serve with the reserves, but to the wives of members. I have believed for a long time that the other ranks and sergeants' mess are crucial to a successful TA unit. Both should be the best clubs in any neighbourhood. The Ministry of Defence must give every encouragement to that because if the wives and girl-friends want to spend their weekends and evenings at a TA drill hall, in the other ranks' club, the sergeants' mess or in other mess facilities, that will provide the framework on which a successful reserve force can be built.

There should be much greater choice of commitment to the Territorial Army. The Royal Navy has a much wider breadth of commitment. One can undertake different degrees of involvement. The same choice is not available in the Army because we try to ensure that the Territorial soldier is almost as good as, and in some cases better than, the regular soldier, which has meant that the training is extremely arduous. Once people have been initially trained there should be the opportunity to undertake a lesser commitment. I am well aware of the existence of the Home Service force and the valuable role that it plays, but we should give other opportunities to people to continue to serve in the reserves instead of making them leave the reserves because they feel that the commitment is too great.

It is interesting that we shall shortly have a statement on the future of the Gurkhas, who serve for an average of 15 years, which means that training is a less arduous problem. The average in the Territorial Army is much lower as I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will mention. I believe that the average is probably three years, which means that a substantial proportion of the time spent in the TA is spent in basic training, which is a distinct disadvantage.

We should also consider the age limits. My hon. Friend the Member for Wealden has already mentioned the demographic trough and the problem that it will create. We must consider whether the age limits are realistic in this day and age and whether we should revise them, especially for those in non-combatant units who could continue an extremely worthwhile career in the reserves.

My hon. Friend also referred to the commitment of business and the need to encouraging employers to release their staff for service in the reserves. We must address two issues. The first is the importance of the university officers training corps, which do three things. They help to train regular service officers; they help to train people who will take up reserve commissions, and the third and a most important category of their role, which is frequently forgotten, is that they show what service life is about and its importance and benefit to the security of the nation. They show people who are unlikely to have the time to serve in the forces either as regulars or reserves what service life is about. In my experience, employers who have released their staff have been much more than appreciative of the type of training that their staff can get by serving in the reserve army. That must be given positive encouragement. We should seek to expand our university officers training corps wherever possible and give them every encouragement.

More practically, we should reimburse employers for their commitment and we should certainly consider paying national insurance contributions while their staff are at camp. We should also consider other ways in which we could show our appreciation for the sacrifices that firms, often small ones, make for the benefit of our reserve forces.

I have a personal interest in the future of the 39 Signals regiment which at present has its headquarters and drill hall in Selsdon road, Wanstead, which is affected by a Department of Transport road-widening scheme. It has been standing in the middle of dereliction and demolition for many years because the two Departments could not agree now much compensation was to be paid or when that could be settled. At long last, agreement was reached that the building should be rebuilt in Gordon road in my constituency. Clearly, long periods of uncertainty are not helpful to the recruitment of service personnel because they do not know where they will serve.

I have experience of that. I served in a drill hall due to be demolished and replaced by a shopping centre. For about eight years virtually no work was done on the drill hall because it was to be pulled down and a new one built elsewhere. We spent many hours debating what the new drill hall was to contain and how it would be designed only to find that the bottom fell out of the property market and the development did not take place. We had to stay in the drill hall that we had. Consequently, we submitted an enormous list of work that had to be done, such as keeping the rain out but we were told that money was short and we had to take our turn. That shows what can happen and how buildings can be run down. I urge the Ministry of Defence to ensure that such circumstances do not arise and to urge other Departments to come to conclusions much more quickly so that we can all get on and build what is required.

The future of the reserves, particularly the Territorial Army, is bright. Indeed, it must be bright because without it we shall not be properly and adequately defended.

2.7 pm

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): I congratulate my hon. Friends the Members for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) and for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) on their excellent speeches. I shall talk principally about the Territorial Army although I shall make some brief comments about the regular reserves. I served for 10 years as an officer in the Territorial Army and I am privileged to have just been accepted into the home service force unit sponsored by the Tenth Volunteer Battalion, the Parachute Regiment.

I agree with most of what my two hon. Friends have said. At the heart of keeping people in the TA is developing spirit in a unit. I disagree with my hon. Friends only in that I do not think that pay has much to do with that in the case of the TA, unlike the regular Army where pay and conditions are absolutely critical. There is a serious problem of turnover in the TA. Many good units are fulfilling their vital role and all of the units have a vital role. The problem of turnover must be tackled by developing unit spirit rather than just increasing pay

scales. I should like to see an evaluation of the impact of the recent increase in bounties on the effect of turnover before we consider putting extra funds into pay.

The three keys to developing spirit in a territorial unit are group leadership, interesting training and the social factors to which my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South referred. Many units face desperate leadership problems because of employment pressures on young officers and junior non-commissioned officers to leave just when they are becoming valuable to the TA. Their family gets squeezed between their two careers.

The employers' initiative taken by the Government is extremely important, both in general terms and in some of its specific more public offshoots, such as Exercise Executive Stretch, which I believe took place two or three weeks ago to give employers a direct opportunity to see what TA units were about. The leadership side is not just direct liaison with business, but it is also about making the young officer see that he has career development within the TA, which will also make him more useful outside.

An important step was the new extended Sandhurst course, so that people coming into the TA can become officers very much more quickly if they commit themselves to a longer period at Sandhurst. However, that is only a first step. The TA should adopt for its officers and junior NCOs the kind of modular approach that business schools are developing for part-time students, who are following full-time careers at the same time, so that an officer in his 10 or 15 years service in the TA can acquire modules that build towards the position where he becomes a good company commander and can point to those modules to show how he has developed his own skills and abilities. He can point those out to his employer, too, so that his employer can see how he is developing. His employer can be encouraged to visit the courses. In that way we would not only have better officers but we would enable the TA officer to see that he is becoming more valuable to his employer as well as to his unit. That would keep the good people in the TA and would mean that the standard of leadership right across the TA would be more uniform, matching what already exists in the best units.

The other aspect of leadership is the interface with the Regular Army. It would be helpful if more of the regular commanding officers coming in had had experience in the TA, either as adjutant or as training major, or, if a good officer had been selected for command who had not done either of those jobs, he could have a few months attachment to another TA unit before he took up his command. That would, perhaps, ease some of the problems that occur in the TA when a commanding officer comes in from the outside with clear objectives—because objectives are the same in the TA as in the Regular Army—but without quite as clear an idea of how to achieve them. The TA is a different environment from the Regular Army. The best commanding officer that I was ever privileged to serve with was a regular officer who had been first an adjutant, then a training major and finally a commanding officer. He was able to bring all that experience of the TA to his unit as well as his regular career.

It would also be thoroughly healthy for the long-term planning of the TA for the post of TA brigadier—the most senior officer—to be moved from UKLF Salisbury into the Ministry of Defence. That man would become a true deputy to the major general responsible for reserve forces and would have immediate access and the automatic right to see all the major papers that cross that major-general's desk, especially bearing in mind that the filler of that post may have had no TA experience at all.

I should just touch on two aspects of the issue of the regular reserves. The home service force, which I have just been privileged to join, offers a new lease of life for the regular reserves. The home service force has an exceptionally low cost. It involves just 10 training days a year and needs little equipment. The more of our regular reservists who can be encouraged to join it, the more people we will have doing just a little training and keeping themselves current, at a negligible cost to the regular army. A big expansion of the home service force from the present ceiling of 4,500 to, perhaps, 20,000 or 30,000, or even more, could be achieved at negligible cost.

I would ask my hon. Friend for his assurance that his colleagues on the procurement side will take account of regular reserve factors in evaluating equipment. I shall mention one piece of equipment as an example, which has nothing to do with my constituency or my unit. I have no vested interest in it. On the question of the appraisal of the new B vehicle for the army, there are several different vehicles there, one of which is Bedford. I hope that when we are looking at a vehicle, even as simple as that, we will do what the Russians always do. We must ask to what extent the controls and the parts inside for which maintenance people are responsible are similar to the generation that they are replacing. Those people we bring back from the regular reserves who have served in earlier generations of the Army will then be able quickly to become acquainted with the vehicle.

I believe that it is still true today that Soviet tank commanders in reserve forces—the Soviets have a few people in their early 60s in those forces who fought in the war, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden—would be able to get into a first-class modern Soviet tank and still be acquainted with most of the controls. All our procurement decisions should consider the regular reserves and whether the people who came out of the Army 10 or 15 years ago would still understand the controls of different, new equipment.

I shall conclude as I am looking forward to my hon. Friend the Minister's reply. This is a very important subject and I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden on bringing it before the public.

2.15 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Michael Neubert): I greatly welcome the opportunity presented by the motion to draw attention to the importance of the reserve forces in the defence of the nation. It is a mark of the commitment of my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) to defence policy and the needs of the nation that, following his good fortune in the ballot, he has chosen to bring this subject before the House. As a former Under-Secretary of State for the Army, he has a special authority on the subject. In that capacity, he referred in particular, to the Territorial Army.

In terms of numbers it is, of course, by far the most significant of the volunteer reserve forces and, if I may, I will follow my hon. Friend's lead and concentrate my remarks on the Army reserves. A number of the points I shall make apply, however, as much to the reserves of the Royal Navy, the Royal Marines and the Royal Air Force

[Mr. Michael Neubert]

as they do to the TA. Indeed, the Royal Naval Reserve, the Royal Marines Reserve, the Royal Auxiliary Air Force and the RAF Volunteer Reserve play an equally vital role in defence of the nation, and my concentration on the TA today should not be seen as detracting in any way from that.

As my hon. Friends have acknowledged, the Government have consistently given the fullest support to the volunteer reserve forces, and the past decade has seen their strength increase from 73,500 to 90,600. Over this period, the TA has increased by some 25 per cent., involving a major expansion programme which has seen the formation of six additional infantry battalions and an Air Defence Regiment, along with a large number of smaller units. This expansion reflects the crucial nature of the role of the TA, on which my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden touched.

On mobilisation, the TA would provide some 58,000 personnel in formed units to reinforce the British Army in Germany, making up more than half the infantry, logistic support and medical services in the British Army of the Rhine. I have just been there for an intensive 48-hour visit, in the course of which I experienced death by 1,000 vufoils, many of which emphasised the importance of the reserve forces in our order of battle and logistic plan.

In addition, a further 29,000 posts, including the home service force, are earmarked for home defence roles—that is, guarding key installations, undertaking reconnaissance and providing communications facilities. The Royal Naval Reserve has increased by about 7 per cent. since plans for its expansion were announced in 1984, and the Royal Marines Reserve by some 60 per cent. during the past 10 years. During the same period, the Royal Auxiliary Air Force and the RAF Volunteer Reserve have increased fivefold. As with the TA, this reflects their increasingly important roles on mobilisation and in war. It should be a matter of great pride to those concerned that reserve forces can assume such a heavy share of the burden of the defence of NATO, the Western Alliance and the nation.

The reserves are an integral part of the services they support. As the recently published "Statement on the Defence Estimates" said, they are not a follow-up force —a point that my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden spotted—separated from the regular services. That is well illustrated by the often heard reference to the "one army concept", which we strongly support and which clearly underlines the fact that the Territorial Army is not, in operational or equipment terms, of lower standing than the Regular Army. Rather, as with the other reserves, it is a vital and integral part of our overall effort to defend the country in times of crisis. As the volunteer reserves are part-time forces, they make their contribution at a cost significantly below that of additional regular forces—a point to which two of my hon. Friends drew attention.

The volunteer reserves are excellent value for money and we appreciate that well. What is more, the reserves are without the costs—both financial and social—of compulsory military service. We therefore remain committed to making the maximum use of this highly cost-effective manpower asset and to ensuring that its capability is maintained. However, I will be warned by what my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden said about the need to maintain the reserves at a satisfactory strength by comparison with conscript armies elsewhere in the Alliance.

Fighting alongside regular troops in the front line, it is vital that the volunteer reserves should be as efficient and professional in carrying out their varied tasks as their regular counterparts. The key to that is well planned and concentrated training. Our efforts in that direction continue to be aimed not only at providing a wide range of training opportunities on evenings and weekends and at annual training periods, but at recognising that external pressures may come into play and ensuring that we provide the scope for volunteers to reach peak efficiency through optimum levels of training.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wealden brought with him today a shopping list almost as long as the one my wife takes to the Nine Elms branch of Sainsbury. I counted no fewer than 11 points on it, so he will understand that I cannot respond to him on all of them. Both he and our hon. Friends will understand that, if I cannot cover their points in every detail, I will write to them after the debate and take account of their views.

My hon. Friend made the point that training should not be confined to Salisbury plain. I am glad to assure the House that it is not the only focus for training. A Territorial Army volunteer can find himself or herself in Germany, Cyprus or Gibraltar, and some lucky ones can take part in exchange visits with the National Guard and go to the United States. We recognise the need to provide the incentive of travel just as much for the volunteers as for the Regulars.

We continue to strive to reach our target ceilings for the reserves, but we must never sacrifice quality for quantity. We continue to strive to build up the trained strength of the reserves. Recognising the special pressures that may be brought to bear on volunteers, and which do not apply in the same way to their regular counterparts, it is also essential that they should be made aware, at the earliest possible opportunity, of precisely what is expected of them and, in the Territorial Army, for example, we endeavour, where possible, to make available unit training schedules by November of the year preceding the training year, which runs from the beginning of April to 31 March.

One of the important aspects of our overall training programme is to offer volunteers the opportunity to participate in major exercises such as, last year, the main field exercise of the British Army of the Rhine, Iron Hammer. I am sure that the House will be pleased to note that the Territorial Army continues to acquit itself well in exercises of that nature. Training is demanding in terms of time and effort and requires a strong sense of dedication from the volunteer. It is therefore only right and proper that it should be not only relevant, but interesting and exciting. In addition, it is essential that Territorial Army units are provided with the necessary equipment to carry out their roles. In that connection, I can answer the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden about up-to-date equipment.

It is a firm policy to introduce new equipment based on the role of units, be they regular or TA, and in some cases the TA units receive it before Regular Army units. Among equipment already issued to the TA are Javelin air defence missiles, the Milan anti-tank missile, the light gun for artillery units, Fox and CVR(T) vehicles and Clansman radio. We are also exploiting modern technology in the provision of training equipment, and moving towards the

greater use of simulators as one way of providing more effective and realistic training. That will have a number of subsidiary advantages, not least by reducing the pressures on ranges and training areas and, in so doing, lessening the impact of training on the environment and on the people who live near our training areas.

As far as the Royal Naval Reserve is concerned, as my hon. Friend will know, each of the 11 sea training centres has now taken possession of its own River class fleet minesweepers, and the RNR is planning to man more than half of the Navy's wartime MCM forces. The Royal Marines Reserve continues, as we have heard, to be equipped for its main role in defence of NATO's northern flank in Norway.

It is critical that we sustain the enthusiasms of the volunteer and, in addition to the training and equipment aspects which I have already mentioned, that we continue to keep under the closest review the pay and conditions of service. I take the point made by my hon. Friend about that, but he will not expect me to respond precisely today. This fact has become more important than ever at a time when, as my hon. Friend pointed out, with our continuing efforts to retain our volunteers, we need to take account of the potential effects of the demographic trough. As my hon. Friend said, not only are numbers falling but competition for the few that there are is increasing. To be young and employable in the early 1990s will be heaven.

Pay continues to be linked to that of the Regular forces, and in the training year just completed there was a significant increase in the annual training bounty—more than 30 per cent. for those with at least three years' service. That means £600 tax-free, a not insignificant lump sum. We are not complacent; we continually review such benefits, and will take account of the points made by my hon. Friend about increasing these bounties.

We have also introduced for the TA, or are trying out, new schemes offering volunteers who may feel unable to meet the full training obligation the opportunity to continue in service on a lower training liability. We have simplified administration, including recruitment procedures, and introduced a number of concessionary medical and travel arrangements for volunteers. The RNR has undergone a functional reorganisation, with increased emphasis on its war task training.

We also need to ensure that units are provided with good functional accommodation in which to train. My hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) may rest assured that we will be in contact with him about his local problem shortly and hope to be able to help with it. We are now well on the way to completing the new and rehabilitated TA centres required for the TA expansion programme, and I am pleased to say that we are giving priority to the programme of renewal and maintenance of the existing centres which make up the TA estate; and we are making improvements in accommodation for the other services.

Whatever improvements we may introduce in pay, training, equipment and accommodation, we cannot afford to ignore the many external pressures affecting recruitment and retention, one of which may well be the influence of a wife. Again, my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford South need be in no doubt that we understand that very well.

To a large extent, these factors are outside the Ministry of Defence's direct sphere of influence. Although the complex nature of recruitment and retention makes it difficult wholly to divorce the two, it is worth highlighting our particular thrusts in both areas, especially in the light of the potential effects of the demographic trough.

My hon. Friend will have heard of the Army's study into manning and recruitment in the 1990s, when demographic pressures on service intakes will become particularly acute. It has pinpointed a number of measures calculated to benefit the TA. As an early step, we have recently embarked on a national recruiting campaign aimed jointly at prospective Regular and TA soldiers. The naval services too are actively engaged in addressing the recruitment and retention difficulties of the coming years at a time when the economy is sound and competition from industry is keen.

In the area of retention, it has been clear for some time that domestic and work pressures have often caused volunteers to foreshorten their service. I am sure that the House will appreciate the prime importance of retaining the high degree of trained ability of our more experienced volunteers. Largely as a result of that, the National Employer Liaison Committee was set up to look at these points and other issues of interest. Along with a number of recommendations on training and conditions of service, many of which have already been implemented, the committee recommended a major image campaign, which is under way. It was launched in September and is designed to bring home to the public at large and employers in particular the importance of the reserve forces and to demonstrate to employers the two-way benefits that may accrue from employee's participation——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Orders of the Day

Private Members' Bills

PUBLIC SAFETY INFORMATION BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Objection taken. Second Reading what day?

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham North-West): With the agreement of the hon. Member in charge of the Bill, Friday 9 June.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 9 June.

PROTECTION OF RESIDENTS IN RETIREMENT HOMES BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Objection taken. Second Reading what day?

Mr. Tony Banks: With the agreement of the Member in charge of the Bill, Friday 9 June.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 9 June.

BRITISH NATIONALITY (HONORARY CITIZENSHIP) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

GAMING MACHINES (PROHIBITION ON USE BY PERSONS UNDER EIGHTEEN) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 9 June.

RIDERS OF EQUINE ANIMALS (WEARING OF PROTECTIVE HEADGEAR) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Tuesday 23rd May, Motions in the name of Mr. Neil Kinnock relating to Community Charges and Rating and Valuation may be proceeded with, though opposed, for one and a half hours after the first of them has been entered upon; and if proceedings thereon have not been previously disposed of, Mr. Speaker shall then put the Question already proposed from the Chair.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

Data Protection Act

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

2.30 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I have just come from the opening of a sheltered housing project in my constituency. It was opened by Frank Bruno and halfway through my speech big Frank boomed out, "Thank you Harry." I do not think that the Minister will be saying that at the end of the debate.

I welcome the debate because it gives me the opportunity to draw to the attention of the House the Government's neglect of the Data Protection Act 1984. The Government are riding roughshod over that Act and in many cases using the loopholes in it to undermine individual privacy. As my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) has said, it is not only the Government who do that. Individual privacy is also seriously damaged by organisations such as the Economic League, which keeps a blacklist of names and details of thousands of people who may be active, perfectly legally, in the trade union movement, in CND, the anti-apartheid movement and in many other lawful organisations.

I shall start by dealing with the Government's abuse of the Data Protection Act by reminding them of the words in the 1975 White Paper "Computers and Privacy", which stated what then seemed obvious:

"The time has come when those who use computers, however responsible they are, can no longer remain the sole judges of whether their own systems adequately safeguard privacy".

What do those resounding words imply? They imply that the controller, owner or collector of data, even if they are the Government, cannot be the sole judge and jury with respect to the personal data that are collected, processed, used or disclosed. As I hope to demonstrate, the Government are currently active as both judge and jury on this personal information and they have a record of disregarding all eight of the data protection principles.

The first data protection principle is, in theory, supposed to let people know what happens to their personal data. To guide data users, the data protection registrar in his guideline No. 4 has advised them to

"Explain to the individual why information was required".

He has also advised people to ensure that individuals are not

"misled as to why the information is required, or why it will be used or disclosed".

That advice is ignored by the Government, who daily mislead people with respect to the poll tax and the electoral register. According to the Scottish Office, none of the departmental propaganda distributed by the Government informs Scottish poll tax payers how their personal data will be collected and compiled from hitherto confidential sources to form the poll tax register. That information is contained in *Hansard* of 5 May 1988 at column *534*. The same is true of the "Ridleyspeak" poll tax publication from the Department of the Environment.

I do not wish to cover a lot of ground unnecessarily, so I refer the Minister to the explanatory memorandum of my Poll Tax (Restoration of Individual Privacy) Bill, which attempts to give poll tax data the same legal protection as data for the national census. Aptly introduced on St. Valentine's day, it also commemorates the Government's

massacre of individual privacy. I refer the Minister to *Hansard* of 5 March 1987, which shows that the Government have continually refused my request that voters be told when their details are sold on to third parties. The Government have also refused to redesign electoral registration forms to give voters the option of saying whether they want their names and addresses to be sold.

The second data protection principle relates to the need to register all the specified purposes for which information on individuals is kept with the data protection registrar. It comes as no surprise that the second largest Government Department, the Ministry of Defence, has one of the smallest numbers of registrations—only 16. The reason given is national security. In exploring this subject, it is important to repeat what the report of the Lindop committee on data protection said about public trust. In section 23.21, Lindop said that, with independent supervision, the security services would

"be open to the healthy—and often constructive—criticism and debate which assures for many public servants that they will not stray beyond their allotted functions."

Instead, the opposite occurs, and section 27 of the Data Protection Act is designed to give the national security apparatus a free hand. Thus, many personal data details are kept from the registrar's minimal supervisory powers, and the Government act as judge and jury on how this applies for national security purposes. That undermines the status of the second data protection principle.

The third data protection principle deals with disclosures of personal data. The legal position with regard to disclosing personal data is positively dangerous. In many cases, a "non-disclosure" exemption applies. This awful piece of jargon means that the disclosure is not subject to the requirements of the third data protection principle, that it need not be registered with the data protection registrar and that because of section 26(3)(b) of the Data Protection Act, it is not subject to the enforcement powers of the registrar in relation to all eight data protection principles. In short, the registrar does not know when these disclosures take place, and if he did know, he would have no powers in relation to them.

A small list of "non-disclosure" exemptions shows the full extent of the registrar's impotence in law to control disclosures. These are the exemptions. The first relates to any disclosure of personal data held by any organisation if it is required by law for the poll tax register. Even the Minister of Social Security can breach a previous duty of confidentiality. Second is any disclosure from any Government Department to the police for the purpose of prevention and detection of crime. That is almost open-ended. Third is any disclosure from any Government Department to the Inland Revenue or to VAT officers for the purpose of assessment of any tax or any duty. Forth is any disclosure from any Government Department for the purpose of national security. Fifth is any disclosure to or from any Government Department to or from any other organisation if there is a legal power authorising the disclosure. I shall not dwell on this small list of illustrative disclosures that the registrar cannot oversee, as their breadth and scope speak for themselves.

The fourth data protection principle deals with the adequacy and relevance of personal data to the specified purpose for keeping it. In the debate on the new housing benefit regulations, my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) and the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) both pointed out that, due to the lateness of the DSS regulations, local authorities would not have the complete software to administer the regulations, and staff could not be properly trained. In the same debate, my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) said that the tardy performance of the DSS meant that Newham council software could not accept manual corrections.

These problems have repeated themselves with the social fund and poll tax rebates in Scotland. According to the lead story in *Computer Weekly* on 3 November last year,

"claimants are being left in the dark about their repayments because the software producing their figures is unreliable and faulty."

A reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on 5 December 1988 shows that the Government had to wait until version six of the software before there were significant reductions in software difficulties. In other words, the Government admit that they have inflicted the unreliable versions one to five on the public, in the knowledge that inaccuracies would result. They have also tolerated contraventions of the fifth data protection principle by casting considerable doubt on the accuracy of data held for benefit purposes. In their indecent haste to short-change the poor, the Government have a track record of ensuring that personal data required to administer their new regulations are inadequate or inaccurate for the purpose of providing benefit. So much for the fourth and fifth principles.

Another example of the Government's disregard for the spirit of the fourth data protection principle arises in the Scottish poll tax regulations, under which everyone must provide his date of birth for the reason of identification. There may be two John Smiths living at the same address in Edinburgh, but the Government do not say that it is only if there is more than one person with the same name that dates of birth should be provided. Instead, they prefer the authoritarian solution of making everybody supply a date of birth. In the vast majority of cases, therefore, the poll tax officials have information that is excessive for the purpose of collecting the poll tax. That has sinister implications as the information could be used to compile a data network covering everyone.

The sixth data protection principle calls for personal data to be deleted if it is no longer required, but that, too, is being disregarded. I refer the Minister to my Adjournment debate on 20 February 1987. The police still keep all criminal records for at least 20 years. Many of those records are on line and available to all police officers in all circumstances when they tap into the police national computer. That is a breach of the spirit of the sixth data protection principle and undermines it because the data is hardly ever deleted. That practice certainly undermines the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1979. Some of those old records are inconsequential, but are now being regurgitated in job-vetting procedures which are being increasingly adopted by the Government, local authorities and health authorities.

The seventh principle allows for subject access, but there is a perverse aspect in that third parties are obliging people to use their right of access to police records before those third parties confer employment or benefit to them. The Minister knows full well that some English local authorities are vetting taxi drivers before they apply for

[Mr. Harry Cohen]

licences. That sort of vetting should not arise through the back door of an Act that is supposed to extend liberties, not deny them.

Access itself is far too costly, as was shown by the answers to my parliamentary questions in October 1987. It costs a data subject a maximum of about £900 to have access to all the register entries from the Department of Employment; £720 for those from the Scottish Office; and from the Minister's Department it is a snip—real value for money—at a maximum of £700. That is to be compared with the registrar's suggested fee in his third annual report of between £3 and £5 for access to all files on an individual held by a data user. That figure was based on a comprehensive survey of members of the public, but it has been ignored by the Government.

Recent surveys at the end of last year by the National Consumer Council, the consumer magazine *Which?* and the Freedom of Information Campaign have all shown that the cost of subject access is seriously deterring data subjects from exercising their rights under the law. With only millionaires eligible to regard subject access to Government files as an option, it is not surprising that ordinary members of the public are not springing into action to exercise their rights. In March last year, I was told that the Home Office had received 16 requests when it had expected between 5,000 and 50,000. Such is the scale of the Government's undermining of one of the basic rights of the Data Protection Act.

With regard to the last data protection principle, I am concerned that the Government seem to equate the eighth principle, which deals with the security of personal data, with individual privacy. For example, in the one debate on the Government's data network, the Government stated that privacy is related to "unauthorised access". Government Departments, it is said, will have to authorise disclosures which will be logged, scrutinised and audited to ensure privacy.

That is not good enough. The carefully abridged specification for the Government's data network, as placed in the House of Common's Library, anticipates new data interchanges between Departments of state. In relation to the Government's data network, I repeat my earlier point that those activities are not subject to the independent scrutiny of the data protection registrar. The registrar cannot see the detailed list to which I referred earlier. Until an element of independent scrutiny is introduced, the Government data network should not proceed another step. The current position is best described by a parody of the White Paper statement—the time has come for the Government to be sole judge as to how far the Government's data network can invade privacy.

My final comments relate to codes of practice. As the Minister is aware from his recently legalised readings of "Spycatcher", page 360 states:

"the main interest F Branch of MI5 had in the Computer Working Party was to establish widespread computer links, principally with the National Insurance computer in Newcastle."

Concerned by that, I asked the Home Secretary on 9 March 1988 about a code of practice for national security purposes. I was told that there was

"no advantage in a code of practice in this area."—[*Official Report*, 9 March 1988; Vol. 129, c. 195.]

I then asked whether some information, which would not compromise national security, could be given to the data protection registrar. I was told:

"Such arrangements are not required by the Data Protection Act".—[*Official Report*, 31 March 1988; Vol. 130, c. 679.]

That completely undermines the concept of codes of practice. If MI5 holds much personal data about an individual's political activities—on 6 April last year *The Guardian* estimated that data was held on 1 million individuals—if MI5 can link to Government Departments such as the DHSS computer at Newcastle and we can only read about that in books which the Government want to ban, and if the Government data network will link the Home Office to other Departments when the Home Office is responsible for internal national security issues, I think that some code of practice is essential to restore public confidence.

Before I finish, I must state that my expectations are not high. The Government have a track record of invading the BBC, cajoling the IBA, promoting identity cards, legalising burglary, tightening official secrecy and introducing the poll tax. Systematically undermining the Data Protection Act is about par for the course.

2.48 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Tim Renton): I congratulate the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on securing this afternoon's debate and for the cogent manner in which he set out his concerns. At the risk of breaking with the practices of the House, I will echo the words of Frank Bruno and, with the exception of the hon. Gentleman's final few sentences say, "Thank you, Harry."

If I may say this without being patronising, the hon. Member for Leyton has built up a very good knowledge of the intricacies of the Data Protection Act 1984 which is not a subject on which many hon. Members are expert. He has also built up a great knowledge of its underlying principle of the protection of the privacy of individuals in respect of personal data which is processed automatically. I know that he has tabled a number of parliamentary questions on the question because it has fallen to me regularly over the past two years to answer them. He further demonstrated his concern when he introduced the Data Protection Act 1984 (Amendment) Bill 1987. There is no question of the Government neglecting the Data Protection Act 1984 or of breaking it in spirit or deed.

As to the community charge, the Local Government Finance Act 1988 is very restrictive on the sources from which data can be obtained and on the disclosures that can make use of that data. The Department of the Environment was mindful of the views of the data protection registrar and of others when that legislation was prepared, and the registrar issued guidelines that go beyond the Act's statutory requirements.

On the question of whether the same principles should apply to security or crime investigations, sections 27 and 28 of the Act set out limited exceptions to the normal operation of the legislation, and section 29, which deals with mental health, makes the point that the non-disclosure rule is in the interest of data subjects. Most right hon. and hon. Members, including, I hope, the hon. Member for Leyton recognise the prime importance attached to national security—not least in tackling crime

—and that it is not feasible to apply exactly the same constraints to such activities as to the generality of data use.

I was surprised at the hon. Gentleman's assertion that only a millionaire can afford to exercise his access rights. That seems to be going too far. Up to £10 may be charged by a data user for granting subject access in an individual case.

Mr. Cohen: That charge can be imposed every time.

Mr. Renton: I know that it can be imposed for each right of access, but some data users charge nothing in certain circumstances. The hon. Gentleman said that only 16 requests for data access have been made to the Home Office. I suggest that that is not because of the £10 charge —even if the various Home Office departments do charge the maximum—but because there is a lack of interest on the part of data subjects in having access to their data files.

Of more general interest, which I am sure the hon. Gentleman shares, are the two reviews now being undertaken on the implementation of the Act. One is by the data protection registrar himself, for the purpose of monitoring and assessing the implementation of the legislation with whose enforcement he has been entrusted. In May 1988, the registrar circulated a registration document entitled "What are your views?" About 2,100 copies were distributed and responses on some or all the subjects covered were received from 149 persons, companies or associations. I understand that the hon. Gentleman himself was among them.

The registrar is analysing those responses and will compile his own views on the charges that might be appropriate in the light of experience. I understand that it is the registrar's intention to publish the analysis and his conclusions when his next annual report is published on 12 July. That will provide a helpful picture of the Act's effects and what respondents would like to see done for the future.

The registrar's analysis and conclusions will form part of the input to the interdepartmental review committee comprising officials of the Home Office, Department of Home and Industry and Department of Employment, with the data protection registrar serving as consultant and adviser, that was announced on 4 July 1988. Its terms of reference are:

> "To review the Data Protection Act 1984 in the light of experience gained during its implementation, with particular reference to the impact on data users of the registration requirements; and to make recommendations."

If we were serious about neglecting the Act, as the hon. Gentleman claims, we would not go so far as to encourage and help the registrar in producing his consultation document and to establish the interdepartmental committee. That is not the work of a Government who wish to neglect the Act.

The committee was set up to look at the representations about the burden of the registration arrangements which I know have been made to the Government and to the registrar by trade associations and individual companies, especially smaller companies—the data users—who in the early days said that the forms were excessively complicated. However, the work of the committee will go wider than that. It will examine all aspects of the Act's implementation and consider whether any changes are needed in the interests of data users, data subjects, or both.

As part of its work, the committee has also looked at the registrar's consultation document and its circulation to see whether, in its view, it adequately covered the field of interest or whether it needed to seek additional evidence. It has decided that the registrar's study, both in its scope and in its coverage of possible respondents, would render unnecessary any further consultation outside Government. Should the Government conclude, after completion of the review, that significant changes to the legislation were necessary, they would of course need to carry out their own consultation exercise on the basis of a set of specific proposals. The decision to rely on the registrar's very full consultation exercise will enable the review committee to make more rapid progress than would otherwise have been the case.

Mr. Cohen: I understand that the Government might want to do their own consultation after the registrar's. However, I hope that that will not be an excuse for a long delay in reforming and improving the Act. Will the Minister give a commitment that the registrar will be able to look in his review at sections 27 and 28 which I have described as inadequate and which, as I have said, run counter to the theme of the Lindop report?

Mr. Renton: The hon. Gentleman must not look for guile where there is none. The purpose of setting up the independent inter-departmental committee was, as I have said, to look specifically at the impact on data users of the registration requirements. The registrar is close to the end of his consultation exercise because the decisions are to be published on 12 July, which is just over two months away.

In order to make progress, the registrar—the adviser to the committee—has agreed that the committee may have sight of his preliminary conclusions. When those conclusions have been published, I am sure that the hon. Member for Leyton, with his expert knowledge of the issues, will avail himself of the opportunity, if he so wishes, to make further representations to the registrar.

I am not, of course, in a position today to foreshadow the contents of either the registrar's report or of the committee's conclusions. Equally, I am not in a position to say whether and when there would be amending legislation. But I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the points he has made today will be taken into account by the committee, and in turn by Ministers, before the Government announce their conclusions on the basis of experience to date of the operation of the Act.

I am grateful to hon. Gentleman for giving us a further opportunity to give this important subject an airing. I hope that what I have been able to say in this short debate may set at rest some of his doubts and suspicions.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at two minutes to Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 22 May 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

NEW WRIT

For Glasgow, Central, in the room of Robert McTaggart Esquire, deceased.—*[Mr. Foster.]*

Motion made and Question proposed,

That Mr. Speaker do issue his warrant for the Clerk of the Crown to make out a new writ for the electing of a Member to serve in this present Parliament for the constituency of Vauxhall in the room of Stuart Kingsley Holland Esquire, who, since his election for the said constituency, hath accepted the Office of Steward or Bailiff of Her Majesty's Three Chiltern Hundreds of Stoke, Desborough and Burnham in the County of Buckingham.—*[Mr. Foster.]*

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Does the hon. Gentleman wish to object?

Mr. Grant: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: In that case, the motion stands over until the commencement of public business.

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SECURITY

Earnings Rule

1. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his latest estimate of the public expenditure cost of abolishing the earnings rule.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lloyd): The estimated total public expenditure cost of abolishing the earnings rule for pensioners is £205 million in 1980-90, and £375 million in 1990-91.

Mr. Brazier: Is my hon. Friend aware that this measure will be greatly welcomed by many people of pensionable age, not least in my constituency, who seek to better themselves after the formal retirement age? Does he further agree that the welcome stimulus that it will provide to the economy by releasing many valuable skills back into the economy should, in the long run, make the measure self-financing?

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend is right. There will be greater choice for the elderly, the economy will benefit from the skills and experience supplied by pensioners continuing to work, and there will of course, be additional revenue for the Exchequer.

Mrs. Roe: Is my hon. Friend able to say how those people affected by the change will be informed of the new arrangements?

Mr. Lloyd: Yes, we plan to write next month to all those in receipt of a reduced pension and all those who have deferred their pension. There will be others, of course, earning under £75 per week of whom we are not directly aware, but I hope and expect that they will learn of the measure through the extensive publicity and editorial comment.

Residential Homes

2. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he last reviewed the payment limits for residential homes.

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Nicholas Scott): We reviewed the limits last October and announced significant increases, which took effect last month.

Mr. Eastham: Is the Minister aware that there is growing concern particularly among charitable organisations which want to offer high quality provision but are unable to do so due to inadequate funding, which they believe is not being met by the Government? The feeling that local authority provision of residential care is inadequately funded is causing anxiety and worry to many families, and there is growing suspicion that some of the private organisations which have been set up are becoming money-making bodies. Will the Minister apply his mind to those problems?

Mr. Scott: Of course, we watch all of this carefully. It is worth reminding the House that when the Government

came to office we were spending some £10 million per year on such support; 10 years later, the figure has increased to £1 billion per year.

About two out of three people in this type of accommodation are able to pay their fees from the support that they receive. The level of support set must take account of the interests of the taxpayer and not fuel the market. It was never designed to pay every fee that is charged in every area. I think that we achieved about the right balance in the upratings last month.

Mr. McCrindle: I recognise that substantial sums are being expended in this area of social security, but does my hon. Friend agree that in the process of building up that substantial figure public expenditure on the provision of accommodation for elderly people has been able to be curbed quite considerably? When my hon. Friend comes to review further requests for still greater assistance, will he bear in mind that in many ways it is rather a good investment as it may mean that local authorities do not have to expend quite so much as would otherwise be necessary?

Mr. Scott: I am sure that the system of national limits that we introduced in 1985 is a much better way of combining the interests of the taxpayer and the need to keep public expenditure under some sort of proper control with meeting the needs of those who require this kind of accommodation. As my hon. Friend will know, we are considering all these matters in the light of the Griffiths report on community care and the need to make proper judgments between the need for institutional care and domiciliary support.

Mr. Frank Field: When do the Government intend to respond to the Griffiths report?

Mr. Scott: My right hon. Friend and hon. Friends in the Department of Health have that matter at the top of their agenda—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman will know better than almost anyone in the House how complicated the subject is, and how important it is that those who have to make judgments between domiciliary care and residential care are able to do so, as far as possible, in a financially neutral climate. The Government are addressing the matter as one of great urgency and I hope to be able to make an announcement in the not too distant future.

Mr. Soames: I welcome what my hon. Friend has said about increased resources, but is he aware that there are great disparities in the cost of residential homes between the north and the south due to the difficult situation in the labour market in my constituency and elsewhere in the south-east? Does my hon. Friend agree that in this area of the public provision, as in so many others, there should be some form of regional fixing of income and allowances to assist those who find life extremely difficult?

Mr. Scott: My hon. Friend knows that at present only London has a special enhancement of the rates that are paid, but I am conscious that the geographical spread, in a sense, goes wider than that. That is one of the matters that we shall have to bear in mind when we come to consider the Griffiths report.

Mr. Fearn: Has the Minister had any discussions with the National Care Homes Association or with Age Concern? I presume that he has seen the report from Age Concern that many elderly people who have been in residential homes for some time are now being asked to quit.

Mr. Scott: If the hon. Gentleman has evidence relating to the many cases of which he speaks, I hope that he will make it available to me or to my colleagues in the Department of Health. We are constantly in touch with the providers and the time is coming when we shall need to take a fresh look at these matters in the context of the Griffiths report.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the only monitoring of care standards or staff qualifications at small homes with fewer than four residents, which do not have to be registered under the Registered Homes Act 1984, is on initial application and that there is no statutory requirement for continuous monitoring? Will the Department support the Department of Health in its review of the remit of the Registered Homes Act to bring smaller homes under statutory monitoring?

Mr. Scott: When these measures were first introduced there was a need to balance bureaucratic intrusion and complexity with the need to achieve proper standards. I know that my colleagues in the Department of Health are concerned and they will have my full support in any action that they choose to take.

Mrs. Beckett: If the Minister is in touch with the care providers, what response does he intend to make to the now almost universal call, particularly from charities, for an urgent review of benefit rates in this year—1989—to avert an otherwise threatened financial collapse? Does he realise that many people, particularly the most dependent elderly people, are very fearful about the difficulty that they face in meeting the gap between rising costs and static benefit rates? Is the Minister aware that in many cases their children are also pensioners and cannot help them? When do the Government intend to do something about that?

Mr. Scott: I have no evidence whatever of any imminent collapse in provision in that area. Many people can look to other sources of income, including support from their families, and so on. It was never intended that the rates should meet the fee which is charged anywhere in the country, at whatever level it is set. If we did that, we should be making the market in that area, and it would not be sensible for us to do that. We listen very carefully to the providers, but I see no prospect of any enhancement of the rates in the current year.

Family Support

5. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the level of Government financial support for the family in the EC; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. John Moore): The United Kingdom compares very favourably with other European Community member states in the financial support made available for the family. As far as child benefit is concerned, the real value of benefits for the majority of families is considerably higher than in most of the other states. Furthermore, our family credit scheme has no parallel elsewhere in the Community.

Mr. Nicholson: As the elections to the European Parliament will give the Government's opponents the opportunity to make the usual far-fetched allegations about our welfare benefits and contrast them with those in the EEC, will my right hon. Friend say whether other EEC countries have the same system of child benefit as ours, which is universal and tax-free? Will he also confirm that other EEC countries do not have our system of income support to low-income families, which is most welcome to such families?

Mr. Moore: There are quite a few points in that question. Essentially my hon. Friend is absolutely right. There is no comparable pattern of benefit. Italy, Germany and Greece have means tests for their child benefit systems. France does not pay benefits for the first child. To take an overall pattern, of the domestic purchasing power, for a two-parent family with one child under the age of two, the United Kingdom child benefit payment is the highest in the Community. For a two-child family with both children under the age of six—the average family size in Europe—the United Kingdom ranks third in the Community. I confirm my hon. Friend's point about income support. That structure, like family credit, must be seen in relation to the £9 billion which we spend to help families with children while part of that—£4·5 billion—goes to child benefit support.

Ms. Short: Will the Secretary of State confirm that the elderly members of our families—our pensioners—have the worst income in the EEC and that the situation is getting worse for pensioners throughout the country as their transitional protection is eroded? Does he accept that it was a mistake and wrong to break the link between pensions and earnings and that unless he changes that, British pensioners will become even poorer, when they are already feeling the squeeze?

Mr. Moore: The hon. Lady's first point was complete and utter nonsense. It was factually inaccurate and I must make that clear time and again. One of our difficulties in trying to make comparisons between our pensioners' rates and those in Europe is that our pensioners, like pensioners in only two other countries in Europe, have the benefit of a basic pension as well as the additional benefits to which my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security referred earlier, such as income support. The only accurate way to try to assess and judge the way in which this country tries to assist pensioners relative to the way in which other European countries treat pensioners is in regard to the percentage of gross domestic product overall——

Ms. Short: Flannel.

Mr. Moore: Those who shout "flannel" or "rubbish" from sedentary positions may like to be reminded of this. Would they like a system whereby those on low incomes for most of their lives—the vast majority in continental countries—receive no basic pension because pensions are earnings-related? I do not imagine that they would like such a system. The only comparison that can be made is with gross domestic product, and in that respect our pensioners rank third highest in the European league table, if there can be said to be such a thing.

Mr. Tredinnick: Child benefits in this country are universal and tax-free, but can the same be said of other EEC countries?

Mr. Moore: No. As I said earlier, the position varies enormously. Germany, Italy and Greece operate a means test, and much lower benefits are paid in most European Community countries by comparison with our child benefit. We pay the highest child benefit in Europe for a family with a child aged below two. As to the typical two-child family, we rank third in the Community. It is not possible to make specific comparisons, and I have tried to abjure from doing so.

Mr. Frank Field: How many claimants in Europe have been affected by transitional protection arrangements? So that we may make a comparison between this country and our European neighbours, can the Secretary of State also say how many British claimants failed to secure increased income in 1986, 1987 and 1988?

Mr. Moore: I commend the hon. Gentleman for trying to get in the question that his three absent hon. Friends were unable to put, but which I looked forward to answering. Those in Europe who might like to put such questions might be delighted to have the kind of income support structure that the Labour party has not sought to deny in its review, as I believe it is called.

Mr. Burns: Does my right hon. Friend agree that £1 billion of the £4·5 billion spent on child benefit goes to families with incomes in excess of £20,000? Would it not be better if more of the money going to wealthier families were targeted instead on genuinely less well-off families?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend was among those who recognised what I sought to do in this year's uprating decision, which was to add more than £70 million for the assistance of poorer families with children, thus recognising how much better off are many families with higher than average incomes. My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to one specific group benefiting from the £4·5 billion that we spend on child benefit.

Mr. Robin Cook: Did the Secretary of State, in his study of EEC data, consider the Commission's recent report that the number of families in Britain with below half the average income has almost doubled? Is not that the real reason why he is so anxious to judge poverty by the absolute standards of the Victorians? Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that, judged by any relative standard, the rich are much richer and the poor are even further behind them?

Mr. Moore: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman seeks to embrace the absurd statistical illusions which suggest by definition that half of a nation, whatever its wealth, is in poverty. That kind of statistical absurdity, as I have tried to persuade people—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) would not like it to be drawn to the attention of the House that he recognised and supported the point that I am trying to make in an article in *The Sunday Times*. I do not for one moment doubt that there is a need, and I would not be expending £51 billion—the largest social security expenditure this country has ever seen—if I did not think that there was a requirement to help and assist people. I would never deny that there is need, but that is not the same as citing absurd statistical nostrums which suggest that one third to half the nation is in poverty, which is rubbish.

Reforms (Review)

8. **Mr. McCrindle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what current plans he has to review any aspect of the reforms introduced on 1 April 1988.

Mr. Moore: We have given an undertaking to monitor all aspects of the social security reforms, and that is a continuing process. We have given extra help to the least well-off families with children, for example, and we are making nearly £200 million extra available to older and disabled pensioners from October.

Mr. McCrindle: Given that many of the people within the Government's sights in terms of targeting benefits more efficiently are benefiting as a consequence of the 1988 review, will my right hon. Friend nevertheless take account of the failure, seemingly, of targeting to reach people just above income support level who were recently described in a pamphlet as being "not rich, not poor"? As many of them did not have the opportunity to build up an occupational pension, as so many people now retiring have done, are they not a section of society to which the Government ought urgently to turn their attention?

Mr. Moore: I am glad that my hon. Friend recognises that the new income support system is fairer and more generous. He also said—I thought it a fair point—that we should always remember that just above the income support line are people who, by any definition, are not well off. I know that he will be pleased about the way in which family credit tries to help poorer families with children, going some way up the income scale. He will also be delighted not only with the adjustments to transitional arrangements for housing benefit for those above income support level that we made last spring, but with the news that 1·4 million of the 2·6 million elderly and disabled pensioners who will benefit this autumn from the changes that we are introducing will be above that level.

Mr. Madden: In his review of the social security system, will the Secretary of State ensure that the practice of giving food vouchers to people who apply for crisis loans is scrapped? A constituent of mine, the mother of three children under eight, recently lost all her money. When she applied to the local office for £20, she was given a food voucher which stipulated that she could spend the money only at a named store within a week of its issue, that she must not spend it on tobacco, alcohol or sweets, and that the loan must be repaid in 1990. That food voucher was useless for her purpose—to buy a present for her son. Is the right hon. Gentleman proud of a system which represents all the worst aspects of the old poor relief system which we all thought that we had left behind years ago?

Mr. Moore: I am extremely pleased that as a result of the Government's economic success we are able to spend vast amounts on income support and, in addition, on such things as the social fund. Some people receive vouchers of the kind to which the hon. Gentleman has referred. I shall look into what he has said, but I am sure that he would wish to put this into perspective.

Mr. Madden: So would my constituent.

Mr. Moore: If the hon. Gentleman could contain his inherent bitterness for a second, he might like to concern himself with the million or so people who have already benefited from the social fund. They are not exactly complaining.

Mr. Baldry: Will my right hon. Friend base his review on one criterion—the existence of a strong net below which no one can fall? Does he agree that we must not become confused by those in the media who, in recent weeks, have tried to relate such a net to equality? The purpose of the social security system has never been to introduce more equality into society. It has always been to ensure that people are properly protected.

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend has expressed very well points that I have lately been trying to address. We are trying to help large numbers of our fellow citizens who are clearly in need. We must keep that clear in our minds, and not be forced by distorted statistics into the pretence that the country is somehow failing, creating an illusory poverty affecting one third of the population. My hon. Friend is absolutely right to ask me to look constantly to see what parts of society need additional help, and I shall seek consistently to do that.

Mr. Robin Cook: What hope does the right hon. Gentleman's review hold for the quarter of a million pensioners and other claimants receiving transitional protection, who received no increase last year or this year and who under the present rules will receive none next year? Is he aware that by definition they are among the frailest and most disabled claimants? It would be outrageous if they spent a third year on a frozen income, reduced to what by any standards—absolute or relative—is a degree of poverty that is a disgrace to any civilised society.

Mr. Moore: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on getting back to the question that his hon. Friends keep trying to ask but never seem to be present to do so. I will put the matter into perspective. The hon. Gentleman seems not to be endorsing the new structural income support system that his own team's review does not seem to wish to reject.

Of those on supplementary benefit, 35 per cent. received no payment for additional requirements of any kind. The average additional requirement payment to the sick and disabled—the hon. Gentleman mentioned the disabled—was £5·34 a week. Instead, 220,000 claimants are now receiving a disability premium of £13·20. That is a considerable improvement, which I would expect both sides of the House to welcome.

Some 4,400 disabled people were receiving domestic assistance additions, averaging—*[Interruption.]* I realise that this answer will be unpalatable to the Opposition Front Bench. Those people were getting domestic assistance addition, averaging £4·87 a week. Now over 7,000 are, I am happy to say, getting the severe disability premium of £26·20 a week. That is an illustration of the change to a new and better system to help those who are most disadvantaged.

Maternity Benefits

9. **Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what comparative assessment he has made of the United Kingdom system of maternity benefits as against those of other EC member states.

Mr. Scott: We do of course in this area, as in many others, take note of what is happening elsewhere in the Community. We concluded that our record compares very favourably with the other European Community member states where only two countries—Denmark and Italy—provide income replacement for a longer period.

Mrs. Shephard: I thank my hon. Friend for his reply. Do all other EEC countries provide maternity grants?

Mr. Scott: In Germany, Greece and Portugal, only insured people are entitled to such benefit, whereas we provide benefit for all working pregnant women by means of one or other of the allowances or benefits.

Ms. Mowlam: Does the Minister agree that one ought to look not only at the amount of maternity benefit that women receive but at the length of time that they are allowed maternity benefit? I am sure that the Minister will want to hear about a most interesting comparison—I look forward to his comments—of the length of time that women receive maternity benefit. If I were pregnant in West Germany, I would get benefit for 32 weeks, In Italy for 21 weeks, in France for 16 weeks, in Spain for 14 weeks and in Ireland for 14 weeks, but here women get it for six weeks. *[Interruption.]* Obviously male Conservative Members of Parliament do not have the child care problems that many women in this country have to face. I am sure that the Minister will accept that that is the important comparison.

Mr. Scott: Only two countries in the European Community—Denmark and Italy—pay income replacement for longer periods than we do. There are some insured benefits, but they are not on the basis of income replacement, as ours is.

Mr. Thurnham: Will my hon. Friend put the record absolutely straight? Is he aware that although we are one of the most generous payers of maternity benefit, Labour party MEPs have been advertising at great expense, and quite falsely, that we pay maternity benefit only for six weeks?

Mr. Scott: I am surprised that the Opposition should be so economical with the truth in that particular area. Although earnings-related SMP runs only for six weeks, for another 12 weeks after that it continues as a flat rate benefit.

Ms. Richardson: I do not understand how the Minister can be so smug about the benefits that he claims are available to pregnant women. Britain is the worst provider of statutory maternity pay for pregnant working women in the EEC. The eligibility criteria that the Government have introduced have deprived over half Britain's working women of any entitlement at all. Will the Minister comment on the fact that Britian is unique in Europe in giving no maternity leave, as of right to all pregnant women in employment? Furthermore, 87 per cent. of the part-timers working less than 20 hours are women. There is no universal right to a maternity grant. Many women notice that to their detriment.

Mr. Scott: Maternity leave is provided for women in full-time regular employment. That is the basis of the system. That is why it was introduced, and it is right that it should be on that basis. If we allowed any part-timer —however many hours were worked—to have maternity leave, we should open the gates to all sorts of abuses of the system.

Departmental Expenditure

10. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by what amount spending by his Department has changed in real terms over the past five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Moore: By about £2·25 billion between 1983-84 and 1988-89, a real increase of 5 per cent. We plan to increase spending by a further £3·5 billion in the present year, bringing total expenditure to over £51 billion, nearly one third of public spending.

Mr. Cran: Will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to condemn some elements of the professional poverty lobby in this country who continue to ignore the fact that everybody is better off than they were, as is evidenced by the fact that in the 15 years to 1985 average household incomes rose by 25 per cent. in real terms? In addition, the poor and the needy are now in receipt of 31 per cent of public spending this year, as against 25 per cent. in 1979.

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Perhaps unwisely, I tried in a recent speech, which attracted some attention, to take a period of time which is disconnected from any particular party's period of office to illustrate what has happened during the past 40 years, during which successive Governments have tried to improve the lot of the least well-off people in society. It does no service to them, or to those of us who try to help them, to distort the truth. We shall help people who are genuinely in need much more effectively through our current massive, and record, social security spending.

Mr. Heffer: I accept that the mass of the people are far better off than they were in the 1930s. We are not talking in terms of that type of poverty. Is it not clear that people who are at the lowest end of the income scale, who are struggling on benefits and on low wages, could have been a lot better off if the Government had not given great hand-outs in tax to their friends but had given that money to the people at the lower end of the scale?

Mr. Moore: The hon. Member genuinely cares about these issues. I am glad that he recognises that all are better off. His argument seems to be that those at the bottom could have been even better off as a result of different economic policies. It is extraordinary that the Opposition's argument is now about how to spend the results of Conservative economic success. It may be of interest to the hon. Member to know and consider that, 10 years ago, the top 5 per cent. paid 25 per cent. of gross income tax. Today they pay nearly 30 per cent. Their success has added to the success that allows me to spend the present record sums on those in need.

Disabled Parents

11. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will take steps to improve social security benefits for children of disabled parents.

Mr. Scott: As my hon. Friend knows we have increased real spending on the long-term sick and disabled by 90 per

cent. to £7·3 billion since 1978-79. He will also know that, when we have all six reports from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, we will be better placed to judge whether this help is well directed.

Mr. Bowis: My hon. Friend gives an excellent report in terms of what we have been able to achieve so far. We are talking about a particularly brave group of children and parents. Will he consider two aspects of their lives closely? First, when a child's education is continually disrupted by being called out of school to look after a sick and disabled parent, perhaps some form of additional care and respite could alleviate that.

Secondly, when two disabled parents manage to cope in the home but have difficulty getting their able-bodied child to school, a discretionary payment can be made by the education authority, but when no payment is made, as has recently been the case with the Inner London education authority, such families receive no help.

Mr. Scott: I note what my hon. Friend says. It is clear that, in the circumstances which he described, the Child Care Act 1980 lays a responsibility on local authority social services departments to promote the welfare of such children. Normally, when such a case is brought to the attention of the social services department, it liaises with health authorities and voluntary agencies and is able to provide a wide range of domiciliary services, including respite care, which are in the interests of the child.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Is the Minister aware that children of disabled parents whose incomes were cut in last year's social security changes also became poorer at a time of rapidly rising prices and when child benefit has been losing its value? Has this not piled handicap on handicap for these families? In advance of the review of disablement benefits, not to ignore what the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) said, will the Minister introduce a special allowance for families in which children do so much for their parents to enable them to stay at home?

Mr. Scott: Apart from reiterating my opening reply, I remind the House that when we introduced income support, the income support disability premium gave £60 million extra to 270,000 people—an important enhancement of support for disabled people. I am not dismissing the problems of child carers, but I reiterate that they have to be addressed by a partnership between central Government, local authorities and local health authorities in the provision that they can make for individual cases.

Community Charge

12. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the arrangements for paying the community charge rebate.

16. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Scretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the arrangements for paying the rebate of the community charge.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We estimate that one in four of those liable for community charge in Great Britain will benefit from the effective help given by the rebate scheme to those on low incomes. In addition, the special element built into the rates of the income-related benefits will help nearly 9 million people with the minimum contribution they have to make from their own resources.

Mr. Haynes: Will the Minister let the Secretary of State know that I am here, and I am always here? Is he aware that last Friday we met Church leaders in Nottinghamshire? The have their feet on the ground in the community and know about the problems of people in poverty. I use the word poverty because it is there. When will the Government spend some money on telling the people about their rights to rebates for the community charge? Wake up!

Mr. Lloyd: We always notice when the hon. Gentleman is here. I am grateful that he has had time to ask his question as it provides a further opportunity to advertise the rebate scheme. As the hon. Gentleman knows there are editorial comments, leaflets, advertising and the fact that local authorities make their own arrangements for letting people know. There will be no doubt at all that all those eligible for a rebate will have had plenty of opportunity to learn that fact.

THE ARTS

Galleries (Openings)

53. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Minister for the Arts how many new galleries have been opened by the main national institutions in the last five years.

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce): Five major new galleries have been opened by national institutions during the last five years: the Tate gallery, Liverpool; the Clore gallery on the Tate's Millbank site; the Victoria and Albert's theatre museum in Covent Garden; the British Film Institute's museum of the moving image; and the Imperial War museum's new superhangar at Duxford. In addition, most of the national institutions have redesigned and refurbished areas within their existing buildings to create new gallery space.

Miss Widdecombe: Does my right hon. Friend agree that that is an excellent indication of his policy of partnership in the museum world, and that coupled with the 53 per cent. increase in Government grants for repairs and maintenance, it gives the lie to any claims that the museum world is in a state of crisis?

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. It is absolutely true that the amount of redevelopment and the opening of new galleries in the past few years has been enormous. A number of other new galleries are in progress, including the Sainsbury wing at the national gallery, further plans for new galleries at the British museum and the complete refurbishment of the Queen's house at the national maritime museum. An enormous amount is happening and, as my hon. Friend said, with the increase in the amount of money for building and maintenance, the overall resources and the improvement in the national institutions are progressing very well.

Mr. Frank Field: As part of this refurbishment programme, what steps is the Minister taking to move those collections which are never shown by London galleries in the north, particularly Merseyside?

Mr. Luce: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will have warmly welcomed the opening of the Tate gallery in Liverpool last year with the extension of the Tate to Merseyside. A vast amount of lending is now taking place. The Tate gallery, the British museum, the national gallery and the Victoria and Albert lend a large number of objects. With the extension of outstations of various national institutions around the country, there is much wider access to our collections.

Northern Ballet

54. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on the funding of the Northern Ballet.

Mr. Luce: The funding of the Northern Ballet theatre is a matter for the Arts Council. The House will be pleased to note that the council has decided to continue funding for at least two more years to enable the company to stabilise its financial situation.

Mr. Favell: My right hon. Friend will be aware that that news has been received with acclaim throughout the north. Is it not true that under Christopher Gable, the artistic director, the Northern Ballet theatre has made enormous strides in standards? Is it not also true that all arts organisations require a sound and firm financial foundation upon which to base their work?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend is right. He is also right to pay tribute to Christopher Gable who has given remarkably strong leadership to the Northern Ballet theatre over the past few months. The standard of its productions is undoubtedly high and it is attracting new audiences to ballet, which is an important development. If Northern Ballet can get its own house in order, which it is well on the way to doing, it has a strong future.

English National Opera

55. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what discussions he has held about the future funding of English National Opera.

Mr. Luce: The funding of individual arts organisations is a matter for the Arts Council, but I keep in touch with the chairman and director of English National Opera.

Mr. Bowis: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is widespread admiration for the English National Opera, which has made enormous strides in the quality of its productions as well as in education, touring and attracting sponsorship? Is he aware that there is widespread unease that the company is unable to plan ahead because of the failure to reach an agreement with Westminster city council in particular? Will he talk to his colleagues in Government about that?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend is right to emphasise the English National Opera's standard of excellence in the arts. Its last season was remarkable and there were many new productions. There are five new productions in the coming season. It does an extremely effective job in generating new audiences for opera and I have nothing but praise for what it achieves. My hon. Friend is also right to draw attention to the fact that a proportion of its grant comes from Westminster city council. It is an important contribution to its overall funding. The Government provide just under £7 million and its total resources are about £15 million. Therefore, it is an important sum and I hope that Westminster city council, in considering what support it can give, will enlist the support of other London boroughs on whose behalf at present it gives support to the English National Opera.

Mr. Jessel: Will my right hon. Friend take this matter seriously as the English National Opera is an important and successful British institution whose viability is jeopardised by a side effect of the reorganisation of local government finance? Will he talk with our right hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government on this matter as soon as possible?

Mr. Luce: In the past I have been in touch with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on this matter and I attach great importance to it. It is right at this stage to stress that I look to Westminster city council to decide what it can contribute and then to generate support from other London boroughs to see what they can do to help English National Opera.

Incentive Funding Scheme

56. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Minister for the Arts to what extent the incentive funding scheme has achieved the return and objectives estimated when it was introduced.

Mr. Luce: A total of £18 million of additional money is expected to benefit 48 organisations since this scheme began in 1988. This represents £3 of private sector money for every £1 invested by the taxpayer.

Mr. Hague: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the scheme has done a great deal to encourage many organisations to improve their professionalism, particularly in marketing? Has that not brought considerable benefits to many consumer and arts organisations? Can my right hon. Friend say a little more about the benefits brought to Yorkshire and the north?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend is right. One of the main purposes of the scheme is to provide an incentive to organisations to diversify their sources of funding and become even more professional in their management. Under the initial scheme we have already achieved a £3 return for every £1 invested, which is a big improvement on what was targeted—£2 for every £1 invested. That shows the enthusiasm with which some arts bodies are receiving the scheme and the effort they are making to obtain extra sources of funding from the private sector.

I am pleased to be able to say that, of all the regions, Yorkshire comes second with 20 per cent. of all the awards.

Mr. Butler: Can my right hon. Friend tell me what importance is given to the regions under the scheme? Do they lose out to London? Can he tell me to what extent business sponsorship has grown in total?

Mr. Luce: Over 70 per cent. of the organisations that receive incentive funding are based outside London. I am anxious to achieve the highest standards of excellence throughout the country. That is important to the success of the arts, which should be accessible to people throughout the country.

Museums and Galleries

57. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will conduct a national audit of the state of the buildings of the national museums and galleries.

Mr. Luce: I have no plans to do so. The national museums and galleries commission their own building surveys and present their conclusions in the context of the corporate plans which they submit to my Department.

Mr. Haynes: It is time that this Minister woke up. Is he aware that national museums and galleries are falling down? We need a national audit to put that right. I am asking this Minister to wake up, as well as Social Security Ministers.

Mr. Luce: I enjoyed the hon. Gentleman's contribution, but he should recharge his batteries, change direction and embrace as warmly as he can the fact that I have increased resources available to museums and galleries for building and maintenance by 53 per cent. Will he give his strong support for that?

Mr. Fisher: Does the Minister accept the statement made by the trustees of the Victoria and Albert museum that they have inherited a £50 million backlog from the Property Services Agency and that the trustees of the Tate gallery have inherited a £27 million backlog? The increase for the coming year will be only 2·1 per cent. If the Minister accepts those figures, what will he do about them? If he does not accept them, will he accept the suggestion made by my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) of a national audit to establish how badly placed our national museums are?

Mr. Luce: The hon. Gentleman is tending to fall for the Armageddon syndrome—everything is coming to an end in the arts world and there is a crisis, which there is not. A series of problems are being tackled. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman did not acknowledge that this year we shall spend £48 million on building and maintenance of our national institutions, and that the amount over the next four years will increase by 53 per cent. When will he acknowledge that?

CIVIL SERVICE

Ethnic Monitoring

71. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service whether he will make a statement on his Office's ethnic monitoring policies.

The Minister of State, Privy Council Office (Mr. Richard Luce): The Civil Service is an equal opportunities employer. It has a range of policies to ensure equality of opportunity for all staff. The ethnic origin of applicants and new entrants to the Civil Service is monitored.

Mr. Janner: Is it correct that, as a result of monitoring exercises, the Minister has found that his Department does not employ one person from an ethnic minority in grades one to four, or grade six, and only one in grades five or seven, which is better than most Departments in which not one black person is employed in grades one or two and only one in grades three or four? Does the Minister agree that this is a deplorable reflection on past promotion and recruitment policies? What does he propose to do about it, when the Civil Service is giving such a poor lead to the nation's employers.

Mr. Luce: I acknowledge that the number of Asian or black people employed in senior positions in my Office is small—only 1 per cent. of those above grade seven. The number of Asian or black people employed within the service as a whole reflects the number throughout the country——

Mr. Janner: Only in the lower grades.

Mr. Luce: Indeed, it is only in the lower grades, but as they become more experienced their promotion prospects will increase. I am not satisfied that equality of opportunity is adequate for staff to reach senior levels. I am therefore glad to be able to tell the House that all Departments have agreed to draw up a comprehensive action programme to increase equality of opportunity for black and Asian staff, which I hope will help.

Mr. Marlow: How does one resolve some of the queries arising out of this monitoring nonsense? Does my right hon. Friend have a sort of colour code in his Department? Perhaps, if one was going to be objective about it, my right hon. Friend could help the House by letting us know what the ethnic classification is of the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner), who asked the question?

Mr. Janner: White and Jewish.

Mr. Luce: There are understood procedures, and I understand the question that my hon. Friend asked. It is important that equality of opportunity is ensured, so that there is a fair and open system and that people are recruited on merit.

Recruitment

72. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how many students were recruited into the Civil Service *(a)* direct from schools and *(b)* direct from universities (i) in the past year and (ii) 10 years ago; what were the costs of the recruitment exercise in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: Information is not available in the form requested.

The Civil Service Commission recruited a total of around 7,000 people in 1988 of whom over 2,500 were young graduates. Most recruitment of school leavers is carried out locally by employing departments.

Mr. Greenway: Does a school leaver have as much opportunity to get to the top of the Civil Service as a recruited graduate? If not, will my right hon. Friend do something about the old boy network which prevents this?

Mr. Luce: School leavers who do not have university experience have that opportunity if they have the talent. They can join the Civil Service at a particular level with two A-levels and, if they prove themselves after two years, can be transferred to the fast stream. This means that there are opportunities for people of all backgrounds and experience to work their way to the top.

Ms. Mowlam: Are figures available on male and female recruitment to the Civil Service over the past 10 years? What steps are taken to break down the old boy network on that front as well?

Mr. Luce: I am surprised that the hon. Lady is not aware that there is a programme of action to recruit more women into the Civil Service. The fact that there will be a great decline in the number of 16 to 19-year-olds coming on to the market in the next five years means that the competition will be intense. There already is a programme of action to ensure that there is equality of opportunity for women.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Can my right hon. Friend give figures on the recruitment of students in science and engineering? Does he agree that if there has been an increase it must be good news in terms of better recognition being given to the work of our engineers and scientists?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend is right. Last year was a record year for recruitment of engineers and technology specialists, although there are still problems in other specialist areas, such as computing. Because a much more flexible pay system is evolving in the Civil Service, we can deal more effectively with problems concerning the specialist skills that we so badly need.

Trade Unions

73. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service when he last met representatives of the Civil Service trade unions; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Luce: I have meetings from time to time with representatives of Civil Service trade unions both centrally and during visits to Civil Service establishments. A wide variety of matters are raised.

Mr. Barnes: Is there not a need to protect and, often, to re-establish traditional Civil Service impartiality? The Government oblige civil servants to involve themselves in the production of propaganda, the worst of which are probably the poll tax leaflets. Is it not a disgrace that the Government are forcing civil servants into a position where their traditional standing begins to be threatened?

Mr. Luce: The hon. Gentleman must have missed last week's debate when the rules and regulations on Government advertising were made clear. It is perfectly proper to carry out such advertising, provided that it is in no way party political. I would go much further than that and say that it is surely the duty of any Government to ensure that their citizens know their rights and responsibilities and the important implications of legislation. It is important that the community should know for its own sake the facts and details of the community charge.

I totally refute the suggestion that the Civil Service is not impartial. I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the fact that the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee recently stressed that in its view the Civil Service was certainly impartial.

Mr. Kirkhope: Has my right hon. Friend discussed with representatives of the Civil Service trade unions further placements of their members in industry and commerce, outside the Civil Service? Has he had any response from the trade unions to such initiatives?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend is right. He may be aware of the bridge programme, which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and I launched about two months ago, in which we are drawing further attention to industry and commerce on the prospects of more secondment and more exchanges between the Civil Service and the private sector. There has been an initial response to the programme. I hope that there will be an increase in such exchanges. I have no reason to believe that the trade unions object to them.

Dr. Marek: Did the Minister consult the trade unions before the Secretary of State for Social Security made his statement to the House recently about operational changes within his Department? What do the trade unions think about the matter.?

Mr. Luce: My right hon. Friend made it plain in his announcement last week that he would consult the trade unions on the staff changes, as is the case with every agency that we establish. I would like to take this opportunity to stress the significance and importance of my right hon. Friend's decision, which will ensure that the vast bulk of the operations of the benefits office, of the national insurance contribution service and of the information technology service are turned into agencies with clear performance targets, so that the services to the consumer can be made plain and can be improved upon. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will welcome that warmly.

Agencies

74. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service whether any new Civil Service agencies have been established since 24 April.

Mr. Luce: No further agencies have been established, but on 17 May my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security announced that he had decided that virtually all the operational tasks of his Department should be given agency status with clear target dates for when those agencies should be launched. I expect more agencies to be set up before the summer recess.

Mr. Key: That is good news. Will my right hon. Friend tell the House what improvements he is considering in training for the management and delivery of services to the public? However, will he also consider the implications for the many staff who face a considerable period of uncertainty in the agency programme, such as those at the aircraft and armaments experimental establishment at Boscombe Down, about which no decision has yet been made on agency status?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend is right to stress the importance of those developments. Part of their purpose is to ensure improved performance and better management of the service and services to the public, and I believe that those aims will be achieved. In the announcement of all the agencies, plenty of time is being given. In the case of the largest agency—the benefit service—which involves 70,000 people, the change will not be made until spring 1991. That will give plenty of time to look at the future and to plan the staff required.

Soviet Diplomats and Journalists (Expulsion)

3.30 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the expulsion by Britain of eight Soviet diplomats and three journalists and the expulsion by the Soviet Union of a similar number of British diplomats and journalists.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Geoffrey Howe): The Soviet ambassador was asked to call at the Foreign Office on Friday 19 May. He was informed by the political director, Sir John Fretwell, that 11 present members of the Soviet community in London, and a further three who have recently departed, had been carrying out activities incompatible with their status. Mr. Zamyatin was asked to arrange for their withdrawal within 14 days. He was also informed that we were declaring persona non grata three Soviet officials who had recently left. I am arranging for the names of those concerned to be circulated in the *Official Report*.

Less than 36 hours later, on the evening of Saturday 20 May, our ambassador in Moscow, Sir Rodric Braithwaite, was informed by the Soviet Foreign Ministry that eight members of our embassy staff and three British journalists were required to leave the Soviet Union within two weeks. A further three former members of the embassy were declared persona non grata. In addition, a quota would be established for the personnel of British organisations and representatives in Moscow.

The decision of Her Majesty's Government was taken only after very careful consideration and on the basis of incontrovertible evidence. By contrast, the Soviet Union's almost instant mirror-image response has no possible justification. It is all the more to be deplored that the Soviet Union should have chosen, in these circumstances, to expel three British correspondents whose independence is not in question. Their work has contributed directly to the recent significant improvement in relations between our two countries, which has been welcomed by the whole House. It was primarily to give the Soviet Union an opportunity to show that this improvement extended to an area where Soviet behaviour has been at its most unregenerate that we decided not to give any initial publicity to our decision to expel members of the Soviet community.

The Soviet Union's response to that deliberate restraint on our part shows how far it still has to go to live up to the standards of behaviour that the free world regards as normal. Even so, we shall continue to work to sustain the improvement in relations that has taken place and to which we attach importance. But we shall not turn a blind eye to unacceptable activity, which threatens our national security and so the safety of our citizens.

Mr. Kaufman: The Opposition regard the expulsion of three reputable British journalists from Moscow as wrong and completely without justification. We deplore any proven cases of Soviet espionage in this country. We assert the right of Britain to take proper action to protect national security and we ask the Government the following questions.

Why were the expulsions of Soviet nationals from Britain handled so incompetently, with the news announced not in London by the Foreign Office but as a result of Soviet action in Moscow? Did the Foreign Secretary really delude himself that he could keep this action quiet? Were the expulsions the best way, or indeed the only way, of handling the issue? Could not the problem have best been sorted out directly during the visit of President Gorbachev to Britain last month? When did these cases come to light? Was it during the last few days or was it earlier? Did the Government take into account the danger of tit-for-tat reprisals? Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman worried about the serious deterioration in British-Soviet relations that is now occurring, with Mr. Genady Gerasimov today warning of a further 170 expulsions of British citizens from the Soviet Union to bring its quota into line with our limit of 205 Soviets here?

British security must be safeguarded, but is it best safeguarded by reawakening cold war attitudes on both sides?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I was tempted to welcome the support that the right hon. Gentleman offered me in the first two or three sentences of his question, but in the light of the hand-wringing querulousness with which he continued, I do not now find it possible to do so. I explained to the House why we took the action in that way, precisely for the deliberate purposes that I have described. If I had announced these matters in a different fashion, ahead of the announcement made in the Soviet Union, the right hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends would have been the first to accuse me of provocative cold war attitudes. The decision to expel those people was taken only after the most careful consideration, after a long period in which the Soviet Union had been increasingly aware of our deep concern about such matters.

We are not alone in finding it necessary, sadly, to take such decisions. We are aware that a total in the past five years of 248 Soviet officials have been required to return to the Soviet Union from postings abroad, including expulsions in this country. In the past 12 months alone, a total of 24 Soviet officials have been expelled from 12 countries. We had no alternative but to take this action now, in the light of the mounting evidence of an accumulating risk to the security of the people of this country. I invite the entire House to support what we have done.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that many of us have been impressed by the efforts of President Gorbachev to introduce more glasnost and openness in Soviet affairs, such as more openness in its conduct of foreign policy? While applauding my right hon. and learned Friend's reticence in announcing the action that was taken, I am aware that the Soviet response of expelling highly reputable journalists who had carried out their normal functions of reporting the news shows that the malign influence of the KGB is still abroad in the Soviet Union. Will my right hon. and learned Friend take it from those who want more co-operation with the Soviet Union that we are deeply depressed by the evidence that the KGB has not been put out to grass?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful for my right hon. Friend's support, especially over the way in which we have handled the announcement. He knows that no one has

striven harder than my right hon. Friend and myself, during the six years that I have held this office, to promote an improvement in east-west relations. My right hon. Friend and I have sincerely and warmly welcomed any improvements. We shall continue to welcome all the evidence of new thinking that President Gorbachev and my opposite number, Mr. Shevardnadze, have brought to the conduct and management of Soviet foreign policy. That makes it all the more regrettable that these matters have demonstrated a continuance of certain activities and of an attitude that shows that, at least in this area, new thinking has not yet penetrated the Soviet structure. We wanted to give that a chance to happen, and we still hope that it will.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Will the Foreign Secretary make it clear to the Soviet Government that both this House and this country regard the right of independent reporters to report independently as a fundamental civil liberty? Can he assure the House that there was no means other than expulsion to remove those Soviet citizens from this country? Could not that have been secured by a voluntary arrangement, which would not have created the resulting tension?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I welcome the hon. and learned Gentleman's first point. It is regrettable that the Soviet Union should have chosen to disregard the legitimacy of independent journalists' activity just at the conclusion of the London Information Forum, during which both east and west exchanged views to try to establish that principle.

It is not possible to take action other than expulsion in cases of such unacceptable activity. That has been plainly underlined by the unwillingness of the Soviet Union to respond to our action in the way that I had hoped.

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the vast majority of people in Britain will welcome his action and deplore the Opposition's wimpish attitude? Does he further agree that this unhappy episode makes it clear that there is another face to the Soviet Union, which has nowhere near been exorcised yet, and that it behoves us to keep up our guard for the foreseeable future?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I welcome my hon. Friend's support and endorse his last point. The continuance of such conduct makes it necessary for us to remain vigilant in all aspects of the Soviet Union's conduct. I wish to emphasise one point, which I am sure has the support of the whole House—that we would prefer to live in a world in which the Soviet Union, in this matter, had caught up with some of its new thinking in other matters. The world would be a far better place if the Soviet Union was willing to discontinue such unacceptable activity, which unfortunately still affects its relations with many other countries.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): I agree that the expulsion of the three journalists is foolish and that their work in the Soviet Union has been of great value. What does the Foreign Secretary mean by "new thinking"? Does not spying take place by all countries? During the past few minutes one would have thought that only the Russians engaged in spying. Would it be a good idea to hold a conference not only to balance nuclear and conventional weapons but to balance the amount of spying carried out by all countries?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The right hon. Gentleman is right to pay tribute to the three journalists, who are all experienced writers and who have provided faithful reporting, of a high quality, on the Soviet Union. That has been in the interests of both countries. I must make it clear that the diplomats concerned have, in their different areas, also made an important contribution to relations between our two countries.

The right hon. Gentleman must surely appreciate from his experience in office, supported by the figures that I have given the House, that the scale and nature of unacceptable activities undertaken by the Soviet Union are in a class of their own and have continued unabated during recent years. That is why we have had to take this action.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that this action justifies the Government's cautious approach throughout the glasnost and perestroika of the past few months? Is he aware also that the term "deliberate restraint" is not in Opposition Members' vocabulary and that, by raising the matter in such a way today, they have demonstrated their total inadequacy to run the foreign affairs of this country?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not find it difficult to agree with my hon. and learned Friend's last point. I cannot emphasise too strongly that, in our handling of this matter, we were concerned only to take the right decisions for the security and safety of the people of this country. We were not looking for any kind of propaganda advantage. With the success that has been acclaimed on both sides of the House, we continue to remain committed to the improvement of relations betweeen East and West. *[Interruption.]* The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), who was muttering from a sedentary position, is now repudiating the tribute that he has paid on many occasions to Her Majesty's Government's success in improving relations between East and West. That is our objective. It is a matter of the utmost regret that that kind of conduct on the part of Soviet authorities should continue.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is the Foreign Secretary aware that although, unfortunately, there are several KGB people stationed in this country who could not care less about improving Anglo-Soviet relations, there is speculation that other people—certainly those on the Tory Benches and in other places—also could not care less about the undoubted improvements in relations which, as the Foreign Secretary has admitted, have occurred between the Soviet Union and this country? Is the Foreign Secretary aware also that there is added speculation that the Prime Minister herself wanted an issue prior to the NATO summit to try to demonstrate that the Soviet Union remains the enemy?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman's question is down to the usual quality of his interrogation. As I told the House this afternoon, the action that we have taken was taken in the face of accumulating evidence that could not have been allowed to continue any longer. It has been taken with regret, because we would like to see an end to such activity on the part of the Soviet Union. We are determined to go on working in the future, as we have done in the past, for improved relations. We only hope that the Soviet Union will understand exactly what that should entail on its part.

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that Russian intelligence and secret services had an independent existence within the Soviet state long before the Soviet Union was ever invented—back to the days of Peter the Great? Does he recognise that, for Russian intelligence, glasnost and perestroika mean "take the foreign suckers for a ride"?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I would not follow my hon. Friend in the full sweep of his eloquent denunciation. However, I remind him that the whole House has welcomed what President Gorbachev is trying to achieve for the Soviet people and for the improvement of relations between that country and the rest of the world. Perestroika and glasnost are part of that. The whole House should join me in regretting the extent to which those propositions manifestly do not apply to the matters with which we are concerned today.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): What is the Foreign Secretary saying to Mr. Roxburgh, one of the journalists involved, who went into print to say that these matters are rather better handled in a number of other countries such as Germany and France? Without being offensive to the Foreign Secretary, he will forgive me for asking whether, in the light of GCHQ and Zircon, the incontrovertible evidence has been submitted to the Security Commission. For example, does Lord Griffiths of Govilon, a High Court judge and chairman of the Security Commission, agree that it is incontrovertible evidence?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The matter has been handled in accordance with the normal standards that apply to matters of this kind, without——

Mr. Dalyell: The normal standards are Westland.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: —without enthusiasm and with great regret. We have concluded that the action that we have taken was absolutely necessary. To remove the impression that was left by his question, I remind the hon. Gentleman that, in the past 12 months alone, Soviet officials have been expelled from a dozen countries covering a wide range of political backgrounds. This is the inevitable response to the character and quality of such Soviet action.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): Will my right hon. and learned Friend join me in congratulating the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) on giving the House a courageous and rather terrifying insight into Labour party security policy?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I concur with that.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Foreign Secretary confirm that the statements made by some of his colleagues today suggest that—contrary to all the meetings between Gorbachev and the Prime Minister and others in this country—they want the cold war flames to be fanned once again?

How many diplomats have been sent back to South Africa, apart from the three referred to earlier this year? How many have been sent back to Japan or to West Germany? If the Prime Minister is so concerned about the carryings-on in the Common Market, how many have been sent back to Common Market countries?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman can always be trusted to broaden the scope of the question. For his benefit and for the benefit of the House, I repeat that our action in this case has been careful, measured, to the point, and designed to deter the continuation of unacceptable activity by and on behalf of the Soviet Union. This is action that we have been compelled to take, together with many other countries in the free world. We hope that the Soviet Union will learn its lesson, because the whole House wants to see a comprehensive, genuine and sustained improvement in relations with the Soviet Union. That will not be possible on the scale that we would wish as long as misconduct of this kind continues to take place.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that this is a private notice question and an extension of Question Time. We must now move on to a statement by the Secretary of State for Defence.

Following are the names:

List of those Soviet Officials currently in London who have been given 14 days notice to leave

A. A. Bagin, embassy driver
N. L. Kolodin, air attaché
I. N. Kudashkin, Soviet trade delegation
I. N. Kuzmin, Novosti press agency
S. V. Kuznetsov, third secretary, Soviet embassy
A. V. Makarukov, attaché, Soviet embassy
I. N. Peskov, TASS
Y. P. Sagaydak, Komsomolskaya Pravda
Y. A. Smirnov, assistant air attaché
N. G. Tuyev, third secretary, Soviet embassy
M. G. Zhiltsov, assistant naval attaché

List of those Soviet Officials who have left the United Kingdom but who have been declared persona non grata

V. I. Kozlov, former military attaché
A. G. Marshankin, former assistant military attaché
S. I. Novozhilov, formerly at the Soviet trade delegation

Brigade of Gurkhas

3.51 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. George Younger): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the future of the Brigade of Gurkhas.

We have been considering the future of the Brigade of Gurkhas after the United Kingdom withdraws from Hong Kong in 1997. We recognise the concerns of the Gurkhas about their future, but there are many uncertainties inherent in trying to look this far ahead. The international scene is currently in a period of change with welcome improvements in east-west relations and correspondingly better prospects for progress in conventional arms control. Domestically, as a result of demographic factors, the number of young people from whom the Army must recruit is now well below the level of recent years and will continue to be so into the 21st century. Inevitably, recruiting into the British Army will become more difficult as a result.

It is not possible therefore to be definitive at this stage about the future for the Gurkhas after 1997. Major changes in circumstances in the interim, particularly in the size of the British Army as a whole—or developments in the future manning situation—may require us to reconsider. However, on the basis of the information available at present, I have decided that, although the Hong Kong commitment will have ceased, we should plan on a future for the Gurkhas after 1997 based on a viable brigade structure. At present, we see this force being a balance of four Gurkha infantry battalions, squadrons of the Queen's Gurkha Engineers, the Queen's Gurkha Signals and the Gurkha Transport Regiment, together with the necessary infrastructure. It would comprise about 4,000 personnel. I would expect the future Gurkha force to have roles that lie within the main stream of the Army's defence commitments, including, as now, a substantial Gurkha presence in the United Kingdom.

There will be a progressive restructuring towards the new force over several years. The timing of these changes will depend on both the commitments and circumstances facing the entire British Army at the time, and, in particular, on the extent to which it is possible to recruit and retain British soldiers within the Army in the face of the demographic difficulties. These difficulties may also lead us to increase the number of Gurkhas to be retained. If necessary this can be considered at a later stage. The present arrangements with the Government of Nepal, whereby Gurkhas are recruited and discharged in Nepal and remain Nepalese citizens at all times, will continue.

No change in the current deployments of Gurkhas is envisaged until withdrawal of a battalion from Hong Kong takes place, which would not be before 1992. No major decisions are needed on the future of this battalion until next year, when we shall have a clearer picture of the impact of demographic trends on army manning.

The House will wish to know that the Government of Nepal have been informed, in advance, of our plans.

Finally, I should like to emphasise that the Gurkhas have served the Crown with distinction since 1815. They have fought alongside British troops in many theatres, including two world wars and the Malayan emergency; and most recently they served in the Falklands campaign. This announcement contains the elements necessary to demonstrate to the Gurkhas that we are planning for them to have a worthwhile and viable future in the British Army after our withdrawal from Hong Kong. As such, it will, I am sure, be welcomed by them, by this House and by the country at large.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Despite what the Secretary of State would have us believe, we view with great dismay a real cut in the number of Gurkhas serving in the British Army. There will be a cut of 50 per cent. from 8,071 personnel serving in the Gurkha brigade to 4,000. That is a substantial cut in anyone's terms.

The Secretary of State has presented us with a mess of words and he has not come up with many answers. The number of Gurkha battalions is to be reduced from five to four, and we want to know how he will account for the 4,000 personnel. Are all the Gurkha battalions to consist of three companies rather than four? If so, to what use will the remaining companies be put? Are we to understand that the engineer, signal and transport regiments are to be reduced to mere squadrons? How many personnel are to be lost from these units?

As the Secretary of State has said, from the point of view of tradition and history the Gurkhas have served us well for about 174 years. They served mainly on the Indian subcontinent during the previous century but in this century their battle honours reflect brave service in Europe, the middle east and, more recently, in the Falklands.

Their 13 Victoria crosses, which they have won since 1914, are ample testimony to the loyalty, courage and steadfastness of these great soldiers.

The enlistment of Gurkhas in the British Army has been vital to the economy of their native country of Nepal. It is stated in the admirable report of the Select Committee on Defence on the future of the Gurkha brigade, which was published earlier this year, that the value to Nepal of the British Gurkhas is about £30 million annually. As the report states, that is two and a half times the United Kingdom's overseas aid to Nepal. What proposals do the Government have to replace that? Are there to be further discussions on aid? Rather than inform the Nepalese Government, may we have an assurance from the Secretary of State that the Government will have serious discussions with the Nepalese on the imposition of a 50 per cent. cut in the income that they derive from the British Gurkhas?

What will be the future of the British military hospital in Katmandu? We know that it is to be handed over to the Nepalese in 1990, but will the Government carry out their promises of aid and support in the handover period?

The Secretary of State suggested that he was making a "nothing" statement. He seemed to suggest that he could pick things up in future. He seemed to be saying in a rather insulting way to the Nepalese, "You can have your soldiers back home now but when we want to pick them up again in future, we shall do so." I think that it is a shabby statement.

Mr. Younger: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) for his tribute to the Gurkhas and the remarkable service which they have given. I was rather surprised by his reaction to my statement and I think that the Gurkhas will be surprised as well. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the Gurkhas' present role is to reinforce security in Hong Kong. We are talking about a position

[Mr. Younger]

after 1997 when, by definition, there will be no such role. The maintenance of a Brigade of Gurkhas is a real gesture of our appreciation of what the Gurkhas have done and what they can do in future. It is an enhancement of what is available to the British Army. The statement will be more widely welcomed than the hon. Gentleman seems to think.

I can confirm to the hon. Member that the companies in the battalions which will continue will probably number three instead of four. That will mean that they can match up more easily with the role of the other battalions which they will work alongside in the British Army, which will have three companies.

The squadrons will be reduced from regimental size to independent squadron size although, as I made clear in my statement, the expected figure of 4,000 can and perhaps will be increased when the effect of the demographic factors is considered. I appreciate what the hon. Member for Rhondda said about the economy of Nepal. We are very conscious of that factor because we value our relationship with the Government of Nepal on this matter. We will continue discussion with the Nepalese Government. We have already told the Nepalese Government that the hospital at Dharan—not Katmandu, as the hon. Member for Rhondda said—will be handed over to the Nepalese Government. The Nepalese have welcomed that. As that hospital deals almost entirely with Nepalese civilian patients, that move seems appropriate. We shall help the Nepalese Government to manage the transition and to pay for the handover business. We shall continue discussions with them.

I also welcome what the hon. Gentleman said about the report of the Select Committee on Defence. The report was immensely helpful and very well researched. I join the hon. Member for Rhondda in thanking all the members of the Select Committee and my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates), the Chairman of the Select Committee, for all their work.

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, while his general announcement about the future of the Gurkhas is welcome, the almost total lack of any detail after such a long delay is difficult to understand? This will still leave much uncertainty and anxiety in the many places that members of the Select Committee on Defence visited during the course of our inquiry where Gurkhas are to be found.

In particular, will my right hon. Friend confirm what I inferred from his reply to the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers)—that the figure of 4,000 is very much the worst case figure which he thought he should set? Even the detail of reducing from five to four battalions and reducing the companies to three per battalion does not add up if my right hon. Friend says that all the infrastructure—the infantry and supporting arms and services—are to be retained in some form. In that context, is it planned to have a Ghurkha brigade or to merge the Ghurkha troops with British brigades, which would help my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State because there would be less infrastructure? How is that to work out?

If more Gurkha soldiers and their families are to be stationed in this country I can state that, from experience of the Gurkha battalion in my constituency, they will be most welcome. Over the past few years they have been outstanding members of the community and they are extremely welcome wherever they go. I am sure that their brothers who follow from Hong Kong will be just as welcome in this country.

Mr. Younger: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments and for the work that he and the Select Committee on Defence put into this matter. I appreciate what he says about the detail, which cannot be included in the statement. However, I hope that that will not lead to any feeling of uncertainty among the Gurkhas. As my hon. Friend acknowledged, the figure that I announced today of a brigade strength Gurkha regiment with four battalions and a minimum number of 4,000 men is the figure which we definitely expect to be required after 1997. As I made clear in my statement, it may be necessary in due course, if other recruitment falls, to have a rather higher figure. I can confirm that we believe that the minimum viable number is about 4,000, as I have said. We certainly envisage that the battle order of this brigade and the strength of 4,000 allows for three infantry company battalions at full strength with the independent squadrons.

With regard to the brigade structure, there will be a Brigade of Gurkhas with a brigade headquarters for administration. However, the operation of the Gurkha units will be tied in with that of the rest of the British Army according to where the particular units are serving.

With regard to the future and the uncertainty to which my hon. Friend referred, I must state that we are talking about providing in 1989 for a situation which will occur after 1997. With the best will in the world and long-term planning, that is a long time in the future. The fact that we have been able to give this element of assurance—the statement involves a rock-bottom level of assurance—should reassure all those who are concerned about the Gurkhas that we consider that their very valuable service should continue in future.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): The Secretary of State paid tribute to the Select Committee on Defence and to its First Report on the future of the Gurkhas. Does he accept that his announcement today in reality rejects the Select Committee's conclusions? In particular, on what basis has he rejected the Select Committee's conclusion that

"The evidence of the Ministry of Defence gives us no grounds for concluding that a cut in the number of Gurkha infantry battalions is justified"?

Similarly, on what grounds did he reject the Select Committee's recommendation that

"there is good reason to suppose that the British Army will need them, in something like their present numbers, well into the 21st century"?

Do the proposals for redeployment involve consideration of a role in the British Army of the Rhine? Are the Gurkhas to be confined to the United Kingdom mainland or will they be available for service throughout the United Kingdom?

Mr. Younger: I thank the hon. and learned Gentleman for his comments. However, I do not agree that the statement amounts to any rejection of the report of the Select Committee on Defence. If we had decided to keep the Brigade of Gurkhas at its present full strength of about 8,000 after 1997 when the Hong Kong commitment, which takes up so much of their strength now, had gone, that would have been an enormous enhancement to the forces available to the British Army. I hope that everyone,

including my colleagues on the Select Committee on Defence, will accept that that would have been a very exceptional step to take. We have given a clear signal. Our minimum viable level for the Gurkhas ties in well with the view expressed by the Select Committee.

The roles which the Gurkhas can carry out in future will be broadly similar to those of other battalions in the British Army. However, there are some roles for which the Gurkhas are perhaps not so suitable as other British battalions; in particular, for service in infantry battalions in Northern Ireland where language problems would make them less suitable. However, there are many other roles in the British Army which the Gurkhas fulfil just as well as other battalions and we hope to weld them in there.

There is nothing new with Gurkhas being stationed in the United Kingdom. We aim to continue their present terms and conditions of service as closely as we can.

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): Will my right hon. Friend accept the congratulations of the majority of the House on his firm commitment to a minimum level of 4,000? However, that figure begs a number of questions. What is the future of the long home leave system? Can we be sure that 15 to 20 per cent. of a Nepalese battalion will still be able to go on long leave, which is essential to maintain their cultural and home ties? Is the present plan likely to affect the arrangement whereby the Ghurkhas carry their own reserves? That is one of the main reasons why the Gurkhas have four companies instead of three. Does he expect that they will be tied into the Territorial Army in some way or to some other organisation?

Mr. Younger: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who has a long and deep interest in the Gurkhas, for his congratulations on the general tenor of the statement. I confirm that we shall keep the long leave system and that the battalions' future strength and obligations will allow sufficient scope for the existing leave system to be continued. The main reason for having the fourth company in Gurkha battalions is their enormously manpower-intensive role on the Hong Kong border. When that role ends, three companies—as in other British battalions—will be more appropriate. The strength of the Gurkha battalions will allow for that three-company set-up still to provide for the essential long leave system that my hon. Friend mentioned.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): The Secretary of State should not believe that churlishness causes right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House to think that his statement has some of the charactistics of a colander. I appreciate that the right hon. Gentleman must take into account the variables that can arise between now and 1997, and that it makes sense for him to be canny. I do not blame him for that. Perhaps I can plug just one hole in the colander. The Secretary of State will recall that at the time of press speculation and comment when the Select Committee was considering the Gurkhas' future, one school of thought of questionable origin was that the Gurkhas may be suitable for one type of warfare but not for another. I refer not to Northern Ireland but to their role in high tech, modern rapid response situations. The suggestion made in the media was that perhaps the Gurkhas do not think quickly enough. Will the right hon. Gentleman put that argument to bed once and for all and counter it, here and now?

Mr. Younger: Yes, certainly. I am glad to respond to the hon. Gentleman by countering that suggestion completely. The Gurkhas are not only extremely good soldiers who fought extremely well in many different conditions and theatres, but are clearly very adaptable. I have no doubt that they can cope with any task that they are given.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): Is my right hon. Friend aware that my right hon. and hon. Friends and I warmly congratulate him on making the long-term decision that he has, not just for reasons of recruitment but because—and this is the important factor—it maintains our honourable link with the Gurkhas over a great many years? Looking to the future, will my right hon. Friend give consideration not only to the Gurkhas' roles out of area but to roles that need extra support within NATO itself?

Mr. Younger: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments. It is a long-term decision in the sense that it secures a long-term future for the Gurkhas when their present major role disappears. That is the good side of the long-term decision. The less good side is that it is not possible this far in advance to make detailed pronouncements about precisely where each part of the Gurkhas will serve. I take my hon. Friend's point about the Gurkhas' future roles. They will be available for most general duties throughout the British Army—the same as other infantry battalions.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Will the Secretary of State reflect that Nepal needs help here and now? Without going into the merits of the country's very unfortunate dispute with India, is it not a fact that Nepal's forests are being cut down to provide fuel because that has been denied to the country, and that it is currently in a terrible economic situation? As a token of gratitude for much service, ought not the British Government to do something here and now? Will the right hon. Gentleman at least undertake to read my Adjournment debate tomorrow night, on the problems of tropical rain forests when I will describe the ways in which Nepal can be helped, and then discuss it with his hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development?

Mr. Younger: I shall certainly read the hon. Gentleman's Adjournment debate with great interest and —although I am sure that this will not be necessary—I shall draw it to the attention of my hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development. By making further use of the Gurkhas' excellent military skills, we indirectly make a contribution to the Nepalese economy, and we are glad to do so. However, overall responsibility for aiding the Nepalese economy is a matter for my hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas development, and I shall ensure that the hon. Gentleman's remarks are drawn to his attention.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): All those like yourself, Mr. Speaker, who served in the incomparable Indian Army in the second world war will know of the Gurkhas' legendary qualities, including their steadfastness and their courage. This country owes them a great deal of gratitude. Does my right hon. Friend acknowledge that one cannot separate soldiers from the society that breeds them? Nepal is basically a very poor country and has a need for economic aid. While we warmly welcome the promise made about the hospital at Dharan, it is not

[Sir Bernard Braine]

enough. Can my right hon. Friend say whether continued economic support will be given to Nepal, not in the 1990s but from now on?

Mr. Younger: I appreciate my right hon. Friend's remarks about the enormous respect and gratitude that we all have for the Gurkhas, for what they have done, are doing and will continue to do in helping the British Army in their incomparable way. We want to do all that we can to help our friends in Nepal, in any way that we can. However, as my right hon. Friend will appreciate, my role as Secretary of State for Defence is limited to ensuring that the Gurkha element is well organised and properly run. I hope that my statement is reassuring about that aspect. Nevertheless, I shall ensure that my right hon. Friend's remarks also are drawn to the attention of my hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development.

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware that he is to be congratulated on ending a period of uncertainty? Nothing is more debilitating than uncertainty. Can my right hon. Friend say more about the future of the Gurkhas, not only in the context of their connection with the United Kingdom but their role in other countries, such as Brunei? Will my right hon. Friend acknowledge that tributes have been paid by right hon and hon. Members in all parts of the House to the wonderful work that the Gurkhas have done and will continue to do, thank God—and I do not mean that irreverently—in helping us all to maintain a free world? It is gratifying that the whole House unites in paying great tribute to the Gurkhas for that. The truncation of the association is sad, but it is joyful that the link will be continued, albeit on not such a substantial scale as in the past.

Mr. Younger: I strongly agree with my hon. and learned Friend that the ending of uncertainty is important, and something for which all concerned with the Gurkhas have hoped over a considerable period of time. My feeling is that my statement today will do just that. I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend for reminding the House of the remarkable role that the Gurkha battalion plays in Brunei. The Sultan of Brunei has been informed of the situation, and I am grateful for the hospitality that he extends to the Gurkha battalion in Brunei. It plays a useful role there, and one that we welcome.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): Together with four other hon. Members and a Member of another place, I was privileged to be in Nepal in January, but under different auspices than the Defence Select Committee. We saw at first hand the significant economic and environmental problems that confront Nepal. As was mentioned by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) they are not helped by India's present blockade. Is my right hon. Friend aware that there will be a welcome not only in Nepal but in our constituencies—which attach importance to the Gurkhas' past service—for the care he has taken hitherto and for his close consideration of the points raised today? Is he aware also of the importance that the people of Nepal attach to the hospital at Dharan, and can he give further details about how the British Government will assist its transfer?

Mr. Younger: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, and take very seriously the points that he and others have made about the economy of Nepal. To allay some of their anxiety, it is worth repeating that there will be no reduction in the present strength of the Gurkhas until at least 1992, and that the economic benefits of the current set-up will continue until and even after 1997.

Although the hospital has been dealing with military personnel, the overwhelming majority of patients have been civilian, and the Nepalese Government welcome the proposal that it should become a civilian responsibility. British assistance in the running of the hospital will, however, continue for some time, and discussions are in progress about how that should be done.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): Having served in the army for a short time, let me join those who have paid tribute to the Gurkhas, and those who have welcomed the good news contained in the statement. Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is a lesson to be learned from the spirit of the Gurkhas? After all, the loyalty and success of a regiment depends on its local connections and origins. When considering recruitment, will the British Army think of restoring the local links—perhaps even of restoring the county regiments?

Mr. Younger: I sympathise with much of what my hon. Friend has said, but—as I am sure he will understand—because the matter affects regiments other than the Gurkhas, it will need to be considered much more carefully on another occasion.

Points of Order

4.21 pm

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I remind you of the exchanges in the House on Thursday, which occur in column 487 and 500 of the *Official Report*? I mentioned the non-availability in the Library of the answer to written question 221, in the name of the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro). I went to the Library at 9.45 pm that day to discover that the answer was still not available. Later that evening I learned that the Secretary of State for Scotland had held a press conference, not in Edinburgh, as I had earlier supposed —not even at Dover house in Whitehall—but, at 2.45 pm, in a ministerial conference room virtually in the Chamber.

We all understand why such things happen, but I put it to you, Mr. Speaker, that it is intolerable that Ministers should arrange for questions to be put down and for answers to be made available to journalists before the time has even come to make them available to Members of the House—and, indeed, that seven hours later, more than six hours after that answer should have been available to Members, it should still not be available to them.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to reflect on how you can help hon. Members. That strikes me as a blatant example of gross manipulation of the procedures of the House and of the media, and an insult to hon. Members. We are entitled to be told what is being said, for the benefit of our constituents. It is not dignity that makes me raise the issue, but the fact that on Thursday I was debarred from making any sensible comment, or asking any sensible question, on behalf of my constituents and those of my hon. Friends in other parts of Scotland.

Mr. Speaker: I have had an opportunity to look into the matter, and I understand that there was an embargoed Lobby briefing on the Scottish aspect of the statement at 2.45 pm last Thursday. Subsequently the text of a written answer arrived late in the Library, and, I understand, was not available until about 6 pm.

I can only repeat what I have said many times before: I regard it as important for Members to be the first to be informed of any Government announcement.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): I agree with the points that you have made, Mr. Speaker. It was clear that arrangements to brief the press at the proper time were not made in this case, and I apologise to the House for the error.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It relates to the scrutiny of European issues and legislation. There was a time when Council meetings were followed by a statement or private notice question in the House. Since Mr. Delors said that 80 per cent. of our laws would be decided in Brussels, that practice seems to have come to an end, perhaps to prove his point.

Last week the wise men of Europe and the unelected institutions decided what was best for our health and what should be written on the fag packets of the people of the United Kingdom. This may seem a piffling little issue, but many people would want to ask the Government what is Europe's competence in that regard, and whether, if it has no competence, it should be challenged. If it is not to be challenged, what precedence does it have? This is very relevant to the powers of the House in future over health matters. Let me give another small but important example——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not go into detail. I think that I have got the drift of his point of order, with which I have some sympathy. May I deal with it?

The matter was raised at Prime Minister's Question Time last week. I understand that the Select Committee on Procedure is looking into how we are to deal with EEC matters in future, and until we have that report it is difficult for me to say anything else.

Mr. Marlow: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. At the weekend an important meeting took place in S'Agara to do with financial matters, including taxation, a matter that the House takes very seriously. Various undertakings were given and various documents were signed. We do not know what those documents and undertakings were. I feel that the House should have the opportunity of having a Minister before it to make a statement or perhaps answer a private notice question on such an important matter, so that at this early stage we can examine what is being done. At a later stage it might be quite impossible for the House to uncover the ground that has already been covered.

Mr. Speaker: I am deeply concerned that the House should not be bypassed in any way, and I shall bear in mind what the hon. Gentleman has said. He will have an opportunity, which he may try to take, to raise the matter at greater length later this afternoon.

Vauxhall By-election

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That Mr. Speaker do issue his Warrant to the Clerk of the Crown to make out a new Writ for the electing of a Member to serve in this present Parliament for Vauxhall in the room of Stuart Kingsley Holland, who, since his election for the said constituency, hath accepted the Office of Steward or Bailiff of Her Majesty's Three Chiltern Hundreds of Stoke, Desborough and Burnham in the County of Buckingham. —[Mr. Foster.]

4.27 pm

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I am becoming concerned when I am cheered from the other side of the House.

I am mindful of the fact that the Spring Adjournment debate is waiting, and I do not wish to deprive my Back Bench colleagues of the chance to raise matters of great import relating to their constituencies, so I shall be as brief as I can.

The Vauxhall constituency contains Brixton and has enormous symbolic importance for black people in the United Kingdom and in the Caribbean, as it was virtually the first place to which they migrated in recent times. Up to 50 per cent. of its inhabitants are estimated to be black and of Caribbean descent, and it is a barometer of black people's progress within the United Kingdom.

The Vauxhall constituency, in the borough of Lambeth, is—regrettably—an area of severe deprivation in every sphere: in education, employment and housing. That was charted in some detail by the right hon. the Lord Scarman OBE in his report "The Brixton Disorders 10-12 April 1981", after his inquiry into those disturbances, which none of us wish to see repeated. Lord Scarman was in no doubt about the level of deprivation and frustration that fuelled them.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Grant: I am sorry, but I must go on.

One of the key aspects of the frustration of black people is their lack of politicial representation. Lord Scarman had this to say about it:

"In addition they do not feel politically secure. Their sense of rejection is not eased by the low level of black representation in our elective political institutions. Their sense of insecurity is not relieved by the liberty our law provides to those who march and demonstrate in favour of tougher immigration controls and 'repatriation' of the blacks."

Mr. Hanley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Grant: No.

"Rightly or wrongly, young black people do not feel politically secure, any more than they feel economically or socially secure."

Mr. Hanley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Grant: No. [HON. MEMBERS: "Give way."] Since the Scarman report, black people in Vauxhall and in other parts of the country have seized the political initiative and elected a substantial number of black local councillors. They have also elected or appointed black leaders of local councils. In doing so, they have shown their determination to use the political system rather than other means to redress their disadvantage.

That has not been easy, because the present Government have taken a number of steps in order to disfranchise black people. Some Lambeth councillors have been disbarred from office over rate capping. The Local Government and Housing Bill that is going through Parliament at this moment will make it even more difficult for black people to be selected as parliamentary candidates and to become councillors. The positive action programmes that have been put in hand by the local authority in Lambeth to ease the disadvantage of the black communities have been vilified by the press and the media and by some Ministers. Despite that, however, substantial progress has been made. The people of Vauxhall, particularly the black people, therefore feel that the next step should perhaps be a black Member of Parliament to represent them in this House.

It might have been expected, knowing the background to the Vauxhall constituency, that the major political parties would think it appropriate to field candidates who could reflect that deeply felt need for black representation at the highest political level. Having been to Vauxhall, I know that a substantial number of black people there having a sense of rejection and resentment at the fact that this opportunity was not seized by at least one political party.

People have asked why it is necessary to have a black Member of Parliament for Vauxhall; could not a white Member of Parliament do the job just as well? In answering that question, I have to point out that it is quite well established in the Labour party and in progressive circles—I almost said "and in other progressive circles" —that the principle that sections of society should represent themselves is paramount and that Parliament should reflect a cross-section of society, but that principle seems to have been rejected in Vauxhall. The main reason why sections of society should represent themselves is because only those who come from particularly disadvantaged sections of society—who have experienced the oppression, the frustration and the degradation that they feel—can understand precisely what is at stake with regard to policies that affect them.

To quote an example, I am unable to produce a child. Some say that that might happen in the future, but it is not possible now. Therefore, I cannot possibly know how women feel about child bearing because I am not a woman. In the Labour party, trade unionists represent trade unions. It would be silly and a nonsense if I were to try to represent young people in society. There is a clearly established principle that the people who are directly affected should represent themselves. In the two recent by-elections in Wales, the candidates had to be Welsh and Welsh-speaking. I support that principle. Local conditions should determine who is selected and positive action should be taken to ensure that people are properly represented.

It is a pity that the parties in Vauxhall did not adopt the principles that were adopted when the candidates for the Welsh by-elections were selected. The imposition of a candidate in Vauxhall is to be deplored. If President Gorbachev had imposed candidates during the recent elections in the Soviet Union, everybody would have been up in arms. In the United Kingdom, however, political parties can impose candidates without a qualm. What particularly concerns me about the imposition of this candidate is the fact that there was a particularly good field of black candidates from which to choose. They were candidates of all political persuasions. Some of the

candidates were to the Left; some candidates were hard Left. A clear choice could have been made among the black candidates who put themselves forward.

One reason has been given for the non-selection of some of the black candidates who were selected by the local Labour party: that they were seen to be controversial. If one is a black politician worth one's salt, one has to be controversial, because this is a racist society. Any black person who attempts to represent black people and put forward black issues properly will be torn apart by the media. If uncontroversial black candidates put themselves forward, they will not be capable of being selected because they will be politically inexperienced and naive and they will certainly not have been involved in raising black issues in the public forum. To expect a non-controversial black candidate to be selected is therefore nonsense.

It is unacceptable, too, that the excuses given for not selecting a black candidate have been publicly expressed in personal terms. The candidates were called "simple." There were other patronising terms. The candidates who were involved in the selection process are experienced. At least one is the leader of a local authority. Another candidate is the deputy leader of a local authority. Other candidates have been councillors for 10 years or more. The calibre of the candidates who put themselves up for selection was of the best. They would have represented any political party with dignity.

The failure to select a black candidate for the Vauxhall by-election will have certain consequences. At the moment there is a lack of representation in the House. Four Members of Parliament out of 650 are black. There are about 50 women Members of Parliament; there may be even fewer. Blacks and women are virtually in the same position. About eight times as many black parliamentarians should be here, and about eight times as many women should be here, too. Given the particular issues involved in Vauxhall, at least one political party ought to have acted positively and selected a black candidate.

I fear that the consequences will be these. There will be a loss of faith in the political system and in the political parties. Black and other minority people will set up separate organisations. If political parties will not allow black people a place in Parliament, black people will find other ways in which to make their voices heard. They will organise separately in areas where they live in numbers and take votes away from those who neglect them. They will join other communities—for example the Moslems—in a broad coalition against racism.

Once again, I quote Lord Scarman's report. *[Laughter.]* I hear some guffaws from Conservative Members. The Government might feel that they have been left out of my speech, but responsibility lies with them and other political parties. Lord Scarman said:

> "There is a lack of a sufficiently well co-ordinated and directed programme for combating the problem of racial disadvantage. Unless a a clear lead is given by Government, in this area as in others, there can be no hope of an effective response. The evidence I have received suggests that the black community in Britain are still hoping for such a lead, although they are cynical about what they see as the previous lack of response from all governments of whatever persuasion. If their hopes are again dashed, there is a real danger that cynicism will turn into open hostility and rejection. This must not be allowed to happen."

Tomorrow's Opposition day debate on inner cities gives the Government an opportunity to say where they stand with the black community in Britain. It provides an opportunity for the Opposition to state clearly and categorically, following the fiasco in Vauxhall, their policies with regard to black and other minority communities. Unless both sides of the House make such clear and unequivocal statements, I fear that black people in Britain will feel that, once again, they can have no truck with and no faith in this parliamentary democracy.

4.41 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): In recent months, I have had cause several times to state the conventions relating to by-elections. The House will by now be well aware that it is customary for the Chief Whip of the party which last held the seat to move the writ for the by-election, and to do so within three months of the vacancy occurring. This is what is happening today and there can be no objection to it. Stuart Holland applied for the Chiltern Hundreds on 18 May. It is in the interests of the people of Vauxhall that they be represented again inthe House as soon as possible. The method of selection of the candidates by the parties involved in the by-election is not the responsibility of the House; I therefore hope the House will now support the motion in the name of the hon. Member for Bishop Auckland (Mr. Foster).

4.42 pm

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): I declare an interest in this matter, since I live in the Vauxhall constituency.

I am not the only hon. Member of this place who lives in that constituency. My right hon. Friend the Patronage Secretary is in his place, and he too lives in the Vauxhall division. My hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren) is also a constituent of the late doctor [HON. MEMBERS: "Late doctor?"] The former doctor. [HON. MEMBERS: " Former?"] The former Member of this place. Not only Conservative Members were constituents of our late colleague; the hon. Members for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) and for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam), those two heroines of the Left, also live in the Vauxhall division.

The arguments as to whether you, Mr. Speaker, should issue your writ for this by-election are finely balanced. It is arguable that the people of Vauxhall need much longer to recover from the shock of the departure of their Member of Parliament.

I have been studying, as you will have been studying, Mr. Speaker, the achievements of our former colleague. He was the author of "The Socialist Challenge." He was also the author of a remarkable work, which some of my hon. Friends have committed to memory, called "The State as Entrepreneur". This breathtaking contradiction in terms was no mystery to our late colleague, because he was a frequent visitor to many overseas lands. I find that he made a journey to Moscow when the House was sitting in October 1987, a further journey to Moscow when the House was sitting in February last year, and another journey to Moscow in November of last year, again when the House was sitting. At least there was one advantage for our late colleague's constituents; we were not troubled frequently by visits from him in the constituency—he was too busy making these journeys.

It will be a source of satisfaction to you, Mr. Speaker, that our former colleague has taken up an appointment which is funded by the European Economic Community. We understand that he has taken up an appointment at the

[Mr. Ian Gow]

university of Florence on a salary designated in European currency units, which is not a currency beloved by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. The equivalent would be £40,000 a year, and it attracts European rates of taxation.

Our former colleague is to be head of the economic and industrial development unit at the university, and no teaching commitments are involved. That will be a matter of some relief to those at the university. In addition to his duties at Florence university, we are told he is a part-time speech writer for Mr. Delors, which gives added justification to some of the criticisms made of Mr. Delors by Her Majesty's Ministers. We are also told that he is a part-time speech writer to the present leader of the Opposition.

The hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) spoke about the selection procedures of his party. I have already explained to the House that in November of last year our former colleague attended a conference in Moscow. A fortnight after he left the capital of the Soviet Union a new text was issued, of which, for greater accuracy, I have obtained a copy, entitled, "Soviet Constitutional Reform", which was issued on 7 December last year and is relevant to the procedures of the Labour party. I shall read the opening sentences of this massive work:

"Elections of people's deputies . . . shall take place in single-seat constituencies on the basis of universal, equal and direct suffrage by secret ballot."

There are precisely the same arrangements for general elections in the Soviet Union as we have here, but here are the changes made in the Soviet Union in December of last year:

"A meeting"—

that is, a meeting to select a candidate—

"shall be quorate"—

that is a rather strange translation, meaning that there shall be a quorum—

"if it is attended by at least 500 voters living in the territory of the constituency."

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): Is it important?

Mr. Gow: That point was raised not by me but by the hon. Member for Tottenham.

The new rules laid down in Russia continue:

"A candidate shall be considered nominated if more than one-half of the participants at the meeting or a majority of the total membership of the relevant body of a social organisation vote for him."

There follow the key words:

"The participants in the constituency election meeting shall be delegated by the work collectives"—

words loved by the Left.

"At least one-half of the participants of the meeting must be voters from that constituency."

That is the key passage.

In Vauxhall, the local comrades wanted to choose their own candidate. They chose a candidate who was black, who was a women and who was a unilaterialist. That choice was overthrown by the central hierarchy of the Labour party. Such an overthrow of local decision making would never have happened in the Conservative party—*[Interruption.]* On the contrary, in the Conservative party, each local association is autonomous, and it is a tribute to the judgment of those associations that we have such excellent Members. So we do not have the same problem as exists in the Labour party.

I was rather saddened by the speech of the hon. Member for Tottenham. He seemed to be telling the house that there should be in this place in proportion to the total population an equivalent number of Jews, Roman Catholics, Asians or Africans. I disagree fundamentally with that proposition. It is perfectly possible for a Roman Catholic Member of Parliament to represent Protestants and atheists. It is perfectly possible for a European Member of Parliament to represent those who are Asian or African and it is perfectly possible for a Jewish Member of Parliament to represent adequately, honestly and honourably those who do not belong to the Jewish faith.

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Gow: I have almost finished my speech.

The sense of shock about the departure of our late colleague is real among the electorate. It might be wise if we were to postpone for a short time the by-election, not least so that further consideration can be given to the excellent points raised by the hon. Member for Tottenham.

4.52 pm

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): I had no intention of speaking and I shall speak for only three or four minutes. We had better get one thing right. The hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) has misled the House on a very important point by saying that the constituency party in Vauxhall had already selected a candidate. That is not true. I do not agree with the decision of my national executive in imposing the candidate, but it is not true that that constituency party had already appointed or selected a candidate. The argument is whether or not the constituency party was allowed to choose one of the candidates who had been nominated or were likely to be nominated. However, I want to put it on record that it is not true that the constituency party had already decided on the candidate. It has not yet reached that stage.

I do not agree with my executive, but the rules are being applied. I did not agree with those rules when they were introduced. The Labour party now lays it down that the national executive can decide the candidate in a by-election. I do not agree with that. I did not agree with it at the time, and I do not agree with it now, but the Labour party has not gone outside the rules, whether or not we agree with the rules.

The hon. Member for Eastbourne always makes amusing speeches in the House.

Ms. Short: No, he does not.

Mr. Heffer: I have always thought that all his speeches are very funny. They are some of the funniest speeches I have ever heard. That does not mean that they have a great deal of content, but they are very funny. I thought that he made quite an interesting speech.

Finally, I appeal to my hon. Friends to consider the local position. In the last analysis, it is vital that the candidate should be decided by members of a local party. Looking back at the history of the Labour party in my city of Liverpool, I do not think that we ever put up a Roman Catholic in a Protestant ward. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] Because it was felt that that might not be politically wise. *[Interruption.]* If Conservative Members will listen for a moment, after a number of years that was changed by the

rank and file in the constituencies, who decided to put up a candidate whether that candidate was Protestant or Roman Catholic, and that has been the position for a long time. The people in Vauxhall should decide the issue, and candidates should not be imposed from outside.

4.57 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Just briefly, my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) referred to the late candidate. If by late he means that he missed the bus, my hon. Friend is wrong. He was early, he got on the gravy train and he has no problems at all. He is an absconding candidate. It is only a shame that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is not here with his encylopaedic knowledge of the perks, the privileges, the financial sustenance that goes with membership of these various European bodies, because I am sure that he would point out to the House the benefits that the previous Member for Vauxhall is taking for himself by turning his back on his constituents and absconding to Europe.

An important point of principle has been touched upon. The candidate that we now apparently have, if the by-election goes ahead as is currently scheduled, has been imposed on the constituency by the party leadership, as my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne has said, under powers which have been surrendered by the Supreme Soviet itself. I ask whether it is a matter of parliamentary privilege that these bullying tactics should be applied to one small constituency in London in such a graphic and heavy-handed way.

Finally, I do not agree with the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) classifying people by their colour and the rest of it, but I have some sympathy with his speech. This is a wonderful democracy that we live in. If the hon. Gentleman sincerely believes that the largest grouping, the largest level of support in the constituency of Vauxhall, would come from black people who also happen to be Socialist—and that is their choice—I put it to the hon. Gentleman that the sensible thing to do, the proper thing to do and the democratic thing to do would be to have such a candidate who could secure the maximum of that support. I put it to the hon. Gentleman that, on mature consideration, if he feels that that is what the people of Vauxhall want, it would be quite wrong if there were not a black Socialist candidate standing in that constituency.

4.59 pm

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): I should like to underline one or two of the points that have been made. It is clear from all the speeches that, whatever happens in Vauxhall, the electorate will not be presented with a Labour candidate selected by the Vauxhall constituency. On that, I have every sympathy with the hon. Members for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) and for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer). The lists produced by my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) of his fellow constituents in Vauxhall did not include the name of the Leader of the Opposition. Therefore, I am not sure why the Leader of the Opposition should have a say in choosing the candidate.

I can underline the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne about how sadly the former hon. Member for Vauxhall is missed by his constituents. He has been missed for some time. I represent the constituency bordering Vauxhall and, time and again, my mail includes letters from his constituents. Time and again people, both black and white, come to my surgery asking me to take up matters affecting the Vauxhall constituency. Why is that? Have they been unable to find a Clapham bus that goes to Florence?

Mr. Gow: Or Moscow.

Mr. Bowis: Indeed, but there may be quicker ways of getting to Moscow than on the Clapham bus.

There is a further point that we should consider before allowing the writ to proceed. That is whether an enormous amount of public money and the time of public servants might be wasted if the by-election went ahead with the imposed Labour candidate. Let us suppose that, despite the efforts of the multifarious elements in the Labour party, the candidate were to win, is there any precedent for such a candidate being deselected within a week?

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That Mr. Speaker do issue his Warrant to the Clerk of the Crown to make out a new Writ for the electing of a Member to serve in this present Parliament for Vauxhall in the room of Mr. Stuart Kingsley Holland who, since his election for the said constituency, hath accepted the Office of Steward or Bailiff of Her Majesty's Three Chiltern Hundreds of Stoke, Desborough and Burnham in the County of Buckingham.

Spring Adjournment

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That this House, at its rising on Friday 26th May, do adjourn until Tuesday 6th June.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

5.2 pm

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): I have no wish to contest the motion before the House. However, there could be a case for returning on 6 November since there would be enormous advantages in that. The Government would not have to face the grevious disability of the House sitting during July, which is when most crises arise and most misjudgments are made. We would all have a good chance of escaping to our constituencies and, in the process, we would lose an entire Session of Parliament. I suspect that that is the only way in which the House can slow down the relentless load of legislation which runs to the detriment of good government in this country.

However, I want to use this occasion for the more modest and traditional purpose of raising a constituency matter—the Health Service in north Shropshire. I make this point in the presence of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House because the topic of the two proposed hospital closures—the Oswestry and district hospital and the Newport cottage hospital—is one of ambiguity. On Oswestry and district hospital there is a question of judicial challenge, and the closure of the cottage hospital has not yet been confirmed by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health. He has said that he will meet a delegation before reaching a judgment. Therefore, it is appropriate that I should direct my remarks to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House. I respectfully request an answer in a letter after due reflection. I also ask that the matter is not referred to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health, for the reasons I have given.

Both hospitals have a great record of service to their local community. Both, by general judgment in Shropshire, perform their task remarkably well and they are served by the inspired work of all the medical staff. It is a classic example of where the judgment of the community is outraged by what is proposed. I have no doubt that part of the difficulty comes from the central underfunding of the Health Service. That is probably the major cause of the proposed closures. There is no doubt that there is a related factor—the judgment of Birmingham regional health authority.

I want to draw my right hon. Friend's attention to a new and developing fact. With the publication of the White Paper, "Working for Patients" we now have the idea of self-governing hospitals. I accept that one cannot draw a neat analogy with the education service, but the development of Whitehall-funded schools is not unlike the proposals for self-governing hospitals.

I wish to see—I believe that it is broad Government policy—a range of self-governing hospitals from the great teaching hospitals to the modest-sized cottage hospitals and all that fall within that spectrum. The hospitals currently under threat because of decisions within the regions should not be snuffed out before having a chance to make their case for self-governing status. It is a modest request but it is highly practical. It was inspired by the fact that so many of the schools that have been granted special Whitehall funding status were confronted by closure proposals. This modest request and the emollient answer it seeks would be well received by me and by a range of political opinion in rural Shropshire.

Currently, there is a spasm of interest in the European Community, with the prospect of the elections on 15 June. Many can convulse themselves into believing that there will be a relationship between the fevered discussions at Westminster and Fleet street and the pattern of voting. Such a consideration leads them to believe that, if my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) would bestow his effusive charms as wholeheartedly in support of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister as she so uncritically supported him when he was Prime Minister, it would be a powerful weapon for Tory fortunes. In my judgment, anything we can do to repair our fortunes and give us the initiative in the health debate would do infinitely more than that—even though, as far as I can judge, that does not have the slightest relevance to the Delors package or anything else.

I make this plea in the broadest and most general political sense. If we are to give a good start to the prospect of self-governing hospitals—it is the topic in the White Paper most likely to confer upon us some sense of initiative—there could be nothing better than that prosepct being held out for the two hospitals in my constituency to which I have referred.

5.8 pm

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): I believe that the House should not adjourn until hon. Members have discussed the growing scandal of the treatment of nuclear test veterans.

It is 40 years since 26,000 British service men participated in British nuclear tests, 14,000 of whom witnessed tests at Monte Bello islands off north-west Australia, Maralinga and Emu in south Australia and Christmas and Malden islands in the Pacific. The Nuclear Tests Veterans Association, of which I am the patron, has been fighting for compensation for years, but so far without success.

I want to direct my remarks to the Prime Minister, although I am glad that the Leader of the House is listening. I have given up hope with the Ministry of Defence, given the deplorable attitude that it has displayed over the years. The Prime Minister claims to have a high regard for service personnel and ex-service men. I do not doubt that for a moment, but she should take a hard look at the way in which the Ministry of Defence is behaving compared with its equivalent in the United States.

In view of the Prime Minister's close friendship with ex-President Reagan, she should compare his utterances about American nuclear test veterans with her own. When signing an Act that provided compensation to American nuclear test veterans one year and two days ago, President Reagan said:

"The Act gives due recognition to the unusual service rendered by Americans who participated in military activities involving exposure to radiation generated by the detonation of atomic explosives. The nation is grateful for their special service, and enactments of (the law) make clear the nation's concern for their continued welfare."

In stark and harsh contrast, the Prime Minister said to me:

"The cause and effect that he says has been proved has not been proved, and therefore compensation is not appropriate."
—*[Official Report,* 9 May 1989; Vol. 152, c. 723.]

Hon. Members must ask which words and which actions show regard for ex-service personnel. When I

asked the Ministry of Defence on 16 may what advice it had about the genetic effects of radiation exposure, it said that although there was some evidence that radiation caused genetic defects in animals, there was no "conclusive" evidence of any genetic damage that had been passed on to children of nuclear test veterans. That is how the mind of the Ministry of Defence works. It denies compensation because there is no "conclusive" evidence, but that is rarely, if ever, available. The intelligent and reasonable approach must be to decide on the balance of probabilities. That method has been adopted by the United States but not by Britain, to the shame of Britain and the Government.

The Act signed by President Reagan compensated atomic veterans who were suffering, or who had died, from leukaemia or thyroid cancer, regardless of exposure level. It automatically compensated for cancers of the small intestine, stomach, liver, bile ducts, gall bladder and pancreas, together with lymphomas and multiple myleoma where more than one rem of exposure was established. No cut-off period for the appearance of cancer was established, although all claims must be filed by the end of 1991.

Naturally, the House is the forum for British parliamentarians, but for a few moments I wish to place on record some of the views of United States senators. In a debate on American nuclear test veterans, Senator Daschle of South Dakota said:

"The scientific evidence strongly suggests a link between the exposure and the diseases listed in HR1811. Some say that we lack definitive proof. How long will we wait for that proof? Will we wait until all these veterans are dead? Are we so afraid of making a mistake in favour of the veterans—of extending benefits when they are not deserved—that we are willing to risk making the opposite mistake of denying benefits to deserving veterans?"

Those important questions should be pondered by the Prime Minister.

Senator Rockefeller of West Virginia made an acerbic comment that could be interpreted as an indictment of the Ministry of Defence. He said:

"I really think it is somewhat incredulous that we are even debating compensation to atomic veterans, people who could not be more deserving . . . for 40 years ad nauseam we have studied this problem, spent millions of dollars, US taxpayers' dollars, to do studies, and none for the atomic veterans. I think that is wrong. I think it is time to bring an end to the research and to the injustice and to respond with recognition and compassion to what these people went through in the line of duty at the orders of the US Government in the service that they were constitutionally sworn to obey. We know enough to act."

Those senators were supporting a Bill proposed by Senator Cranston of California, which provided for the payment of compensation for 13 cancers, compared with the payment for none by the Ministry of Defence. Senator Cranston said:

"I believe that this measure is . . . both a compassionate and fiscally responsible response to the serious and continuing needs and concerns of the radiation-exposed veterans and their families. For them it is simple justice. For us, it is a fulfilment of our responsibilities to veterans injured and injured wrongly through service to our country."

Parliament is as proud of its armed forces as the United States Senate is of its service men and women. The difference is that the United States has taken positive, reasonable and compassionate action on behalf of their nuclear test veterans; we have not. It is paying compensation; we are not. I hope that the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Defence and hon. Members will take note and act accordingly.

5.18 pm

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): I should like to raise three issues with my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House before the House rises for the spring Adjournment.

I make no apology for again raising the issue of drug misuse. As my right hon. Friend knows, I have had an Adjournment debate and have asked several questions about this subject. I am sure that he is aware that what causes me most concern is why money confiscated from drug barons cannot be used by the police in the fight against drugs. I cannot understand why a system that works extremely well in the United States cannot be used in Britain. I remind my right hon. Friend that within the past two months at least £4,300,000 has been taken from the profits of convicted drug offenders. Instead of that money being given to fight the battle against drugs, it goes straight into the Treasury.

I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to the leader column in the *Daily Mail* on Saturday 20 May:

"Two years ago the Metropolitan Police were offered a £16 million reward by the Americans for their help in smashing an international drug ring. They were unable to accept it because of the condition that the money was used in the fight against crime. That was forbidden under the rules of the Home Office, which feared that such an arrangement would result in some forces benefiting more than others.

Yet it seems right that the police should reap some advantage from their successes. A House of Commons Select Committee has now come up with a suggestion. Let the cash go to Bramshill police college, Hampshire, and then the whole force will gain. A model answer to a knotty problem—and with a bit of Thatcherite incentive thrown in."

It seems that the Home Affairs Select Committee—the Select Committee to which the leader referred—and both sides of the House greet the idea with approval. Only the Home Office seems to be out of step. I hope that, before the House rises for the recess, my right hon. Friend will give me the good news that the money will be put to good use in battling against the drug barons in the war against drugs.

I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to the leader in today's *Daily Mail*—I am sorry to quote the *Daily Mail* twice, but it just shows how well-read I am. The leader states:

"This morning we publish an impassioned and authoritative plea for the British Government to back an international ban on the ivory trade. It comes from Richard Leakey, the renowned anthropoligist who has recently been appointed to head Kenya's Wildlife and Conservation Management Department.

At least four African countries, Kenya included, demand that the elephant be listed as one of this globe's most endangered species and hence eligible for complete protection from commercial exploitation. The United States has also joined the campaign. But not Britain. Not yet.

Our Government, the Commons was told at the end of last week, is still thinking about it.

The elephant poachers are not pondering. They are continuing to kill elephants at the rate of 300 a day.

We urge the Prime Minister to procrastinate no longer. Here is an opportunity for her to lead the European Community on an issue of anguished concern to millions of its people."

This matter was raised in business questions on Thursday by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr.

[Sir Fergus Montgomery]

Banks). I was not altogether happy with the reply by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House. The *Daily Mail* leader said:

"The United States has also joined the campaign. But not Britain. Not yet."

Why not? I hope that my right hon. Friend can answer that point before the House rises.

A dog registration scheme is needed as well. There are 6·8 million dogs in Britain and we are supposed to be a nation of animal lovers. I have to say that the more I see of some people, the more I love my dogs. We are told that in 1986 more than 240,000 dogs were officially registered as strays by police in England and Wales. Only about 25 per cent. were claimed back by their owners.

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): I do not know whether there is a great difference between Ulster dogs and English dogs. The Government have introduced a registration scheme for Northern Ireland dogs—Protestant as well as Roman Catholic dogs—but seem to think that a registration scheme in England is not necessary. That shows their lack of knowledge. I fully agree with my hon. Friend's comments.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: My hon. Friend has taken the end of my speech from me. I was going to raise that point. At least 90,000 dogs were destroyed because homes could not be found for them. The total number of dogs, including registered strays, destroyed each year is more than 350,000—about 1,000 healthy dogs a day.

Despite a great campaign by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, there are still far too many people who take on a dog without thinking things through. No doubt, at Christmas they think that it is nice to have a cuddly little pet that the children can play with, but after a while they get sick of it—perhaps it does a bit of damage—perhaps it grows up, and then it is just thrown out.

Dog abuse has increased to record levels. None of this fits our image as a nation of animal lovers. The RSPCA's figures for 1987 show that there were more than 1,800 convictions for neglect, starvation and permanent chaining. I have never been able to understand people who are cruel to either animals or small children—that is past my comprehension. Unfortunately, it happens, and I am sickened when I read some of those cases in our newspapers.

Part of our problem is the difficulty of identifying a dog's owner. The requirement is that a dog should have a name tag, but people ignore that. The chances are that a dog that is roaming has no collar and therefore no tag. Often caring owners put tags on their dogs and sometimes the tags get lost. If all dogs were registered and an element of that registration required that the dog was identifiable by a permanent tag, tattoo, electronic implant or other suitable method, owners could be identified. Any caring dog owner who has lost his dog knows the agony that is suffered. A few years ago, our labrador strayed and the agony that was felt in our house all the time that it was lost and the relief the next day when we got a telephone call to say that it was safe can be appreciated only by someone who cares about dogs.

I cannot understand why the Government are so loth to act on this important issue. A recent opinion poll showed that amazingly 82 per cent. of the public were in favour of taking action. I do not think that many people would support a return to the old dog licence—it cost more to administer than was gained in receipts—but when it was abolished the Government put nothing better in its place. We need a scheme to fund the dog warden service and deter the unthinking, uncaring dog owner.

Registration would assist in identifying the dog and its owner, and indentification is essential if the law is to be enforced and stray dogs returned to their owners. As I said earlier, if the United States can use drug money to fight the drug menace, why cannot we? If in France tattooing is used to identify dogs, in Ireland—I am talking not about Ulster, but about the Republic—silicon implants are used and in the United States technology is widely used, why cannot we do the same?

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): Many of us have some sympathy with my hon. Friend's advocacy of the registration scheme. Will he explain whether he is anxious that such a scheme should be administered by the Government—that is what he seems to be telling the House—or by local authorities? Is there not a dichotomy? Most of the letters that we have received plead for the Government to act. Why should not local authorities take responsibility, as some are doing, by using dog wardens?

Sir Fergus Montgomery: I have very caring hon. Friends. My hon. Friends the Members for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) and for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) have prejudged my comments. I was coming to exactly that point.

An Environment Minister recently saw members of the RSPCA who gathered from the Minister that the Department of the Environment thought that this issue had nothing to do with the Department and was a matter for local authorities.

Mr. Kilfedder: Passing the buck.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: I agree; it is a classic example of passing the buck. The Department seems to believe that local authorities have the power to introduce byelaws. Local authorities are anxious to do what they can—about 200 of them already employ dog wardens—but they find it hard to enforce byelaws without a link between dog and owner. The registration scheme would provide that link.

If this proposal were accepted, it would not necessitate an increase in public expenditure. Implementation of section 37 of the Local Government Act 1988 is all that is required. I remind my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House of early-day motion 348, which is supported by all parties and has been signed by about 250 Members. It shows the strength of feeling in the House on this issue.

I am sure that hon. Members of all parties could testify that their constituency postbags also show that there is a great deal of public support for this scheme. I hope, therefore, that before the House rises for the spring recess, we shall have a statement on when the Government will ensure that confiscated drug assets are used in the fight against drugs, that we shall know what the Government's response will be to backing an international ban on the ivory trade and that we shall know why the Government are refusing to be more positive in ensuring a dog registration scheme.

As my hon. Friend the Member for North Down said earlier, a similar scheme operates in Northern Ireland, where it seems to work well. The director of the Ulster Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals says:

"Not only are dogs looked after better but fewer are suffering from irresponsible and uncaring dog owners."

I hope that when my right hon. Friend replies, he will be able to explain why the Government are being so intransigent over those three issues.

5.30 pm

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): I want to raise the issue of ticket touting, which has become a disturbing and disfiguring feature of the music and entertainment industry in the west end of London and now, unhappily, of major sporting events throughout the United Kingdom. The powers of the police in this matter are extremely limited. The police are entitled to arrest a ticket tout for obstruction but, by and large, the tariff of fine imposed by magistrates is about £50 and in the case of a first offender, it may be rather less. Such a fine operates as little disincentive to a ticket tout who may stand to make many hundreds of pounds in an afternoon's work. Ticket touts deface the streets surrounding many theatres and opera houses, and members of the public are frequently deceived as to the true value of the tickets they have purchased.

Tourists are a particular target, and the reputation of London's west end theatre suffers as a consequence. In *The Times* on 11 February 1989, Patrick O'Hanlon reported on an investigation carried out at the instance of Westminster city council. It said:

"Victims were most frequently from the United States, Canada and Europe. A couple from Canada paid £80 each to the concierge at their hotel for two tickets for *The Phantom of the Opera*. The tickets had a face value of £21. The largest example of overcharging uncovered was £130 paid for each of two tickets with a face value of £19 for *Les Misérables*, a mark-up of approximately 600 per cent'.

The survey confirmed that foreign visitors were the most likely to be overcharged and the report said:

"This has important implications for tourism. Why should tourists pay more for the same product?"

The issue of ticket touts is even more pressing in relation to sport. Wimbledon will soon be upon us and, once again, one of the world's greatest sporting events will be disfigured by ticket touting. People who attended the Calcutta cup match at Twickenham this year will know that to reach their seats in the stadium, it was at times necessary almost to push ticket touts aside bodily. In spite of the best efforts of the Rugby Football Union, it appears that tickets allocated to a school somehow found their way into the hands of others with rather more commercial instincts.

It is in the context of football that the issue of ticket touting requires the most urgent consideration by the House. Witnesses at Lord Justice Taylor's inquiry last week made it plain that the existence of ticket touts and the opportunity to buy tickets at the ground encourage supporters who do not have tickets to attend some football matches. That makes it clear that the activities of ticket touts now have a direct influence on the safety of spectators at major football matches.

Most hon. Members regard ticket touting as morally reprehensible. The Minister of State, Home Office, the hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten), in a reply to my question about 10 days ago, described the practice as "obnoxious". It is obnoxious that, on the day that Lord Justice Taylor's inquiry into the Hillsborough disaster opened, ticket touts were selling £30 tickets for the cup final—which was a remarkable display of skill and ability on Saturday—at £250 each. If ever there was a clear example of a willingness by people with no love for or interest in that occasion to exploit the special nature of a sporting occasion, that is it.

There is a brazenness about ticket touts which passes most understanding. One ticket tout told a reporter from the *Daily Express*, in an article that appeared in the northern edition on Monday 15 May 1989, that he was rather disturbed by the fact that people were exploiting the cup final between Everton and Liverpool. However, he then said:

"Anyway, I can always pull it back a bit by putting even more on the price of Wimbledon tickets."

There is brazenness and an inability to understand how offensive such acts are.

Even some hon. Members claim that ticket touting is merely an exercise in market forces. If that is so, that exercise should be repugnant and obnoxious to anyone with any sensibility. It is now clear that ticket touting may be an important adverse factor in the safety of spectators at football matches. In the evidence heard in the past week by Lord Justice Taylor's inquiry, the link has been clearly proved. As a matter of extreme urgency, we should have a statement from the Government on that before we go off on holiday.

5.36 pm

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): I am delighted to follow the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), because we share a certain affinity and love for sport. I hope that he will remain in his place to hear my few remarks which are on the same subject, although from a different angle. In this wide-ranging debate, I want to talk about a subject of which I may have inadvertently given my right hon. Friend notice in business questions last Thursday—the basis of the Government's attitude to international sport and, in particular, the Government's attitude to sporting relations with South Africa.

As my right hon. Friend will remember, I was somewhat disturbed to learn last Thursday that the three Ministers responsible for sport in England, Wales and Scotland had sent a strongly worded statement to the secretaries of the Rugby Football Union, the Scottish Rugby Union and the Welsh Rugby Union, saying that they should pass on any invitations that might be received from the South African Rugby Board for the forthcoming centenary celebrations on the basis that, as my hon. Friend the Minister for Sport said, should British players accept those invitations, it would have an effect on the future of the Commonwealth games and British competition in sport throughout the world.

It was a sad day when Ministers of the Crown began to take the attitude that players who exercise complete freedom of choice—in this case, they are amateurs who are under no contract of employment and do not have binding business commitments to any employer, as professional sportsmen do—should be not only discouraged, but almost banned from accepting such invitations, although they are entitled to accept them. Many Conservative Members question the Government's wisdom. The Government advocate, rightly, that we should continue

[Mr. John Carlisle]

our economic ties with South Africa, yet they ban those who want to go to that country to play sport from doing so. Many of us find that argument difficult to understand.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: The hon. Gentleman was good enough to refer to our common interest in sporting matters. However, our views are diametrically opposed on the topic he is raising today. Does not the hon. Gentleman believe that it is legitimate for the Minister for Sport and for the Secretary of State for Scotland to draw to the attention of the Rugby Unions the consequence for other sportsmen and, in particular, those who have aspirations to compete in the Commonwealth Games, if the invitations to which he has referred are taken up by individual rugby players?

Mr. Carlisle: I accept what the hon. Gentleman says about his connection with South Africa. Indeed, he is a man of great sporting prowess himself. The objection that I was making to the move of my hon. Friend was on the basis—as reported by *The Daily Telegraph* on Thursday—that it

"would strongly discourage taking action that would facilitate sporting contact with South Africa".

Under the Gleneagles agreement, a declaration on sport that was not signed by this Administration or by any previous Conservative Administration, the Government have a commitment without force of law to point out to those sporting authorities the possible effects of such action. However, it is not the business of any Minister of the Crown to try to put any pressure on the players or the sporting bodies of what is still a legitimate occupation. If it were illegal to play sport against South Africa—or to smoke—it would be a different story.

Therefore, in view of his party's history and his own participation in sporting events, I wonder whether the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East believes that the time has come for Governments to interfere in the selection of sportsmen and sportswomen, whatever country they are playing against. This whole question has arisen at a particularly interesting time——

Mr. Menzies Campbell *rose——*

Mr. Carlisle: I cannot give way to the hon. and learned Gentleman again now, although perhaps I shall later if he still wishes to intervene.

This whole question has arisen at a particularly interesting time, given that, only 10 days ago, on the Saturday before last, when the England rugby team played against Romania, a country that has been castigated with equal vehemence by members of the royal family, the Prime Minister and hon. Members of all parties, not one voice of protest was heard, either from within the Chamber or from outside. Nothing was heard from those anti-sporting bodies that set themselves up to object to sport with South Africa.

Mr. Campbell *rose——*

Mr. Carlisle: I shall give way to the hon. and learned Gentleman later, although I must get on. He must accept that many people find it extremely strange that we can—and I believe that we should—play rugby against a country from behind the Iron Curtain of which there has been such recent vilification in the House, with Oppostion Members using the phrase "that vile regime", but that not one word of protest against that sporting link was raised either by the hon. Gentleman's party, the Labour party or the Government and the party to which I belong.

Mr. Campbell: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. Will he try to distinguish in his own mind, for the benefit of the House, between the actions of the Minister for Sport last week when he wrote to the Rugby Football Union and the actions of his right hon. Friend the Prime Minister towards the British Olympic Association in 1980?

Mr. Carlisle: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman raised that issue before the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) does so, because that will save another intervention. I agree that at that time many Conservative Members felt unhappy, just as my hon. Friend the then Minister for Sport must have felt unhappy, about the objection of the Government of the day, led by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, towards our teams going to Moscow. I have said before and I shall say again that probably the silliest political mistake that I have made was in following my right hon. Friend and my Government colleagues through the Lobby that evening. I have always said that, and I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising that point.

On other matters, I am totally behind my hon. Friends who are responsible for sport; my argument with them is purely on this point, but it is regrettable that they have now aligned themselves to various bodies in the anti-South African brigade which they must find strange bedfellows.

Only an hour or so ago, as I came into the House, I met Mr. Sam Ramsamy who is the general secretary of SANROC, the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee, who is a charming man. He is a South African who has not been near the place for 15 years because he keeps refusing to go there. He runs an organisation that works on the theory that we should not have normal sport in an abnormal society. However, Mr. Ramsamy has found the ground somewhat cut away from him now because the founding father of that organisation, Dr. Dennis Brutus, who has reappeared miraculously from America, and who is a man of far greater stature than Mr. Ramsamy, is now beginning to say that, because of the great advance that has been made in the system of sport in South Africa—in so far as sport can advance within the system of apartheid—we should now be looking towards some form of contact. However, Mr. Ramsamy and SANROC continue to peddle the anti-South African line, being fuelled with funds from Eastern Europe, the World Council of Churches and any organisation that wants to support them. That is why I find it somewhat sad that my hon. Friends almost seem to have seen fit to support their line.

The other people who are affected by this are our friends in the Commonwealth, especially in relation to the Commonwealth games. That was one reason why I found the intervention of the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East so interesting, representing as he does a Scottish constituency. Many people are beginning to say, so be it if—just because British sportsmen and sportswomen choose to exercise what I repeat is their fundamental right of choice to participate in South Africa

in sports which, in many cases, are not represented in other countries—decide that because of that participation they do not wish to take part in the games themselves.

It was a tragedy that at Edinburgh last year, for all sorts of reasons, including the treatment received by Miss Zola Budd, who is a British citizen and who was accepted legitimately into this country—*[Laughter.]* Opposition Member laugh, but I wonder whether they would have laughed if Miss Zola Budd had been black rather than white—[HON. MEMBERS: She would never have got into the country."]—and I wonder what the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) would have said. Be that as it may, the Commonwealth games went ahead and the losers were not those who took part in the wonderful competition and who achieved so much; the losers were the black African countries. Their support comes from the Commonwealth and from the Commonwealth Secretariat, an office in London run by Sir Sonny Ramphal, who is, of course, a man of certain doubtful parentage from Guyana, on the basis of his attitudes towards the well-being of the Commonwealth and towards South Africa.

If the Commonwealth games can be played only on the basis of looking over one's shoulder the whole time to see whether someone is offending in relation to South Africa, which is a country without any connection with those games, something must be wrong somewhere.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North) *rose*——

Mr. Carlisle: I may give way a little later, if the hon. Gentleman can contain himself.

Added to all that, there is the machinery of protest from the United Nations. Only recently the United Nations appointed yet another Sports Commission against Apartheid. Of course, it had certain difficulties in finding members. On 3 October 1988, the first meeting ended in failure because only eight nominations were received from various countries and the commission should have comprised 15 members. Later, however, it was decided to appoint a chairman and a vice-chairman. The representatives came from Nigeria, Peru, the Philippines and the Ukraine. They were noble gentleman in their own way but one begins to question their attitude to and interest in South Africa.

Time and time again, reference is made in this House and elsewhere to the United Nations blacklist, which must have been thought out in the middle of the night by certain people who have what I believe to be an evil intent towards the people of South Africa, whatever the colour of their skin, and especially to those who are sportsmen and women. However, the blacklist was passed by the United Nations and those sportsmen and sportswomen are then vilified wherever they go just because they have exercised their freedom of choice and their right to go to an area or a country where, as I shall explain, they believe that great progress has been made in sport in breaking down the constitution of apartheid.

For the sake of brevity, I shall refer to only two examples. The first refers to rugby which, as many hon. Members know, is almost a religion in South Africa. The South African Rugby Board has made tremendous progress in raising funds, especially in the rural areas, to make absolutely certain that those who play that sport in that country do so on the basis of being free from discrimination on the grounds of "race, colour and ethnic origin" as stated in the Gleneagles agreement. At no club in South Africa that is affiliated to the South African Rugby Board could any hon. Member find any discrimination in selection, the way in which the club is run or the spectators who go to the grounds, unlike the position with those that are affiliated to the South African Council on Sport.

Such enormous strides have been made that Dr. Danie Craven visited Lusaka to meet members of the African National Congress to discuss a basis for the fulfilment of South Africa's desire to return to international sport. The silence from the Opposition was deafening; they said not a word against that initiative. Indeed, words were said by Conservative Members because of the apparent naivety of Dr. Craven. However, that meeting established that even the ANC is prepared to consider whether there should be a place within the international fold for people of whatever sport, and of all colours, who are prepared to promote their sport, despite Government laws of the day, on the basis of no discrimination.

The other major sport where enormous progress has been made is cricket. The South African Cricket Union enjoyed its centenary only a few weeks ago and many notable British cricketers visited South Africa, including myself. No doubt that will prompt the hon. Member for Walsall, North to recite his usual catalogue from the Register of Members' Interests.

Mr. Winnick: How many trips has the hon. Gentleman made to South Africa? Were they paid for by the South African authorities? If, as the hon. Gentleman has previously admitted, that is the case, would it not be better for his reputation if he prefaced his remarks with a declaration to the House?

Mr. Carlisle: If you, Madam Deputy Speaker, had felt such a declaration to be necessary, I am sure that you would have asked me to make one. The hon. Member for Walsall, North has made similar interventions so many times—in fact, almost every time that I speak—that he is probably more up to date with the register than I am. He knows full well that the majority, although not all, of my visits to South Africa have been financed by various authorities within that country, be they sporting bodies, Government, Round Table or Rotary. I have been to that country many times, and always travelled first class and stayed in first-class hotels—information that I am sure the hon. Gentleman wants to have.

I can claim, which the hon. Gentleman cannot, to have some personal knowledge of events in South Africa. His criticism, both inside and outside the House, is always made from afar, as is that of Sam Ramsamy and Sonny Rampha. The hon. Gentleman knows that I am not suggesting that we cannot criticise a country—we have done so in respect of Romania and other countries—without some sense of authority. However, as I and some of my hon. Friends have been to South Africa in various guises, we have a knowledge that the hon. Gentleman, who sits there in his white coat, does not have. I suggest that he accepts the various offers to travel to that side of the free world in the way that his hon. Friends accept offers to travel to the other side.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Does not the Register of Members' Interests state:

[Mr. Frank Dobson]

"The registering of interests is additional to, and in no way a replacement of, the requirement on Members to declare their interests when they speak in debate"?

That requirement is not a convention, but a rule of the House. The hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) should have declared his free visits to South Africa at the commencement of his speech.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I confirm that the words quoted by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) are correct. If hon. Members have interests to declare, it is the custom that they do so at the outset of their speeches.

Mr. Carlisle: I hope, Madam Deputy Speaker, that you will take my original words on the basis that, had I declared an interest that is well known to the House—and I apologise for not doing so—the number of interventions from the hon. Member for Walsall, North would have been pre-empted because he would have had to think of something else to say—which, in his case, is somewhat difficult.

The progress made in cricket is, perhaps, the crux of what is happening in South Africa. Within the past two years, 60,000 black children, who have never even held a cricket bat because they thought cricket a white man's sport, have been coached by players from Britain and South Africa and have enjoyed a game that many hon. Members enjoy. That initiative has, on the whole, been financed by South African companies. The crucial part of that programme has been the arrival of British coaches who often spend the majority of their time in the black townships. Despite that, in January the International Cricket Conference passed regulations that will discourage and possibly even prevent many English coaches who have aspirations to represent their country from going to those black townships to help those children.

The House—like, indeed, the International Cricket Conference—should ask itself whether it is fair or moral for those children to be denied coaching by players from this country and elsewhere simply because the ICC thinks that that will preserve international cricket. If the only way to preserve an international sport is through blackmail and hypocrisy, there is something wrong with sport. Children in, for example, Alexandria will not now receive coaching from some of the lesser players on the English cricket circuit. Do hon. Members really believe that that helps those children? I believe it to be a barrier to one of the greatest sporting challenges of the past few years.

We shall no doubt return to this subject, which has bedevilled the sporting world for some years and will continue to do so until, perhaps, just men and women of true call, "Foul; enough is enough." It is time that we were fair to those whom we are trying to benefit. It is extraordinary to say that, because we do not like the colour of a Government or the way in which they run their country, we should deny their sportsmen and women the opportunity to improve their status and their standard of life. That is why I regret certain moves made by Ministers. I hope that the Government will be sensible and remember that freedom of choice should be not only at the heart of Conservative policy but a basic right of mankind.

5.57 pm

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): It is unfortunate that I find myself following the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle), whose speech has shown the degree to which he has been bought and sold by the South African Government.

I intend to raise a matter that has ramifications for the Lord Chancellor, the Foreign Secretary and the Home Secretary. I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House from time to time find themselves involved in cases where children have been abducted following matrimonial proceedings. The particular case that I wish to raise relates to my constituent, a Mr. Winstanley. Following a long and fraught divorce battle in the courts and court reporting on the after care and custody of his two children, the High Court in Greater Manchester decided that he should have custody and that they should remain in the United Kingdom until the age of 18. Mr. Winstanley's former wife is a Bulgarian national. In February, without the consent of the court or reference to the family, the children were abducted and taken to Bulgaria. It took from February until 8 May, with the full assistance of the Foreign Office, to establish first, where the children were; secondly, whether they were with their mother; and thirdly, whether they were being properly cared for.

Current law does not provide sufficient protection in abduction cases, irrespective of the decision about whether the children should remain with their father or their mother. It is usual for the courts to take the children's views into account before making a decision.

We require a change in the law to ensure that a child is protected from the activities of a parent or people acting on his or her behalf. For example, at this moment it is quite possible for a child to be removed from the United Kingdom without immigration authorities knowing that the child is a ward of a county court or the High Court. It is possible also for a child to be removed when he or she is still under the care of a social services department. When the High Court determines that a child should remain in the custody of the mother or the father, the parents' passports should be clearly marked to show that the child is in the custody of a parent. That would ensure that immigration officers would be alerted to the fact that a child may be in the process of being abducted by a parent or his or her paid representative. Unless the law is changed, such tugs-of-love will continue.

There are emotional difficulties on both sides. My constituent went through the due processes of the law, and the court determined that it was in the best interests of the children that they remain with the father. Those children, who expressed that wish to the court, were abducted and taken to a country far away from their father, with no opportunity to say that was not what they desired. With the assistance of the Foreign Office, we have been able to ascertain that the children are living with their mother in Bulgaria. However, the Foreign Office is unable to act. Its activities are limited to stating that the children are in good health and that there are opportunities for the father to visit them if the Bulgarian authorities will allow him to do so. It is important for the Home Office to consider reciprocal arrangements with other countries.

Unfortunately, my constituent is one of hundreds of people who will find themselves in a similar position this year, either because of one parent removing children or

people being paid to act as agents to abduct children from the United Kingdom. When a custody decision is handed down by a United Kingdom court, it is important to protect not the parents but the children. However, a court order was blatantly broken by a parent disregarding the order or an agent being paid to remove the child. When a child is removed, it is not the British court's responsibility to seek redress in the court of the country in which a child winds up. The parent is responsible for trying to make his or her way through the legal proceedings of a foreign country and to find the financial resources to do so. That is unacceptable. Many parents are unable to pay for legal proceedings in another country.

I appeal to the Bulgarian Government to take urgent steps to ensure that my constituent is allowed to go to Bulgaria and that all facilities will be available to him in term of access to the children and to legal proceedings so that he can determine whether the children wish to remain with their mother or make the journey back to the United Kingdom and present themselves to the court of confirm or vary the custody order that was made earlier this year.

It is important also to amend the Child Abduction Act 1984. It is virtually ineffective. It is effective only if parents or children have prior knowledge of a possible abduction. They can seek a High Court restraining order. It is a major flaw in the law that, unless there is prior knowledge of an abduction, one cannot use the Act to prevent a criminal offence or try to put pressure on the Foreign Office to ensure that children are brought back to the jurisdiction of United Kingdom courts. It is part and parcel of reciprocal arrangements that there should be legal aid in the country in which further court proceedings will be held. When a child is abducted from the United Kingdom and court proceedings must take place in the country in which they are residing, it is important that the parents are given full rights within the law, limited as they may be in some countries, and the financial resources to ensure that their rights and those of their children are exercised.

In many cases we are concerned about parents' anxieties, but young children who were born and bred in the United Kingdom and are abducted to a foreign country cannot speak the foreign language, are completely disorientated and are unable to see the other parent or air their views on whether they wish to remain in that country or return to the United Kingdom. It must be a traumatic experience for them. From my interviews with him I understand that it is traumatic for my constituent and his family. Far too often, such trauma cannot be eased. Because of the lack of reciprocal arrangements the Government are unable to take international action. Unless they are given notice, immigration officers, police and social services departments are unable to know whether a child is being illegally removed. There are many measures to ensure that people enter this country legally, so surely we can take some steps to ensure that children are not illegally removed.

This is the second such case that has been brought to my attention. About 18 months ago, my hon. Friend the Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) and I were involved in a case in which, against their express wishes and those of the social services department, two young girls were removed to Iran. The mother was also removed. Because the authorities had no jurisdiction or prior knowledge of the abduction, the father went to the port of Hull, got on to a ferry to Holland, went across Europe, and then got on a plane to Iran. To this day, the mother does not know whether her children are alive or are being cared for. The British courts and the Government are unable to assist parents in such cases.

Mr. Winstanley's case shows the need for the Government to examine possible reciprocal arrangements and ensure that, whenever a custody order is made, both parents' passports are marked accordingly so that authorities at ports of embarkation can be aware of possible abductions. As I said, there should be reciprocal agreements so that parents have full legal rights and financial resources to take their cases to the court of a foreign country.

I hope that the Leader of the House will respond positively. If he cannot respond specifically, will he at least give a commitment that the three Departments involved will follow up discussions with myself and other hon. Members who regularly face these cases? The lives of many of our constituents are shattered because of the inability to protect children who are abducted by a parent or his or her paid agent.

6.9 pm

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): I give my full support to the passionate plea that the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) has made, through my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, to the Foreign Office and to the Government of Bulgaria. I believe that it is well established in British law that the welfare of the child is paramount. In the circumstances that the hon. Gentleman described, legal aid or financial assistance should be provided so that the wronged parent can pursue the children in the country to which the mother had taken them.

I wish to refer to two matters in this short debate. First, I want to make a vehement protest about the way in which British Airways treated its passengers at London airport while waiting for the 6.30 pm flight to Belfast on Friday. Those passengers were eventually told that they had to wait for the back-up flight to be made available. I had gone from Westminster to London airport to catch that flight and I know what the other passengers had to endure.

More than 100 passengers were made to stand for an intolerable time—between 40 and 45 minutes—on the ramp leading down to the departure lounge for the Belfast flight. One side of that ramp is glass and through it the full afternoon and evening sun shines. On Friday, the heat was intense and the temperature hovered at about 100 deg F. One can imagine the debilitating effect that that would have on the fittest and youngest, but among the weary passengers standing on that ramp—many of whom had travelled from abroad or within the United Kingdom—were elderly people, children and at least one pregnant woman. It is scandalous that no attempt was made by British Airways staff to find out whether the passengers were in a condition to stand in that heat for so long. No one offered chairs, no one offered any advice and no one said when the back-up plane might be made available. No one seemed to care about the passengers.

The well-advertised back-up aircraft was not available and no one was able to say when it would be. I trust that British Airways will abandon its advertising of such back-up services. I remember one advertisement showing a British Airways aircraft carrying a solitary passenger immediately after the regular flight, which was full, had taken off. That advertisement belongs to the realms of

[Mr. James Kilfedder]

fantasy as I have never seen that happen in reality. The 6.30 regular flight was an hour late leaving for Belfast because, according to British Airways staff, the airline had run out of kerosene. It is incomprehensible that no fuel was available for that flight.

It is possible that there are an insufficient number of staff available and British British Airways must ensure that such staff are available in the future, but that does not stop me condemning the way in which British Airways staff treat passengers for Northern Ireland. The incident on Friday was not unique. I have always thought that the way in which passengers are treated is similar to the way in which cattle are treated. The excuse that is always given is that the staff cannot cope with so many passengers and that the numbers take them by surprise. British Airways seems to be taken by surprise regularly every summer and every winter due to holidays or whatever. It never seems to learn or to care. It is high time that the chairman of British Airways, Lord King, resigned, because, if the buck stops anywhere, it must stop with him. I give notice that in the future the people of Northern Ireland will not accept such intolerable treatment from the staff of British Airways at London airport.

The second matter that I wish to raise concerns elderly people. In the previous general election, my principal opponent—whose campaign was largely run by those now regarded as the organisers of the North Down Conservative group—stated that I was elected, no doubt for the last time, on a dying vote. That is an insulting way to refer to the retired people who voted for me because of my concern for their well-being. Such arrogance and indifference towards pensioners ignores the fact that everyone who lives long enough will become old, and many of those who become old do not have enough money to take care of themselves.

The House should not rise until it is made aware of the plight of many elderly people. I refer particularly to those living in my constituency, but my remarks apply right across the country.

A percentage of pensioners in my constituency were in receipt of what used to be known as supplementary benefit but is now called income support. Recently, when the old-age pension was increased by a relatively small amount, those pensioners were no longer eligible for income support and the slight increase in pension was thus cancelled out by the loss of the supplementary sum. They have also lost other benefits because their incomes are no longer regarded as being below a particular financial limit. In other words, those pensioners are worse off, although the cost of living has increased with inflation at more than 8 per cent. and continuing to rise.

I have visited the homes of many pensioners in my constituency and I have seen how they have to think carefully about how they spend their pittance, budgeting carefully to decide what they can afford and what they must do without. I appeal to the Government to reconsider this grievous situation. There is an undeniable case for doing justice to our senior citizens who have worked hard throughout their long years. In my view, what is required is an immediate and substantial increase in the old age pension.

6.17 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I fully support what the hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) said about pensioners. Pensioners are being treated with contempt by the Government. My advice to the hon. Gentleman is to support the Labour party in every way he can, although I appreciate that he cannot actually do so in Northern Ireland.

The hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) again sought to defend the indefensible. As I understand it, part of his argument is that he has the advantage of going on trips to South Africa. He was forced to declare his interest as a result of an intervention from the Opposition.

Mr. John Carlisle *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Winnick: The hon. Gentleman knows very well that he did not declare his interest and that he was forced to do so by the Chair. He should at least agree with me on this, as the events took place just half an hour ago.

Although the hon. Member for Luton, North has the advantage, if it may be so described, of visiting South Africa, he has always done so at the expense of the South African authorities or South African organisations. I believe that he once claimed in the Chamber never to have paid for such a trip. I have never been to South Africa, but I do not have to prove my point, which has been proved on so many occasions—that South Africa is isolated and will remain so until the apartheid regime is ended. I do not believe that there can be the slightest doubt about that.

I had the honour of being a Member of this place in the mid-1960s, and during that period I protested with other Labour Members constantly about the tortures taking place in Greece. Some hon. Members went on trips to Greece—we know all about those trips—and when they returned they painted a rather different picture of what I knew was taking place in Greece. In 1974, when the colonels' regime came to an end, all that my right hon. and hon. Friends and I had been saying about the torture and other terrible happenings was proved right. We knew that we were right when the colonels were in power. We do not have to go on sponsored trips to find out what is happening, any more than our predecessors needed to go to Nazi Germany, Stalin's Russia or Mussolini's Italy to find out what was going on in those countries.

Mr. John Carlisle: If hon. Members go on trips, sponsored or otherwise, it does not mean that they return with the opinions of the bodies that organise them. My hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook), who is not in his place, and my hon. Friends the Members for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) and for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton), the Minister of State, Home Office, and others have been to South Africa, but have returned with views entirely different from my own. Individuals can travel to other countries and return with different opinions, and sometimes their opinions are at odds with the organisations that sponsor their trips.

Mr. Winnick: In the main, those hon. Members who go on sponsored trips tend to return with the views of the organisations or countries which invited them to make the trips. The hon. Gentleman's illustrations are very much the exception. He demonstrates all too well the point that I am making. When he speaks in the House, he says that he speaks on behalf of South Africa. I would claim that he does not even speak on behalf of all the whites of South

Africa, but on behalf of a regime and its supporters which have been ostracised and are isolated from the rest of the world. The view that I have expressed is echoed by the Government. Ministers tend to say what I say and not what the hon. Gentleman says. He is an isolated figure in the House.

Before taking up a domestic issue, I wish to say a few words about the happenings in China. It would be unfortunate if the House ignored what is going on in that country. The students in China are to be congratulated on the way in which they have organised and sustained such a massive demonstration under a dictatorship. Ironically, those who follow events in China are aware that limited reforms have undoubtedly taken place in that country, especially since the death of Mao Tse-tung in 1976. Had the reforms of the past 13 years not taken place, it would have been virtually impossible for the current demonstrations to occur. Demonstrations cannot take place very well in conditions of terror. I accept, therefore, that there have been changes—the changes have been welcome and they have been recognised by the House in debates and at Question Time—but the fact remains that they have not been anywhere near sufficient to satisfy those who have been protesting.

I have been taken by surprise, however, although I have followed the demonstrations that have taken place in China in the past and I know what usually happens to demonstrators in that country. I know of those who have been imprisoned. For example, a dissident who is well known in international circles is currently in prison, having been sentenced to 15 years.

We do not know what will happen this week, let alone in the weeks and months to come. I only hope that the basic demand of the students will be met. Hundreds of thousands of students have been demonstrating day and night, and I salute their tremendous courage. It is not so easy sometimes to demonstrate in a democracy, and it is that much more difficult to do so in the conditions that prevail in countries such as China. The students have been joined by workers and many others and I believe that their demands should be met. They are saying that there should be a dialogue between the leadership of China and the representatives of those who have been demonstrating.

We are aware, of course, of the changes and reforms that have occurred in the Soviet Union, especially in the past three or four years, and it is understandable that many people in China want to see the same sort of progress. They do not argue necessarily for parliamentary democracy on the western model—perhaps it is not possible to have that form of democracy at this stage in China, or for some time to come—but many Chinese people want further and substantial changes. They see a neighbouring Communist party ruling the Soviet Union which has brought about many significant changes, including in some instances genuine contests at election time. Many Chinese demonstrating now are also concerned about corruption and favouritism in very high places.

Perhaps the position of Hong Kong has a more direct bearing on the United Kingdom than the events taking place in China. I was not opposed to the agreement made by the British Government with China for the future of Hong Kong. I believe that it was the right agreement in all the circumstances, and I am sure that it would have been made by a Labour Government. The best guarantee for stability in Hong Kong, however, is for the people there to see substantial steps being taken towards democratic change in China, and it is understandable that there were demonstrations in Hong Kong in support of the students. Whatever may be written on paper, and whatever agreement may have been reached with China, the fact is that China remains very much an authoritarian type of dictatorship, if not now a totalitarian state.

If changes can occur in China on the same lines as those taking place in the Soviet Union, I believe that there will be some confidence among the people of Hong Kong, which will perhaps make them more willing to accept that there is a future there for themselves, their children and their grandchildren.

The domestic matter to which I wish to refer is causing a great deal of concern in the borough within my constituency. The Walsall health authority has submitted an expression of interest—that is the phrase used in the White Paper—in two hospitals opting out of the existing National Health Service management structure. One of the hospitals designated for opting-out is the main hospital in the borough. Only two weeks ago I attended the official opening of a large extension to it. I refer to the Manor hospital. There is no support for opting out within the borough, and certainly none within my constituency, and I have received many letters from constituents expressing their disquiet. They have asked me to do what I can to support the efforts being made to ensure that the two hospitals remain in the existing NHS management structure, and I have responded in a way that would be expected of a Labour Member.

Opting out, as many of my constituents who have written to me have rightly observed, is a half-way house privatisation. It is all part of the Government's attempt to erode and destabilise the NHS. That is not the view of the Labour party alone. The Joint Consultants Committee has stated:

> "These proposals inevitably change the prime aim of the management of these hospitals, from the provision of adequate care to the community as a whole to the financial success of the hospital. The considerable experience of such hospitals in the USA shows clearly that there will be pressure to encourage admission of patients with conditions that can be treated with financial benefit to the hospital rather than to admit those patients—often the chronic sick—whose treatment is likely to lead to little or no such financial benefit."

I imagine that most of the members of the Joint Consultants Committee do not vote for the Labour party, but I accept entirely what they have said. I have said repeatedly in my constituency, and I have written to this effect to the Secretary of State, that the Government talk constantly about participation and insist that voting is essential.

Before any decision is made for the two hospitals in my constituency to become what is described as NHS hospital trusts—that is, before any decision is made by the Secretary of State—there should be a ballot. Surely that is not asking too much. Is not that part and parcel of democracy? I have argued that in every ward and polling district within the borough the residents should have an opportunity to decide whether they want those hospitals to opt out. I am quite willing to abide by the decision reached. If it goes against my views, so be it, although I do not think that that is likely. There should be a ballot for the people to decide.

The Secretary of State for Health is not in the Chamber, but I should like to know whether he would be willing to abide by such a decision. If he says that no ballot is needed,

[Mr. Winnick]

the inevitable response from Labour Members will be, "Why not?" Is he afraid of the outcome? Does he accept my view that the overwhelming majority of people in my borough, which covers three parliamentary constituencies, are completely opposed to the hospitals opting out of the existing National Health Service management structure? Many of the people who express that view were not Labour voters, or at least not at the last general election. When the Leader of the House responds, I hope that he will pass on what I have said in the usual way to his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

There will be a meeting in the borough on Friday at which those who oppose the decision to opt out will make their views clear. I am certain that there will be many more meetings. The point that I shall make at the meeting is that it would be undemocratic and incompatible with any concept of democracy for the hospitals concerned to be withdrawn from the existing NHS management structure without any ballot of the residents. Nor has there been any suggestion that the medical and non-medical staff at the hospitals should be balloted. They have not been asked for their views either. I therefore thought it only right and proper that that issue, which is of great concern in my borough, should be aired at the first opportunity on the Floor of the House.

6.31 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): Before the House adjourns for the spring recess, which actually feels more like the summer recess, I want to raise three brief points.

My first point concerns Basildon district council, which has increased its rates this year by 57·9 per cent. I can understand my hon. Friends being aghast at that, because that is the largest rate increase in the country. That increase has nothing to do with the provision of essential services, but everything to do with the enhancement of leisure facilities.

During the past year in Basildon, we have experienced what could be described as a hung council. It was a hung council by virtue of a Liberal councillor who described himself as an independent——

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): Where are the Liberals?

Mr. Amess: As my hon. Friend asks, where are they now?

On every conceivable opportunity, that Liberal councillor voted with the Labour party and—surprise, surprise—after the county elections this year this so-called Liberal-cum-independent officially joined the Labour party.

One of the many aspects that we must consider in dealing with this very damaging rate increase in Basildon is that of the direct labour organisation report. I have a copy of a note from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment which states:

"Basildon's DLO report for 1987-88, sent to the Department, does indeed confirm a current loss of £634,000 on building maintenance work. Since this represents 58 per cent. of the turnover in this category, it is a serious financial failure. The deficit was charged in the first instance to the DLO reserve fund with the balance charged to the general rate fund as required by the DLO legislation . . . The Secretary of State is empowered ultimately to order closure of a DLO if it fails to achieve the financial target of a 5 per cent. rate of return on capital employed and the authority are unable to provide a statutory explanation."

My constituents will rightly ask how on earth we have managed to lose £634,000.

However, it gets worse. We built a theatre at a cost of £8·5 million. I applaud any local authority which wishes to build theatres for us all to enjoy. Unfortunately, in Basildon we did not have a penny to finance the theatre's costs. Through creative accountancy, a company was set up and the theatre has been so organised that if every seat was occupied 365 days of the year, it would still lose a considerable amount of money.

The people I represent in Basildon welcome the community charge. We believe that Socialists are afraid of the community charge because the ratepayers will see clearly the result of irresponsible financial expenditure like that which occured in Basildon.

My second point relates to the plight of travelling people, which is hardly a new subject for us to consider. I fully recognise the enormous difference between gipsies and travelling people. Recently I drove through Maldon, which is in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, and I noted that a number of travelling people had arrived in his area.

We have an organised site in Basildon which travelling people are welcome to use. However, a ridiculous state of affairs arose two weeks ago, when travelling people arrived at a municipal car park next to a leisure area and set up home. That has caused serious disruption locally involving enormous financial consequences in the amount of money required to clear up their mess. Although I know that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House is well aware of this, I remind him that travelling people can cause disruption to local schools.

Mr. McCartney: I live next to a gipsy caravan site and had no objection to supporting the application for it to be built. One of the problems with the overspill of travelling people or gipsy families involves the irresponsibility of some Conservative-controlled local authorities which refuse to be designated under the Caravan Sites Act 1968 and utilise resources which I congratulate the Department of the Environment on providing to local authorities. The Department sometimes provides grants of nearly 100 per cent. to provide facilities to prevent overspills. If the hon. Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) is concerned about local government expenditure, he should have a go at Conservative-controlled authorities which turn a blind eye to those problems.

Mr. Amess: The hon. Gentleman will not satisfy my constituents. I know how closely he has been following my speech, during which I said that we have a Socialist council in Basildon—which I know he would applaud—and we have a site which the travelling people are not using. The irresponsible way in which Socialists, whether they be Members of Parliament or district councillors, can applaud those travelling people is very unfair.

My final point relates to abortion. I had understood that all Members of Parliament regarded life as the most precious gift of all. We all fight to get to the House because we want to participate in the legislative process, and I had understood that legislation was all about organising people's lives. The 649 other hon. Members in this place

must regard life as the most important thing for us all. Why then do we always fail to have a vote to determine the stage at which an abortion can be obtained?

It is extraordinary that hon. Members who all have hospitals in their constituencies are very concerned about what goes on in the special baby units where pre-term babies are being kept alive 24 hours a day after being born at 22, 23 and 24 weeks when in those same hospitals it is possible for someone to obtain an abortion at up to 28 weeks.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): Does my hon. Friend find it strange that on many occasions we have found time to debate capital punishment but rarely have time to reach conclusions on this country's unsatisfactory abortion laws?

Mr. Amess: I certainly find it strange. My views on capital punishment do not contradict my views on abortion, but I shall not detain the House with further details.

There is great unrest throughout the country, with people failing to understand why it is that an abortion Bill could come before the House last year, but that for procedural reason we were unable to continue voting on it. What are right hon. and hon. Members frightened of?

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): My hon. Friend speaks with passion of his concern about abortion law, but what is he doing to help the 5,600 disabled children who are in institutional care because their families cannot cope with them? What is he doing to help find families for those children? Does he not think that handicapped children are in even greater need of love and care than normal children? What is he doing to help them?

Mr. Amess: My hon. Friend is quite right to raise that subject. If he will consult my constituents, they can give him chapter and verse on how I am involved in helping disabled people locally. However, that has nothing to do with the subject of my contribution. I refuse to compromise. As far as I am concerned, life begins at conception.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Yes, every sperm is sacred.

Mr. Amess: However, I recognise that politics is the art of the possible. If I vote for termination at 18, 19 or 20 weeks, of course I am compromising myself—but I welcome any measure that will reduce the period of time during which an abortion can be obtained if that saves even one life.

I hope that before the next general election the House will be allowed to reach a conclusion on abortion reform. When that happens, I hope that no right hon. or hon. Member will deny to others that which they would not deny themselves, but will join me and other right hon. and hon. Members in protecting the unborn child.

6.42 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I want to raise the subject of the need to tell the truth to the House of Commons. For 20 years, I believed more or less automatically anything said by Ministers of whatever party at the Dispatch Box. If I now seem unduly suspicious, it is a matter of being once bitten, twice shy. I wish to raise one subject briefly, and one other at far greater length.

The first concerns this afternoon's statement about the expulsion of Russian diplomats. I have a question for the Lord President of the Council that he can send to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to answer. It is the same question that I put to the Foreign Secretary this afternoon which he did not answer. My question concerns the "incontrovertible evidence" that gave rise to the expulsions. Was it in any way raised with Lord Griffiths and his fellow members of the Security Commission? If not, what is the purpose of the Security Commission? Some right hon. and hon. Members would like a second opinion of that "incontrovertible evidence". I am not asking to see that evidence myself. I am not even suggesting that those of my right hon. Friends who are Privy Councillors should see it. But after all that has happened, a judge of the Court of Appeal should have agreed that the evidence was incontrovertible.

We have been through Zircon, Westland and GCHQ. There has been a whole series of economies with the truth. It is in that context that I ask whether Lord Griffiths and his colleagues were consulted about that decision.

The second issue I want to raise relates to the unpopular subject of what happened in Gibraltar. Right hon. and hon. Members will see from a letter to me from the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office that he has placed in the Library copies of a statement made by a Spanish police officer concerning the surveillance of three IRA personnel—Mairead Farrell, Daniel McCann and Sean Savage—in the period prior to their deaths at the hands of the SAS in Gibraltar on 6 March last year.

That statement, which maintains that the Spanish police "lost" the three IRA members on 4 March, two days before the shootings, was presented to the Gibraltar coroner during the inquest. The coroner refused to answer my letter to him. I do not complain, but I received a very courteous reply to my letter asking certain questions of the coroner, which he declined to answer. Nevertheless, following the Gibraltar coroner's rules, he declined to accept that statement as evidence because there was no witness to testify under oath.

The statement then surfaced in *The Sunday Times* and I understand that it was passed by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to Lord Windlesham during his inquiry into the Thames Television programme "Death on the Rock". I say in parenthesis that Lord Windlesham did an honest job and that the response to his inquiry by Lord Trefgarne in another place was among the most odious and unacceptable statements made from a Front Bench that there has ever been during my 27 years in the House.

The apparent purpose of disclosing that statement was to discredit the programme's claim that the IRA personnel had been under Spanish surveillance up to the time of their arrival in Gibraltar. I see from the Minister's letter that the Spanish police officer's statement was given at Malaga police station to the Gibraltar coroner's officer, Chief Inspector Correa. According both to the Minister's letter and to the chief inspector's sworn evidence to the inquest, no Spanish judge was present when the statement was given. In his evidence, Chief Inspector Correa said that no Spanish judge was available that day.

That assertion raises a central question in the Gibraltar controversy, for it is a matter of record that the Spanish Interior Minister, Mr. Jose Luis Corcuera, told his

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

country's senate on 11 April this year that the Spanish police officer concerned made his statement about surveillance before a judge in Malaga. Last week, I visited Spain officially as a member of an all-party group, and had informal conversations in the Cortes. Considerable concern was expressed about the matter, because at issue is the truthfulness or otherwise of a Spanish Minister in making a statement to the Spanish Parliament. "This," said Mr. Corcuera, "is the way in which it should always be done"—that is, the hearing before a judge.

Only last week, on 19 May, the spokesman for the Spanish police in Madrid, Mr. Manuel Jimenez Cuevas, announced publicly that the statement had been made on 8 August 1988, in front of the examining magistrate of court No. 6 in Malaga. Thus a contradiction has arisen. If the statement placed in the Library of the House of Commons by the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office is the genuine account of events by the Spanish police, the Interior Minister of Spain has misinformed his country's Senate about the circumstances in which the statement was taken, and the Spanish police themselves appear to be under a serious misapprehension.

If, on the other hand, the Spanish Interior Minister was telling the truth in his country's Senate, that raises a still more serious question: is the statement placed in the Library of the House by the Minister of State the only Spanish account of what took place between 4 and 6 March, or are there two separate statements—one taken in peculiar circumstances by the Gibraltar coroner's officer, Chief Inspector Correa, and the other made in accordance with normal Spanish practice in front of an examining magistrate?

May I ask the Lord President whether he can obtain clarification from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on whether it has in its possession a second Spanish statement on surveillance made on 8 August last year in front of the examining magistrate of court No. 6 in Malaga? If it received such a statement, will the Foreign and Commonwealth Office explain why it apparently made no attempt to introduce it at the coroner's inquest in Gibraltar last year, and will it now place a copy of that second statement—made in front of an examining magistrate in Malaga—in the Library of the House of Commons?

I have four questions. First, was the statement made by a Spanish police officer on 8 August 1988 in front of the examining magistrate of court No. 6 in Malaga ever received by the British authorities? Secondly, on what date was the statement made by a Spanish police officer in front of the examining magistrate of court No. 6 in Malaga received by the British authorities, and on what date was that same statement passed to the coroner in Gibraltar? Thirdly, where is the statement made by a Spanish police officer in front of the examining magistrate of court No. 6 in Malaga now held? Fourthly, will the Government place the statement made by a Spanish police officer in front of the examining magistrate of court No. 6 in Malaga in the Library of the House of Commons? The two statements are in the Library's possession, and, indeed, in mine.

I believe that this is an important matter of truthfulness to the House of Commons or otherwise, which should be cleared up somehow before we go into recess.

Finally—I will be very brief—there is the now well-known statement by Sir Leon Brittan. The Lord President will be thankful that I do not propose to regurgitate the subjects that he and I have so often bandied across the Floor of the House. I think, however, that it would be healthy if the Prime Minister were now to come to the House and say, "Yes, Mr. Ingham and Mr. Powell did keep me fully informed about the progress of my quite improper idea to get the Solicitor-General to write a letter and then leak it. They kept me fully informed about the role of Sir Leon Brittan, and when I was under pressure I did tell a self-preserving fib to the House of Commons.'

Parliament really cannot operate properly if Ministers, however senior, get away with lying.

6.45 pm

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): I wish to raise three issues, two briefly and one somewhat more thoroughly. The first, touched on briefly by my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess), is the problem of itinerants and their proper control.

In my constituency, which has designated sites, we have had persistent trouble with itinerants for many years. We have had outbreaks of trouble in Headcorn, Staplehurst and Hunton, but now we are suffering a serious outbreak in Marden—and I mean trouble in the truest sense of the word. My constituents have been physically threatened, and in one case assaulted, by people who have encamped themselves illegally without permission, and who insist on staying.

It is not very surprising that they insist on staying when enforcement procedures are so inadequate for what is required, and when the workings of the law take so long that any itinerant can encamp himself illegally, get connected up to essential services and sit and laugh while the authorities try to remove him, no matter what trouble he may be causing. This is not a new problem; it is an extremely old one, and is certainly not peculiar to my constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon. Yet there is a lack of will to tackle the problem, and I do not believe that we should adjourn until we have examined it in rather more detail.

It is not very difficult to make the law easier to enforce. If, in accordance with the recommendations of the Carnross report, we made stop notices applicable to caravans—as they are to other dwellings and constructions—it would be possible to bring about immediate enforcement of the law. If we made it impossible for people to obtain connection to services when illegally encamped, it would be much more uncomfortable for them to stay. Meanwhile, the nuisance continues and there is an absence of will. I find it difficult to face my constituents in Marden when I can deliver them no promise of firm action. The problem has been raised time and again, and I know from experience that action is unlikely to be forthcoming.

Secondly, I should like to raise two issues connected with the aerodrome at Headcorn in my constituency. The first is the nuisance of low-flying aerobatic planes, which have caused considerable problems to neighbours. They certainly appear to have flown lower than they are supposed to, and on one occasion one of them came out of the aerodrome on to a road. I have in my possession a petition signed by hundreds of Headcorn residents.

Almost more serious is the problem of parachuting at Headcorn. I am sure that the House will remember two

instances in the past two years of civilian parachutists being killed as a result of collision with aircraft. The first concerned one of my constituents, a young girl making a jump for charity, who fell on to the rotating blades of a helicopter that was on the landing ground. When I raised the issue and asked how landing parachutists and aircraft taking off could possibly have been allowed to mix, I was told, "It was her first jump: she was inexperienced. Had she known what to do, the tragedy might have been averted."

The second incident did not involve a constituent, but it happened at Headcorn. This was a very experienced civilian parachutist, again a young girl but in this case on her 35th jump. As she was landing, she fell on to the propellors of an aircraft. It would be very simple, and it would alleviate a great deal of distress both to relatives and to others, to separate completely, by law, the areas where parachutists land and those where aircraft land and take off. I have no idea why that suggestion is being so comprehensively ignored and why such a mountain is being made of what I believe would be a molehill of legislation that could save lives.

It will come as no surprise to my right hon. Friend if I make a plea to him that is in line with the third matter that was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon. At this moment, as we propose to adjourn for the spring recess, during which we shall not consider any legislation, there is a law that allows one child in an incubator to be loved and cherished and to have all the resources of medical science put at his or her disposal in an effort to save it while another child, of exactly the same age, at exactly the same level of development and with exactly the same level of sentience, can be dismembered alive in its mother's womb.

If hon. Members can adjourn for the spring recess leaving a law of that sort on the statute book, there is something seriously wrong. I urge my right hon. Friend at least to use the time offered by the spring recess to reflect seriously on the fact that we shall not let this issue rest, that it will not go away and that it is a thoroughly bad law that treats two identical children in such a completely different way.

Every time that an hon. Member raises the plight of the unborn, my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) gets to his feet and demands to be told why we are not talking about those who have been born. My hon. Friend's interest in handicapped children and his own position with regard to a handicapped child are known and respected. However, when he talks about handicapped children, I do not intervene and demand to be told why he is not talking about old-age pensioners. When another hon. Member is talking about old-age pensioners, I do not ask why he or she is not talking about single parents. If another hon. Member refers to single parents, I do not demand to be told why he or she is not talking about the disabled in general. It is foolish to say that if one is raising the plight of the unborn one cannot therefore possibly care about those who have been born and that one is neglecting one's duty towards them. I ask my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East to reflect on that fact.

An anomaly of our crazy abortion laws is that the Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929 provides that it is illegal to destroy a child who is capable of being born alive but that it is perfectly legal to poison the foetus before abortion in order to ensure that it is not born alive. A horrific anomaly of that kind requires urgent attention.

Then there are the activities of the British Pregnancy Advisory Service. That service seems to be limited entirely to terminations. We have had endless reports of unsympathetic treatment when those who turn to the service for help say that they do not want terminations. There is the case of the Carlisle baby who was born alive but who is still not registered. The request for an inquest was turned down, although an inquest would normally have been a formality.

My hon. Friend the Member for Basildon referred to the fact that the overwhelming majority of hon. Members are in favour of some reform of the abortion law, although I recognise that there is division as to where exactly the line should be drawn. Despite that overwhelming majority, a small group of people, arrogant in their motives, wish to thwart the will of Parliament. Their methods and procedures are impudent and they have consistently frustrated the will of the House.

Why would it be such a major shift in their thinking if the Government decided to deal with this question? If embryology is a fit subject for the Government, if a small baby not yet 14 days old in the womb is a fit subject for the Government, how much more is it a fit subject for them when that baby is fully developed and sentient at 18 weeks? I have asked my right hon. Friend before, and I ask him again now, to say when this matter will receive the attention that Parliament wants it to receive and that the country wants it to receive but that a tiny group of people are determined that it should not have.

7.4 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): My concern is the catastrophic decline in the population of the African elephant, due to illegal ivory poaching, which is becoming more desperate by the day. It has reached the point where I do not believe that the House should adjourn for the spring recess until we have had a full debate on the subject.

Recent reports from conservation groups have produced incontrovertible evidence to show that we are now at a critical point. Ivory poaching activity has increased dramatically over recent months and years. One of the problems is that a number of dirty wars are going on in Africa—civil wars and terrorist activities. Those wars are, in part, being financed by the illegal trade in endangered species—live animals and animal products, especially elephant ivory and black rhino horn. The trade is abominable and immoral and a crime against the living world.

I know that there is considerable sympathy in the House for the plight of the African elephant and that the Leader of the House shares that concern. He answered a question to that effect last week. Words, however, are insufficient. We need political action, which must be immediate and dramatic. Time is not on the side of the African elephant.

The population of African elephants has fallen from 2·3 million in 1970 to around 700,000 today, and 80,000 African elephants a year are being slaughtered. It is believed that by the year 2000, if the current trend continues, the African elephant will be all but extinct. Although it is claimed that there is a 50:50 balance between legal and illegal ivory trading, I estimate that

[Mr. Tony Banks]

perhaps 75 per cent. of all ivory trade is illegal at the outset. That is because certain corrupt African Governments and officials give export permits to illegal ivory.

The convention on international trade in endangered species—an organisation that is supposed to be regulating this trade—retrospectively legitimises what it knows to be illegal ivory. There have been a number of examples in this country. A recent example involved a shipment of illegal ivory that was landed at Gatwick airport—1,464 kilos from Zaire. After CITES allowed the tusks to be renumbered, the Department of the Environment granted a licence. It appears that that process is about to be repeated again, this time with a cargo of 1,025 kilos of illegal ivory, again from Zaire, which is now at Heathrow airport.

Why is that allowed to happen? Why does CITES accept money from ivory dealers, for example, which must put in question its impartiality? Why does the Department of the Environment retrospectively legalise cargoes of illegally imported ivory? Britain is clearly being used as one of the world's major staging posts for the passage of illegal ivory which then goes to Dubai, Hong Kong and Japan, often with false papers, where it is made into jewellery, billiard balls and snooker balls, carvings and piano keys for export back to Europe and North America.

I ask the Leader of the House to put it to his colleagues, because I know that he is on our side, first, that the British Government must impose an immediate ban on the import and export of raw and worked ivory as an example both to the world and, in particular, to the EEC. We must do that as a prelude to establishing a worldwide ban on the ivory trade.

Secondly, there must be a ministerial inquiry into the actions of the Department of the Environment in colluding with CITES in legalising retrospectively the illegal import of ivory. Ivory that is known to have been illegally imported and that is impounded at the port of entry should not be auctioned off or legalised. It should be seized and destroyed. That is the only way to try to stop the trade.

Thirdly, the Government should insist that CITES must no longer accept funding from ivory dealers. Fourthly, the Government should give immediate assistance by means of human and material resources to those African countries that are desperately trying to protect their remaining elephant herds from the activities of poachers. In certain cases, the British Government should give military assistance, if that is requested.

The African elephant is one of the largest, most gentle and most intelligent creatures on our planet. It would be a crime against the world if we allowed the African elephant to become extinct. This country, with all its special connections, cannot stand by waiting for someone else to take action. The screams of the slaughtered elephants of Africa should torment our consciences until firm, decisive and, above all, immediate action is taken. The elephants of Africa desperately need action to save them. The country demands action, and the Government should not hesitate to act.

7.9 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I support the motion, because I hope that right hon. and hon. Members will take the opportunity to study care in the community during the short break. We know that the Government are deliberating on their response to the Griffiths report. I do not know whether my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House has any part in those deliberations but I hope that, if he has, he will take the opportunity to study some of the reports being prepared in Bolton. Bolton has been described by the district audit committee, in a report produced in September last year, as "very much to the forefront of developments nationally."

Bolton has had a pilot scheme for care in the community since the concept was first heard of in Britain. The town was visited by the Select Committee on Social Services when it was preparing its report. The council has now produced a comprehensive report entitled "A Way to Go: Goal 2000". An active handicap action group has been set up, and it has campaigned and produced reports.

My concern was aroused strongly during the general election campaign when a number of parents came to me and said that they were unable to cope with their problems at home with grown-up children who, because of mental handicap, still had a young mental age. Because of plans to close hospitals, they were left in great doubt about the future for their children. They wanted to know what provision could be made to avoid the development of a two-tier service, in which people coming out of the closed-down hospitals would be provided with adequate dowries, whereas others would be left with a second-rate service, if anything. The tension between the voluntary carers who often have to work 24 hours a day, seven days a week, every week of the year, and people who are employed by the local authority on a nine-to-five day, five days a week with plenty of holidays, became clear.

One of the ladies to whom I spoke said that she could not accept the power that the local authority held over her life in determining what care services should be provided. The worst aspect of the care services is that those in need of care get the least. The report prepared by the council makes that only too clear. When it talks about people who have challenging behaviour—the most difficult to look after—it found that there was virtually no service provision specific to the needs of those people. In other words, the more help people need, the less they get. Is is unrealistic to regard local authorities as the salvation for these problems. I take some exception to the conclusions reached in the Griffiths report, paragraph 30 of which says:

"If community care means anything, it is that responsibility is placed as near to the individual and his carers as possible."

Sir Roy Griffiths argues that the priorities should be determined

"as local as possible and with the locally elected authority."

That does not necessarily follow. I do not see why we cannot set up locally based groups—they may be called neighbourhood care groups—and follow through the first part of Griffiths recommendation that

"responsibility is placed as near to the individual and his carers as possible"

We should give as much of the budget provision and responsibility as possible to those groups, and let them be run by voluntary carers. That is what people want. That is what the Bolton Handicap Action Group, which is chaired

by John Seddon, and which has achieved official recognition as the body which represents handicapped people in Bolton, told me. Leading people, who are known in the town for their concern for the handicapped have written to me. I have had a letter from Mary Kershaw and Barbara Ashman saying:

"We feel that public sector funds could be better used in Bolton if directed by a volunteer care management group.

Could you ask the Government to set up a pilot scheme along these lines in Bolton?"

Perhaps my right hon. Friend will put that argument to his colleagues.

The council says:

"We recommend increasing the involvement of other agencies, voluntary or private, with consideration being given to the development of joint projects between two or more agencies, or setting up consortia of several agencies . . . Parents can be equal members of any such body as long as they see their role as expressing parents' views, and, indirectly, the consumers' 'voice'."

Mr. Oliver Holt, who is well known for his work with Mencap and others, says that many problems have arisen because

"over those years the people with the power to make decisions were all 'itinerant' professionals and politicians (local + national)) who did not have an absolute commitment to producing a solution. They made their decisions which affected our lives and then passed on to other challenges in other fields.

The parents have at last seen through this charade and must now insist on being genuinely involved in the planning and providing of these services, not just as consultants, but as real partners. I hope you can help to make this happen."

I ask my right hon. Friend to spend a little time during the break considering what can be done to provide more power to the elbow of those who are responsible for keeping the show on the road and providing everyday care.

The value of voluntary carers for the mentally handicapped could be worth nearly £1 billion, but it is not paid for. If anybody thinks that the solution involves paying for care, they should realise that it will cost a lot of money. At the moment, about £1 billion of public money is spent on the care of the mentally handicapped, but the vast majority of that goes on the 60,000 people in residential care. The 100,000 people in domestic care cost the taxpayer only £300 million a year. If they were charged at the same rate as the others, an extra £900 million would have to be provided each year.

If the Government want to harness the energies of the voluntary sector, they can use them in the management and direction of these services. It should not be left to local authorities to harness their energies. I am told that in one local authority area, if voluntary drivers brought disabled people to a day centre, they had to discharge them on the perimeter of the premises because only trade union drivers were allowed to come on to the premises, as that was their job. That shows how conflicts between trade union-dominated local authorities and the voluntary sector can lead to unsatisfactory results. I leave that thought with my right hon. Friend and hope that he can give some attention to it over the short break.

7.18 pm

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): Other hon. Members have mentioned the need to tell the truth. I have also heard the phrase, "the right to life". I shall refer to what might seem a small matter of definition but one which I believe is vital to my constituents and hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of other people. I refer to the definition of poverty.

Recently, we have heard Ministers challenge the use of the word "poverty", perhaps with an idea that they can simply define poverty away. This morning, before I came down to the House, I met a young mother of a seven-week-old child. She brought me a letter from the Yorkshire water authority threatening to cut off her water supply. She came to see me because her private landlard had served her notice that he would evict her next month, and as an afterthought she told me about her problem with the water bill, as she could not see how on earth she could pay that bill from her income. I am more than likely to be spending the recess meeting my constituents, many of whom will be asking me how on earth can they cope with their water bills and electricity bills on their limited incomes and reduced housing benefits, which has been referred to earlier. Many people in my constituency are genuinely strugglingg to balance their weekly budgets.

I urge the Leader of the House to take up with his colleague the Secretary of State for Social Security a particular suggestion and invite him to move towards arbitration on the definition of poverty in Britain by re-establishing the Royal Commission on wealth and income distribution in Britain which his Government so readily abolished when they were elected in 1979.

In recent weeks the Secretary of State for Social Services has declared that he believes poverty to be redundant. The title of his recent lecture was, "The End of the Line for Poverty". It seemed to me that he was telling the poor to get off the economic vehicle as they had reached the terminus. One issue that has been and will continue to be highly contentious is the Government's claim that all are sharing in the benefits of booming Britain. That is not true. Every person in our society is not participating in that much-vaunted increase in wealth. Some are not participating, and some are falling into increasing poverty as a result of the Government's tax and social security policies.

The Secretary of State claimed that his Department has set up a comprehensive list of indicators of standards of living. Yet, in a parliamentary reply on 17 March, the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security warned us against using the "Households Below Average Income" statistics. He said:

"It should, however, be noted that the principal objective of the 'Households Below Average Income' statistics is to measure improvements in living standards in different parts of the income-distribution for the population as a whole. The tables are not designed to measure the living standards of individuals by economic status within each decile of the population."

He went on to suggest that the tables do not provide "a meaningful guide to improved living standards."—*[Official Report,* 17 March 1989; vol. 149 *c.390-1]*

It appears that the Department of Social Security does not have an agreed means of determining the living standards of those on below average incomes.

Last July, the Select Committee on Social Services challenged the statistics on households below average income with the remark:

"the new series does not give complete information about the numbers on low incomes."

Once again, the Secretary of State was determined to blame the victims for their plight, and suggested that it was nothing to do with the policies of the Government, but was the fault of the victim. He referred to

[Mr. John Battle]

"the margin for inefficiency of expenditure."

That was a remarkable phrase. He also referred to

"an allowance for unskilled shoppers".

He seems to think that the problem is that people do not do their shopping properly. The problem is that, on £48·60 a week, with a reduction of £2·15 in help with their housing costs and then being short-changed by 2 per cent. on the allowance for inflation in a single pension, those single pensioners cannot buy the same goods in Morrison's supermarket in Bramley this month as they could in March. If that is not a decline in their standard of living, I do not know what is.

When the Secretary of State has the gall to refer to the skills with which families spend their money, he displays a remarkable lack of knowledge. In my experience, those who have to pay the price in society display remarkable arithmetical accuracy as they have to do their weekly shopping on low budgets. I am tempted to challenge the Secretary of State and ask him whether he can remember the price of the last meal that he ate out. I am sure that most of the people that I represent could say exactly how much they paid for the goods in their shopping trolleys.

In another parliamentary answer, the Under-Secretary of State warned us that

"Any suggestion that 'poverty' can be measured by the distribution of the cake without regard for the changing size of that cake must be questioned."—[*Official Report*, 21 April 1989; Vol. 151, *c.* 337.]

I entirely agree. We should take into account the distribution of wealth and income in society instead of focusing only on poverty. In that respect, the return of a royal commission that focused on wealth as well as on income would be welcome. Perhaps that royal commission could do worse than explore the concept of participating in the life of society as a source of the definition of what it means to be poor in modern Britain.

Poverty is not simply a lack of money or physical necessities. It excludes certain people in society from that in which the Prime Minister claims to believe in most of all —the freedom of choice. The freedom to eat as we wish, to go where and when we like is not open to everyone. I certainly do not believe that people choose to be poor when it could be suggested that there are other options. Poverty could best be understood comprehensively as a state of partial citizenship. In the context in which the Prime Minister believes that there is no society, it would be difficult to find a basis for common citizenship. The Government seem determined to wipe out any sense of one community of human beings who can only flourish together; and when that happens, the deprivation of the poor becomes invisible. They are marginalised and pushed out off the main economic text.

The Secretary of State said in his lecture:

"Of course as a Government we must keep a careful eye on what is happening to the numbers and the characteristics of the lower-income households. Of course we will continue to give help to the individuals and families who need it."

I have only to reflect on the caseload in my constituency, which I am sure is repeated elsewhere. If that is the case, we are entitled to ask why all our constituency inquiries to DHSS offices receive replies containing the last sentence, "Sorry that we cannot help, even though we would like to in the circumstances".

The Secretary of State continued:

"We cannot do this unless we can identify who they really are and identifying them is not helped by arbitrary and exaggerated estimates of the number of people said to be living in poverty."

I agree with that entirely; therefore, I invite the Leader of the House to ask the Secretary of State for Social Services to establish a royal commission to settle that definition and to bottom out public information. In every debate in the House on social security and in the economy there has been a deep and divisive dispute about the figures of who are in wealth and who are in poverty in Britain. We end up with discrepancies in statements to the House and in the facts and figures provided by the statistical services of the Library. Last July the "Households Below Average Income," statistics were challenged as not giving an adequate account of the position.

I refuse to accept that, as one newspaper put it,

"some are poor because nature has not given them the gift of earning much. Some are poor by ill luck."

Poverty is not misfortune, bad luck or inevitable, or due to laziness, ignorance or lack of development. It is the direct result of political and economic decisions, not least in this House. It is manufactured by particular policies and systems. It is a political problem that needs a political answer, and one way in which we could tackle it is not by targeting the poorest, in the Government's terms, nor by the trickle-down theory of wealth, which certainly seems to dry up before it reaches those who deserve it most. The Government's policies are not delivering economic justice to all in our society. Instead of eulogies on what the Secretary of State called "western material capitalism", the House should strive to deliver public justice. Establishing the royal commission could be an appropriate way of setting the basis for that action.

7.30 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): My hon. Friends and my right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) raised some important issues which the House should address before the spring Adjournment. I shall confine my remarks to the issue raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle)—the extraordinary speech made by the Secretary of State for Social Security on 11 May. I have been asked by some of my colleagues to press the Leader of the House to say whether the Secretary of State's view that poverty in Britain has reached the end of the line is official Government policy.

In his speech, the Secretary of State said that what he described as the stark Dickensian poverty of 100 years ago was no longer widespread. He said that no one could properly be described as poor and that, compared with the standard of poverty set by Booth and Rowntree at the end of the century, people were now living in affluence beyond their wildest dreams. That tells us more about the poverty of the Secretary of State's imagination than about the condition of many poor people. It also tells us about his poverty of knowledge of the subject.

The modern Tory party claims to be the intellectual offspring of Adam Smith. The trouble is that it either does not know or conveniently forgets a great deal of what its father figure said. The Secretary of State's narrow definition of poverty was explicitly rejected by Adam Smith who, referring to what he called the "necessities of life", included

"not only the commodities which are indispensably necessary for the support of life, but also whatever the custom of the country renders it indecent for creditable people, even of the lowest order, to be without."

In those circumstances, it is clear that Adam Smith would have disowned the Secretary of State's ludicrous speech of 11 May. All matters to do with poverty are clearly relative to time and place.

I would go further and say that the Secretary of State was wrong and that there are indeed people living in conditions of abject poverty to which Booth and Rowntree would have objected. In his speech, the Secretary of State quoted from Booth's description of Shelton street, which is on the edge of my constituency in Covent Garden. He accepts as "poverty" Booth's description of the conditions prevailing in Shelton street where, as Booth said, whole families occupied one room and in such rooms life at night was unbearable.

The Secretary of State did not need to go back to the 1890s to find families living in one room or whose lives were unbearable during the night. His Department must have copies of the reports on the housing conditions of homeless families in bed and breakfast accommodation within a mile or a mile and a half of this Chamber. I will quote from a report about the circumstances—in 1987, not 1887—in which some of our fellow citizens are required to live. It says:

"Even if hotel accommodation is in good order it is rarely appropriate to the needs of young children. It is difficult to maintain hygiene while washing, eating and sleeping in one overcrowded room. High levels of gastro-enteritis, skin disorders and chest infections have been reported. Kitchen facilities are often absent or inadequate, so people are forced to rely on food from cafes and take-aways, which is expensive and may be nutritionally unsatisfactory. The stress of hotel life undermines parents' relationships with each other and their children. Normal child development is impaired through lack of space for safe play and exploration. High rates of accidents to children have been reported, probably due to a combination of lack of space and hazards such as kettles at floor level. There have been difficulties in providing primary health care services to homeless families, including problems in registering with general practitioners leading to lack of continuity of care."

That is not Shelton street in the 1890s, but my constituency and many other parts of central London in the 1980s. It is not Calcutta, but our own capital city.

I will quote from a further report on the conditions in which some people are asked to live. If this is not poverty, I do not know what is. Bloomsbury district health authority's report states:

"In October 1988 in just the Camden part of Bloomsbury there were over 500 families in bed and breakfast accommodation. The Health Visiting Service knew of approximately 200 . . . Risk to health in bed and breakfast . . . is well above that of the domiciled population. These risks stem from shared, or lack of amenities, overcrowding and unsafe properties. Infection, accidents, malnutrition, sleep disturbances, low birth weight babies, eating problems, behavioural problems and depression and even death can result."

Those are just some examples of the circumstances in which our fellow citizens are expected to live.

The report goes on to say:

"A woman was found seven days after a caesarian section with no follow-up care, no cot in the room, a seven inch scar, no pain relief. The toilet was two floors down that there was a shared bathroom. The woman's breasts were blistered and she had no idea how to make up bottle feeds or sterilise equipment. This woman was found whilst the Health Visitor was looking for another baby."

In another case the report says:

"Two year old twins were found by chance in a hotel room. They had recently been diagnosed as diabetic."

There were three children in one room with the mother. There was nowhere to store insulin, which needs a refrigerator, and there was nowhere safe to keep syringes or needles because there were drug abusers in the hotel. Cooking facilities were limited, although a controlled diet is essential for diabetics. There was a

"High risk of accident and infection, all of which are particularly hard to resolve in diabetics".

There was also stress. All those things make diabetes harder to control.

There were other cases that health visitors had "stumbled across" while visiting bed-and-breakfast families. One included

"a baby three weeks old, who was failing to thrive, and needed three weeks in hospital. Soon after discharge the family moved on and could not be followed up."

Another case involved the mother of a 15-month-old baby. She was illiterate and educationally subnormal but cared for her child very well. Because she had come from another borough, the back-up services had not been able to follow her.

I do not want to get into a dispute about relativities of poverty. The people whom I have just described live in circumstances which Charles Booth, on visiting Shelton street in 1891, would have recognised and described as "poverty stricken". By his Victorian values, thousands of families are living in abject poverty in bed and breakfast accommodation. However, there is a difference between Charles Booth and the Secretary of State; Charles Booth did not travel from a house with a swimming pool in a chauffeur-driven car to a luxury office in Whitehall. He went out and looked at where the poor lived. He checked and logged their circumstances and began to do something about them. He thought that it was wrong for a family to live in one room, and by God he was right.

In contrast, the Secretary of State pretends that such conditions do not exist. He says that poverty is at an end, but it is not. As an elected Member of Parliament, representing hundreds of such families, I find it humiliating that they have to live in such circumstances and that I can do nothing about it. It should also be humiliating for Ministers. The Secretary of State for Health would spend his time better looking after such people than in harassing doctors. It would be better if the Secretary of State for Social Security helped such people. It would be better if the Secretary of State for the Environment built them some houses. It would cost only half as much for them to have a decent house as it costs to keep them in bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

Those are the circumstances that prevail at the end of the Thatcher economic miracle. They are a disgrace, and we shall debate them tomorrow in the debate on inner cities. Conservative Members who spend their time opting out and enjoying themselves in South Africa should not laugh at the circumstances in which some people live. We need a Government who are concerned and committed to doing something. We do not have one, but we shall continue to press until we have.

7.41 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): Although right hon. and hon. Members have raised many matters that concern them, to which I shall reply in a moment, it appears that the general wish of the House is to adjourn

[Mr. John Wakeham]

for the proposed dates of the spring recess. In the seven weeks since the House returned from the Easter recess, eight Bills have been given a Second Reading and further progress has been made on a wide range of others. We can safely adjourn for about 10 days before returning with renewed vigour to tackle more of the Government's far-reaching legislative programme.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) spoke of his concern, and that of his constituents, about the closure of two cottage hospitals in Oswestry and Newport. I listened to a radio programme the other day when the BBC was on strike—some of the programmes are much better when it is on strike—about cottage hospitals in Shropshire. Anyone who listened to that programme would have been impressed by the voluntary effort that is made in those hospitals, which I hope will be channelled into new sectors. My right hon. Friend is aware of the proposals to rationalise the hospitals as a consequence of the new district hospital at Telford.

The right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley), who told me that, unfortunately, he would have to leave the Chamber, raised the case of nuclear test veterans. The Government's policy is based on the report published in January 1988 by the independent expert advisers on radiological matters of the National Radiological Protection Board. The board's report did not establish any causal relation between increased incidence of any cancer and participation in the United Kingdom's nuclear test programmes of the 1950s and 1960s. The policy of the Ministry of Defence is to pay appropriate compensation wherever Crown liability is established. As there is no firm evidence to show that the health of British test veterans was affected by exposure to radiation during the United Kingdom's test programmes—a view supported by the board's findings—the Government have taken the view, following legal advice, that the Crown cannot be held liable for any ill health suffered by those who participated and that it would not, therefore, be appropriate to pay compensation. I know that that will disappoint the right hon. Gentleman, who campaigns hard for the causes about which he is concerned.

My hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir. F. Montgomery) made, as he sometimes does on these occasions, a number of interesting points. He mentioned confiscated drug money being used to fight drugs. The Government are well aware that the vital work of combating all types of serious crime makes heavy demands on the police. However, difficulties of principle and practice weigh against passing confiscated funds directly to law enforcement work. Resources must be allocated according to an assessment of overall priorities and needs, to which all public services must be subject. Such income would vary and would be unreliable, and no well-planned initiative could afford to depend on it. Nevertheless, we are discussing the matter with the Association of Chief Police Officers to see whether there are practical options which may help to resolve funding difficulties.

My hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale and the hon. Member for Newham, NorthWest (Mr. Banks) mentioned the plight of the African elephant. I recognise how concerned people are, but I cannot give the hon. Member for Newham, North-West the answers that he wants. I shall, however, refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and if there is more information I will certainly give it to the hon. Gentleman. The Government understand and share the concern about the plight of the African elephant and we shall consider carefully any proposal to ban trade in African ivory in the light of available scientific evidence and in consultation with our European partners. Hong Kong is a party to the convention on international trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora and prohibits the import of ivory in all its forms, except from an approved source and subject to the issue of a licence by the Hong Kong Government.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West based much of his argument on an article that appeared in *The Observer*—or at least, he and *The Observer* obtained their information from the same source. I do not want to go into much detail because I do not want to say anything that might prejudice any inquiries that are taking place. The Government believe that the *Observer* article is inaccurate and misleading in several respects. Details of the case cannot be released and must be kept in confidence at present. However, the Government comply fully with the requirements of the ivory trade control procedures when considering all ivory import and export applications. The article criticises the Department of the Environment for issuing ivory permits, claiming that there are strong signs that ivory had been poached. The position is considerably more complicated than that, but I should prefer not to be drawn further on it at this stage. I hope that I can obtain the agreement of my colleagues to send my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale and the hon. Member for Newham, North-West further information.

I understand the concern of my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale about dogs and the dog registration scheme. As I think he knows—I regret having to say it to him—the Government do not intend to introduce a registration scheme for dogs. It would entail expensive bureaucracy and there is no evidence that it would be more successful than the old licensing system in dealing with the problem of stray dogs. The problem is caused by irresponsible owners, who would be least likely to comply with a registration scheme.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) raised the subject of ticket touts. I do not have much more to say than was said to him by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office—the hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten). I find the business pretty disagreeable, as does the hon. and learned Gentleman and my hon. Friend the Minister. The activities of ticket touts are undoubtedly unpopular, but to abolish them would reduce or end the ability and readiness of reputable ticket agencies to buy unwanted tickets and make them available to those who would rather pay a premium price than miss an event. It would also restrict the freedom of individuals to sell unwanted tickets. A ban could lead to the development of an underground market selling tickets at even more highly inflated prices. The hon. and learned Gentleman made an important point about safety aspects, with particular reference to the recent tragedy. I shall see that his remarks are drawn to the attention of Lord Justice Taylor, who is considering these matters. It would not be appropriate for me to comment further.

My hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) talked about South Africa. I had a feeling that I

had been there before, with the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) bouncing up and down like a jack-in-the-box while my hon. Friend was trying to make his interesting speech. My hon. Friend knows more or less the answer that I shall give. As the hon. Member for Walsall, North says, it is in some ways more supportive of the hon. Gentleman's view than of my hon. Friend's view.

The Government are fully committed to the Gleneagles agreement, which requires Commonwealth Governments to withhold support and discourage sporting contacts by their nationals with sporting organisations, teams or sportsmen from South Africa. Ministers were acting within the spirit of that policy. The agreement recognises that it is for individual Commonwealth Governments to determine in accordance with their laws how best to discharge those commitments. In the United Kingdom's perception of a free society, the Government's role is limited to giving advice and seeking to persuade—the Government have no powers to prevent individuals from visiting South Africa if they so choose.

The hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) raised the constituency case of Mr. Winstanley. The Government are fully committed to providing the most effective remedies possible for those parents who suffer the agony of child abduction. The Hague convention provides a sufficient remedy for abduction to those countries that have signed and ratified it. The Government hope that many more countries will ratify the convention. In other countries, what can be done is limited, apart from taking action in their courts. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office will provide what consular support it can.

Anyone who is worried about the possible unlawful removal of a minor from the jurisdiction of the courts should contact the police, who will alert the immigration service at the ports and passport issuing offices. The more precise the information about a possible unlawful removal, the better the chances of it being prevented. There are also powers under the Family Law Act 1986 for the courts when making a custody order, to order the confiscation of a passport. That may not be of much comfort to the hon. Member for Makerfield, but it is important that those people who are worried about this problem should know what can be done to prevent abduction.

My hon. Friend the Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) raised two matters. He told the horrifying story of Friday night at Heathrow airport before the flight to Belfast, and the effects of the sunshine which others had been enjoying. His vivid description sounded awful. My only comfort is that there is no Government responsibility for the weather or British Airways in that sense, but I will ensure that my hon. Friend's remarks are drawn to the attention of those with responsibility in this matter.

My hon. Friend the Member for North Down referred also to pensioners in his constituency. The Government have kept pensioners' interests high on our list of priorities while maintaining the real value of the state retirement pension. We have pursued policies aimed at creating a stable economic environment so that pensioners' income from other sources increases and keeps its value longer. As a result, pensioners' average total net income increased by 23 per cent. in real terms during our first seven years in office. In addition, pensioners with no other source of income than state benefits saw their gross income increase from 33 per cent. of the average male manual worker's earnings in 1979 to 37 per cent. in 1986.

The hon. Member for Walsall, North raised an interesting subject, the issues arising from China. I do not think that he would expect me to make any detailed comment. Obviously, we are continuing to follow events closely. Martial law was declared in parts of Peking on 20 May. Army units have moved into Peking but are blocked by groups of demonstrators from reaching the centre. The situation is tense but calm. We are concerned that the Chinese authorities have found it necessary to impose martial law. We have urged all those involved to exercise moderation and restraint and we hope very much that the situation can be resolved peacefully. I very much agree with the comments on Hong Kong by the hon. Member for Walsall, North. It is natural that the people of Hong Kong are worried about developments in China and that they should wish to express their opinions, but there is no reason to think that recent events in China will effect Hong Kong's future.

The hon. Gentleman referred also to self-governing hospitals. They will remain firmly part of the National Health Service but will be well placed to give patients more choice and provide a better quality of service. Regional health authorities are still considering the many expressions of interest, but they will forward them to the Department of Health by the end of the month.

Mr. Winnick: What about ballots?

Mr. Wakeham: Further arrangements will be announced in due course. It is not for me to make them now. I am sorry, but I must keep going because I have to answer the points made by many hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), who is looking at me.

My hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) said that he had to leave the Chamber, so I will deal with him later. My hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) raised the issue of gipsies and travelling people. She knows that I have similar problems in my constituency. It is a difficult problem and it is clear that more sites are urgently needed if we are to resolve the problems of unauthorised camping.

My hon. Friends the Members for Basildon and for Maidstone also referred to abortion. I cannot add to what I said during business questions on Thursday, and I have my words in front of me. Two issues come within my responsibility. I hope that there will be an opportunity before the next session for the House to reach a decision on the report of the Procedure Committee on private Members' time. There is also the wider question, which the Government are considering without any commitment, of whether the private Members' procedure is the right way to deal with the matter, or whether there is another way. I certainly have not made any commitment, but we are looking at that point.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow mentioned the Soviet expulsions. The hon. Gentleman cannot expect me to add anything to the full answer that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs gave earlier. All the proper steps were taken. However, I can say something about the Security Commission. It is not a standing body, but is normally appointed by the Prime Minister only to investigate any lapse in British security. It would not

[Mr. Wakeham]

normally be consulted on issues such as the expulsion of diplomats and it would not normally be expected to investigate such matters.

There has been a full inquiry about the events in Gibraltar. The hon. Gentleman raised some points on which I have not had the opportunity of finding detailed information. I will refer those points to my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary. If he considers that there is anything to add, he will write to the hon. Gentleman. If he does not, I will. The hon. Gentleman's remarks on Sir Leon Brittan seem to be a further example of his fertile and fervent imagination, and I have no comment to make.

My hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone raised the subject of the safety of parachutists. Military pilots have parachute jumping areas marked on their charts for low flying and details are provided in the United Kingdom military handbook. The regulations for civil leisure flying, like parachuting, are a matter for the Civil Aviation Authority and I will pass on my hon. Friend's concerns to it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) raised the question of the care service in his constituency. I know of his interest in that. He suggests that we should look wider than the local authority for leadership in those matters. I will refer that to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

The hon. Members for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) and for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) raised the subject of poverty. Considerations of definitions of poverty are a proper subject for debate, as is the question of whether the definition should be changed with changing circumstances in our society. No one denies that there are those who do not receive a reasonable share of material resouces for one reason or another. Our proper task is to ensure that our definition is appropriate and that the massive increase in resources is directed in the right direction. The total resources are now about £50 billion per year——

It being three hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 22 (Periodic adjournments).*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House, at its rising on Friday 26th May, do adjourn until Tuesday 6th June.

Orders of the Day

National Maritime Museum Bill *[Lords]*

Not amended, in the Standing Committee, considered.
Order for Third Reading read.

8.1 pm

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

It is fair to say that the Bill has received general support as it has passed through its various stages in this House and in another place. We had an interesting and lively Second Reading debate on a number of matters relating to the national maritime museum. However, there were no significant differences of opinion on the proposals of the Bill itself.

I will briefly remind the House of the purpose of this short Bill. It is to equip the board of trustees of the national maritime museum with similar powers to hold land and property to those already enjoyed by the other national museums and galleries. The Bill repeals a provision in the National Maritime Museum Act 1934, which vested the main property occupied by the museum at Greenwich in the Secretary of State for the Environment. The Bill proposes to vest the property with the museum's own board of trustees. There are a number of important safeguards about the use of the property which are repeated and updated in the present Bill.

The provisions have been welcomed by the museum and will allow the trustees and the director to use the magnificent buildings at Greenwich to even better effect than they have done previously. Since the Second Reading debate I have paid a visit to the museum and I am full of admiration for the imaginative leadership provided by the chairman, Lord Lewin, and the director, Richard Ormond and for the commitment of the staff, many of whom I had the chance to meet. I am happy to commend the Bill to the House.

8.4 pm

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): As the Minister has said, we debated this matter on Second Reading and, in so far as the Bill gives new powers to the national maritime museum, the Opposition welcome it. But that museum and others will want to know about the funding, powers and responsibilities they are inheriting from the Government and today's debate gives another opportunity for the Minister to explain Government policy briefly and for the House to look in a little more detail at the inheritance of this museum and others.

The Minister explained that the Bill will transfer property from the Property Services Agency. Few hon. Members of any party have any brief for the PSA and I welcome the fact that the museum's property will be transferred from the PSA. However, the transfer makes sense only if it is properly financed, and on that point, the Minister appears to be self-satisfied. On Second Reading, he said:

"the National Maritime museum is heading for success . . . the . . . museum is an outstanding success story."—[*Official Report, Second Reading Committee,* 28 February 1989; c. 10.]

We agree with that in so far as the museum is well managed and we join the Minister is paying tribute to Mr. Richard Ormond. However, that success has been in spite of, rather than as a result of, Government policy.

There is a problem about the buildings that the Bill will give to the museum. The Government gave the museum £3·5 million this year for repairs and maintenance, but that sum will decline to £2·7 million next year, although the museum estimates that it needs £19 million over the next five years. By any estimate, there is a shortfall of at least £2 million. The repairs include such basics as new heating and wiring, roof repairs and floor strengthening. Does the Minister agree that, when he visited the museum, it was explained to him that the inheritance of the buildings is sour and difficult? If he agrees, what will he do about it? What does he advise the national maritime museum to do?

The Minister is giving new powers and responsibilities to the museum. Will he tell the museum that it should try to obtain more sponsorship? Prince Charles said last week that it is very much more difficult for the unglamorous side of a museum's world, such as repairs and maintenance, to appeal to sponsors. Will the Minister advise the museum to lengthen its five-year plan to 10 years and, effectively, put off dealing with the repairs and maintenance that are part of the backlog it will inherit from the PSA? That is the state of repairs and the extent of the problem that the Bill will give to the museum. It is a reflection of the degree of care and concern that the Government have shown for the national maritime museum and for other museums, which are being treated in the same way.

When seen in that context, the transfer of power and responsibilities to the museum, far from being an imaginative move, will look to many hon. Members and to the public not like a transfer of responsibility, but a way of passing the buck for repairs to the museum and of saying to the museum, "You get on with it. We have failed to do our job and have left you with a building with inadequate heating and wiring, leaking roofs and a floor that is not strong enough for many of your artefacts. Now you take over, although we won't fund you any more."

The House must understand that that is what will happen if it passes the Bill. The Bill is passing on the responsibility for a museum that has been inadequately financed in the past. It will pass on to the museum a £19 million bill for repairs and maintenance.

The national maritime museum is not the only museum that is suffering. The trustees of the Victoria and Albert museum and the Tate gallery have refused to accept the new powers in this Bill until the position on repairs and maintenance has been worked out. Legislation is not needed in those cases. The Victoria and Albert museum needs £125 million over the next 10 years and it will inherit a backlog of £50 million in repairs and maintenance from the PSA. Its grant from the Government is £7·6 million this year. It is no wonder that Sir Clifford Chetwood, a museum trustee, said recently:

"Our buildings have suffered from years of neglect while they were maintained by the Government. We will not take over responsibility for them unless the Treasury is prepared to finance this backlog of work."

Lord Armstrong, the chairman of the trustees of the Victoria and Albert museum has said that he agrees that the museum has

"been underfunded over many years."

That is the backlog that the V and A has inherited and which the Bill passes on to the national maritime museum.

As I have said, the Tate gallery is in the same position, needing £27 million-worth of repairs and maintenance. It has buckets in its galleries; its roofs are being distorted by the sun, and the wiring is 50 years old. Three galleries had to be closed last year. Antiquated air conditioning causes high humidity and a temperature that affects many of the exhibits.

That is what is happening in many of our museums. However, on Second Reading and again this afternoon, the Government have shown that they do not seem to understand the crisis that is building up because of the past 10 years of neglect. In the Bill, the Government seek to pass on the legacy of neglect and underfunding to this museum and to others, telling them to get on with it. That is not good enough and the museum world knows that it is not good enough. Hon. Members must understand what they will be doing if the Bill is enacted. We must ask ourselves whether we trust the Government and whether they should be handing over museums in such a state.

The problems relate to security and insurance as well as to repairs and maintenance. The national maritime museum has no alarm system when it is open. It relies entirely on the eyes, diligence and alertness of its wardens. Once the doors are opened in the morning, there is no alarm system. Not only are the exhibits not alarmed, but there is no insurance whatsoever and the Tate is about to inherit severe fire protection problems from the PSA.

The Government have said that everything is wonderful and that they are spending so much money but in reality by 1991 the building programme budget, of which the Minister is so proud, will be £55 million per year. The director of the Museums Association, Dr. Patrick Boylon, has said that an extra £200 million is needed to undertake repairs. However, in 1989-90 the Government are increasing that budget by only 2·1 per cent., and in 1991 it will go up to the magic figure of 2·5 per cent. With inflation at 8 per cent., those museums are running backwards, even without allowing for the fact that, in the south of England, inflation in the cost of building repairs is estimated to be running at 20 per cent. The House must understand the inheritance that it will be passing on to the national maritime museum.

Does the Minister agree with the figures that I have given? If not, what are his figures? Why does he refuse yet again to face up to reality and conduct a national audit so that he, the museum world and the public can see how serious the position is? He may well say that the Opposition are doom-mongering and taking selective figures but let us have the facts and a national audit so that we can see whether the figures given to me by the Victoria and Albert museum, the Tate gallery and the national maritime museum are wrong. If they are wrong, the Government ought to say exactly where they are wrong and conduct a national audit to make the facts clear.

The fist element of what we are doing in the Bill is handing over underfunded buildings. The second element relates to the powers of the trustees. As the Minister has already said, the present trustees of the national maritime museum are very good and have real expertise in nautical affairs. They include Lord Lewin; Mr. Wright, a nautical architect; Mr. Corlett, a ship architect; Mr. Tidbury, who is involved with the Mary Rose trust, and Dame Naomi James, who is a sailor. That is not the case with the Victoria and Albert which has no specialist museum, librarian or other appropriate academic on its board. This legislation would hand over responsibility without making

[Mr. Mark Fisher]

sure that the board, unlike the board of trustees of the British museum, is composed of people with relevant expertise in the running of museums.

As we said on Second Reading, the Government ought to do something about that. We are expecting the trustees to take on responsibilities that they are not in a position to fulfil. Last year's report by the Museums and Galleries Commission said that it was unreasonable,

"to make trustees responsible for raising money to meet museums' basic needs".

It also said that if we carried on like that, suitable people would not be willing to serve as trustees. However, that is precisely what the Government are doing and that is the state of affairs that they are perpetuating with the Bill.

In the past, Governments of both parties accepted that they were responsible for the nation's heritage and for funding museums. All that has changed. The Government now have a policy of saying, "We will give you so much and no more. You find the rest." Trustees work part-time; they are not executives and cannot operate like the board of a public company. They are not there to raise money, so it is a totally unreasonable and misconceived policy to expect them to finance the museums and to raise money for them when those museums are the responsibility of the whole community and society. That is a responsibility that the Government have neglected. They will not accept it, and in the Bill they are legislating for the passing on of such responsibilities.

The truth is that the Government have no museums strategy. In recent weeks there has been an interesting conference entitled "Museums 2000" which was organised by the Museums Association. Museum experts came from 12 or 14 countries and all paid tribute to the high degree of professionalism and the technical expertise to be found in British museums. They agreed that we continue to lead the world in conservation, curatorial skills, exhibition and professional skills. However, they also said that in terms of policy and in the thinking about the role of museums in our culture, we were way behind the rest of the world.

Because of the Government, museums are not clear about what is expected of them. They are not sure how they fit into a cultural policy because the Government do not have a cultural policy. They are not sure how they fit into an educational policy. They are not sure what weight that they should give to the tourist and leisure role. They are not sure of the responsibilities of local authorities. Those basic questions about the role of museums in our society have not been answered by the Government and they are certainly not addressed in the Bill.

In this legislation we are handing over to the national maritime museum—and to others—new responsibilities in a strategy and policy vacuum. What are we preserving? For whom, why and how? What is our attitude towards our heritage? Because the Government have never addressed such questions, they do not have any answers. If one asked the Government, "If these museums did not exist, what sort of museums would you be setting up, for what purpose, where and in what sort of business location, with what relation to broadcasting and to modern means of communication?", one would realise that the Government had no answer. They have never produced anything on paper and apparently they have never done any thinking about policy or strategy or about the role played by museums in our culture.

That is especially true——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I must ask the hon. Gentleman to speak specifically to the Bill. Although I have been interested in what he has been saying, he is going wide of the Bill now.

Mr. Fisher: It is particularly true of the national maritime museum. We accept that our nautical heritage is even less protected than our heritage on land. When the Minister visited the museum last week he will no doubt have been given its new publication, "Heritage at Sea" which lays out exactly the problems. The legislation—the Merchant Shipping Act 1894 and the Protection of Wrecks Act 1973—is inadequate. There is no equivalent to English Heritage for nautical sites.

We are in a catch-22 situation in that the Merchant Shipping Act encourages and almost demands that all artefacts are sold to pay the fee of 7·5 per cent. that is required from salvors and the Department of Transport. That added cost means that museums cannot afford to buy, and when wrecks and sites are discovered they are broken up rather than held together. The Mary Rose is a notable exception, but it is indeed an exception. Our nautical heritage is being destroyed by the very legislation that was meant to protect it. The document recently published by the national maritime museum shows that we need new legislation, a national inventory of sites and a maritime heritage protection agency.

Why are the Government not addressing those problems? Why are the Government devolving powers and responsibilities to the national maritime museum in this Bill without addressing what the museum is about and without taking on board the important "Heritage at Sea" document that was published by the staff of the national maritime museum? Why do they not incorporate all those points and give the money to the national maritime museum? Indeed, why do they not also give it the legislative context in which it can get on with the job that we should be giving it in the Bill?

I fear that the reason the Bill transfers responsibilities to the national maritime museum without providing the money to carry out those responsibilities is that the Government believe in the free market for museums. They are prepared, reluctantly and grudgingly, to maintain the present level of funding, but no more. They say that others, whether independent museums or sponsors, should get on with the job because they will not give them any further help. New thinking and new money from the Government is desperately needed. The Minister should follow the French example, where the Government, with all-party support, have just voted a 12·5 per cent. increase for the arts and museums budget. If the Minister announced a 12·5 per cent. increase in funding for the national maritime museum, he would have all-party support.

Although we are not prepared to vote against the Bill because we support its general thrust, we feel that the Government are handing over to the national maritime museum problems that can be dealt with only by additional funding.

8.21 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): The speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) and your intervention, Madam Deputy Speaker,

underline the need for more general debate on this issue. The massive deterioration of so many of our treasures will cause the most appalling problems. Many buildings are aging, and such mundane matters as wiring, lead piping and so on are putting enormous strains on our heritage.

I want to ask the Minister a gentle question. Is it the Government's policy that funds should be given as a priority to those areas of our maritime heritage where deterioration has already begun—in fact, the equivalent of rescue archaeology? I suspect that the Government are aware that public interest in our heritage is escalating; it is not simply a question of Huggin hill or Roman remains. The House should take that into account.

8.22 pm

Mr. Luce: I shall first respond to the short speech by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) before dealing with the points raised by the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher). The hon. Member for Linlithgow rightly referred to the increasing public interest in heritage and, by implication, more widely in the arts. Indeed, there is a relentless upsurge of interest. In the financial year 1988-89 there were 80 million attendances at museums, including local authority museums, private sector museums and national institutions. It is Museums Year, during which it is estimated that there will be 100 million attendances at museums. That is a story not of collapse but of a dramatic expansion of interest. New museums are opening at a rate of one every fortnight. I accept that the Government have a special obligation to our national institutions, museums and galleries, which is why we give more than £150 million of taxpayers' money to them.

During the past three or four years, I have received representations about the amount of money available—or not available—for the maintenance of our great institutions. I understand the point that it is not easy to find sponsorship for rewiring or for mending roofs. That is why, when I launched the three-year funding policy in November 1987, I said that we would shift greater emphasis and more resources to building and maintenance. Some of the institutions have been operating for a long time, and their maintenance problems have become more acute. As the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central said, inflation costs are especially acute for building and maintenance. However, I wish that the hon. Gentleman would sometimes acknowledge that I have responded to the problem and shifted additional resources to deal with it—for example, £48 million this year, a 50 per cent. increase in real terms since 1979-80. Over the period to 1991-92, the figure will be £55 million a year.

The hon. Gentleman threw out a great many figures. We are discussing the National Maritime Museum Bill. The hon. Gentleman understandably asked about the amount of money for the building programme. This year it will be just under £3·5 million, and I have earmarked £2,770,000 for next year and £3,200,000 for the following year. However, that is only a partial allocation, because for the second and third years I prefer to wait until closer to the time to gauge the real building and maintenance problems. I am holding back a certain sum of money that I can then allocate. In fact, therefore, the total sum for the next three years will be a great deal larger than that shown in the chart.

Mr. Fisher: Does the Minister accept the national maritime museum's estimate that its five-year plan to deal with the backlog of repairs and maintenance will cost £19 million? The current grants announced will fall about £2 million short of that figure.

Mr. Luce: The museum has submitted fresh figures as a result of the corporate strategy that I asked each institution to supply each year, and we are examining those figures. The museum has a five-year strategy, whereas the funding covers a three-year strategy. A considerable sum of money has been allocated for the next three years, and I shall take into account the figures that the museum has submitted, looking five years ahead. I want to ensure that the building is maintained at a decent standard.

The hon. Gentleman gave the impression that he had never visited the museum, but I cannot believe that. I am glad to see him shaking his head—of course he has visited it. Nevertheless, when listening to parts of his speech I wondered whether we were living in slightly different worlds. I do not suggest that everything is perfect with our national institutions; I accept that there are pressures on building and maintenance, especially for the older institutions where the pressures of inflation are more acute. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would wish to be truthful and acknowledge that what the museum is achieving is a remarkable story. The 700,000 attendances last year show the general support for the museum and the growing number of people who want to visit it.

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for referring to the high calibre of the trustees and the cross-section of interests that they represent. They do a marvellous job. I strongly believe in the concept of devolving responsibility to the museums and galleries. Of course, that means more responsibilities for the chairman, trustees and director, and I acknowledge that the policy must be carried out with care. It is right to have less central control—a proposition that the Labour party does not support.

A seminar on nautical sites was held recently following a report on underwater archaeology. I am interested in the recommendations of the report and I am aware of the concern about the preservation of the sites and the work that is needed on them. As the hon. Gentleman knows, I do not have direct responsibility in that area, but it is something that I think the Government should take seriously. A number of Departments have responsibility, including the Department of Transport.

Without going outside the terms of reference of the Bill, I hope that I have responded to the main points raised by the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central. I hope also that the House will agree that the national maritime museum is doing a remarkable job, that it is not surprising that attendance is increasing at a remarkable rate, and that the strategy of joint funding between the public and private sectors is the right basis for a successful future. I am happy to commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time and passed, without amendment.

Civil Aviation (Air Navigation Charges) Bill [Lords]

Not amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

Motion made, and Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time and passed, without amendment.

Atomic Energy Bill [Lords]

As amended, in the Standing Committee, considered.

Order for Third Reading read.

8.30 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Michael Spicer): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

We have debated this short Bill on Second Reading and in two sittings of the Standing Committee. Therefore, I will keep my opening remarks short. If the House wishes me to do so, I will respond to the points made in the debate.

One purpose of the Bill is to raise the financial limit imposed on British Nuclear Fuels from its present level of £1·5 billion to £2 billion. That will allow the company to complete its current massive investment programme, in particular in the thermal oxide reprocessing plant, THORP. The House will know that the company has already secured over £4 billion of contracts associated with this plant, £2·8 billion of which are for overseas customers. It will make BNFL, for instance, the largest single yen earner in the country. Investment is also required to the tune of £500 million to reduce the radioactive liquid discharges over the next four years from their present negligible levels virtually to zero. Recent expenditure has reduced those discharges to less than 5 per cent. of the already low levels in 1979.

The Bill also enables the Health and Safety Executive to recover the costs of nuclear safety research from nuclear site licensees and from applicants for licences. Finally, clause 5 makes necessary changes to the law to enable the United Kingdom to ratify the national convention on assistance in the case of a nuclear accident or radiological emergency. Those changes in particular are welcomed by all hon. Members.

The Opposition, although not voting against this Bill, have tended to speak to it with clothes pegs clasped firmly over their noses. The hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) in particular has clearly found the nuclear industry distasteful. He is in line with his party. As we now know, through its policy review, if it were elected to office, the Labour party would ensure that the nuclear industry is brought to a standstill. The relevant paragraph of that document states:

> "In these circumstances, we will not therefore invest in new nuclear stations, nor will we compensate for that by running existing stations beyond their normal life. In practice, this will mean that a majority of existing stations will be decommissioned by the end of the century, and our dependence on nuclear power will therefore progressively diminish".

In the context of a Bill related to the nuclear industry, Conservative Members are bound to ask how a party which will rely for its electricity production almost exclusively on coal can possibly be serious about addressing the problem of carbon dioxide pollution of the atmosphere. What is more, what would happen to electricity consumers if Mr. Scargill's influence were ever reincarnated and had the damaging effect on coal that it had in the past, or if oil prices ever went through the roof again? Perhaps that subject is for another day.

8.33 pm

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): The Minister goes from strength to strength, bringing into an energy debate — whether it be atomic energy or electricity—the president of the National Union of Mineworkers, and seeking to avoid questions about Government legislation by referring to the aforesaid gentleman. I am grateful to the Minister for reading the recent Labour party policy review, although it is not a matter for debate today. Perhaps in the future we can debate in greater detail what the Labour party will do in office—I am pleased to say that the time is not too far away—rather than the present Government's plans. Meanwhile, perhaps the Minister will tell us the Government's plans for the nuclear industry.

Although it was considered in only two sittings of the Committee, the Bill has given us an opportunity to debate the future of BNFL and the nuclear power industry as a whole. We have certainly been able to highlight the ever-escalating costs of the nuclear fuel cycle, especially those of decommissioning. Decommissioning costs rose sharply in the recent past and, as the Minister has agreed, they are bound to be unpredictable because we have not been through the process yet and some of it is a long way off. The only prediction that he has been able to make is that decommissioning costs are likely to rise in the future. In Committee I asked the Minister to give a detailed breakdown of the £4·6 million held by BNFL for decommissioning its plant. He said that he could not respond immediately but would see whether he could obtain more information. Has he done that? BNFL has only two reactors—the remainder consists of ponds and chemical plants.

Again in Committee, during the discussion on new clause 1, I referred to the moneys set aside by the Central Electricity Generating Board and the South of Scotland electricity board for decommissioning nuclear plant. We are led to believe that the CEGB and the SSEB have about £4·2 billion for that, but according to a parliamentary answer to a question by the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) the CEGB has only £568 billion for decommissioning costs. How much is held by the SSEB for decommissioning costs? Is the balance the cost of reprocessing and the cost of nuclear waste management disposal? It is a substantial amount.

The Minister said that a Labour Government would operate schedule 12 of the Electricity Bill if the time scale for decommissioning nuclear reactors is reduced in future. The Minister knows that schedule 12 covers more than decommissioning. It allows for grants for the storage and reprocessing of nuclear fuel and for the treatment, storage or disposal of radioactive waste. To provide grants for those functions would effectively be to take over the business of BNFL when the Government are allowing the industry to renegotiate its cost-plus contracts. That would be underwriting from the public purse if anything went wrong.

The industry does not have a good record in estimating costs. The Minister has said that costs are bound to be unpredictable. It would be wrong to commit a future Labour Government to such expenditure. Whoever invests in national nuclear power and the Scottish nuclear industry should accept its financial liabilities. We believe that the Government intend to float the nuclear industry. The liabilities should be accepted by those who are to pay. We should make it clear that we will not bale out the privatised nuclear power industry should it want money in future for its day-to-day business.

The Minister spoke about what the Labour party would do in government, but what are the Government's current plans? They appear to be running headlong towards a new nuclear power programme. On 4 May in committee I asked the Minister whether we were to have a larger family of PWRs than originally intended. He failed to reply to that question, and I assume that it slipped his mind. What is the thinking in Government circles? Is it in favour of a massive increase in the PWR programme on the basis that that will mitigte against the greenhouse effect? The Government seem to be out of touch with reality regarding nuclear fuel. An example of that was the Minister's description of the nuclear waste reprocessing industry as an "environmentally pure" industry. I have never heard anyone who works full-time in that industry use such a phrase.

Greenhouse gases are a new event for the Government and they are using them as an excuse to wield their prejudice against the British coal mining industry. They are not, however, prejudiced against coal mining elsewhere in the world, as I understand that they are encouraging our ever-increasing imports of coal. To describe the reprocessing industry as "environmentally pure" is a giant leap away from the opinion that has been held by most people and by that very industry.

At the Prime Minister's seminar on 26 April, Mr. Currie of the energy technology support unit presented a paper in which he used the quaint phrase

"for the purposes of this presentation",

and then went on to make assumptions about the future based on the use of nuclear power to provide 50 per cent. of baseload electricity. To generate that amount, 24 PWRs would have to be constructed by the year 2020. The Minister concluded by quoting what the Labour party policy review says about the nuclear industry, but I challenge him to answer the question that I posed in Committee. What is the Government's position in relation to the nuclear industry in the future? Does he accept what the civil servants said at the Prime Minister's seminar—that to generate 50 per cent. of baseload electricity would require the construction of 24 PWRs by the year 2020? What do the Conservatives think about the future of the nuclear industry? The Minister knows full well what the Labour party thinks. It is extraordinary that even the Government could contemplate such a massive increase in nuclear capacity, even if it were possible.

As I said in Committee, the nuclear industry is under siege, with its economic and environmental excesses being exposed to a nation which increasingly does not share the Government's complacency about our nuclear future. The astronomic and rising costs of the nuclear fuel cycle have been put on record—from the massive capital cost through to the cost of reprocessing and the unknown but undoubtedly enormous cost of decommissioning and waste disposal.

The nuclear industry recognises that it cannot build on greenfield sites. Its application for four new PWRs are on existing nuclear reactor sites. It now plans to dispose of its waste products in deep disposal sites at Sellafield and Dounreay—existing nuclear sites. Since we have discussed this in Committee, I have heard that those at Dounreay are sceptical of taking on the liability of deep disposal. It may be that the Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive

[Mr. Kevin Barron]

—Nirex—will be forced to use one site alone in Great Britain which is prepared to accept the legacy of liability represented by nuclear waste.

How many Conservative Members will volunteer to have a PWR in their constituency if the Government go ahead with their nuclear madness? Is the Minister prepared to have a PWR in his backyard, as he seems to want to commit the Government to further nuclear reactors in the future? Alternatively, are we to assume that we shall run out of seaside sites for nuclear reactors? In years to come, will such nuclear reactors take over fossil-fuel power stations? Does the Minister believe that PWRs will be built in constituencies such as that held by his hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), which has a number of fossil-fuel power stations currently under threat? Will the new families of PWRs be built in such areas? The Government are in a state of confusion about the nuclear power industry. Perhaps the Minister will explain what their plans are. How big a tab will present and future taxpayers have to pick up for this costly—both environmentally and in money terms—industry?

We accept most of the Bill. We did not oppose it in Committee or on Second Reading, and we do not intend to oppose it today. Nevertheless, if the Government go ahead with the anticipated large-scale development of PWRs in the mistaken belief that that is the answer to the problem of greenhouse gases, exactly where will that development take place and in whose constituency? Who will be asked to accept the extension of the nuclear industry? The Opposition—and, I am sure, millions of other people—would like to know the answers.

8.46 pm

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): I was not a member of the Standing Committee considering the Bill, but I read the record of its proceedings today, and I found them absorbing. I am decisively anti-nuclear, and I am in tune with the majority of our population. The British people do not want any more nuclear power stations; and, frankly, they do not want to see any more money squandered on the industry.

The first clause of the Bill will increase the borrowing capabilities of BNFL from £1·5 billion to £2 billion. Therefore, the industry will be able to avail itself of an additional £500 million of public funds. In common with the public, I believe that that is throwing good money after bad, because the record of that industry inspires no confidence. BNFL has a history of leaks at Windscale, now Sellafield, and a history of escalating costs. One need only study its accounts for last year to see that the cost of reprocessing Magnox fuel increased by 27 per cent. in one year, or by 35 per cent. in real terms in the past two years.

Poor Sellafield may well feel that its days are numbered because the technology of reprocessing is now unnecessary. I noticed that, in Committee, Conservative Members asked why it was necessary to reprocess nuclear waste. The old justification was that we needed uranium and plutonium, but then we were faced with the embarrassment of the waste. We no longer need uranium, as it is cheap to buy on the world market and there are abundant reserves of it all over the world. We do not need the plutonium, especially as the Government are now winding down their fast breeder reactor programme, about which I am delighted.

What we are talking about is the long-term death of the nuclear industry. We do not need the uranium or the plutonium, nor do we need the waste. The technology of reprocessing merely multiplies the volume of waste by a factor of 100. It creates and adds to the embarrassment and it is expensive to store and dispose of such waste.

It is clear from the advanced gas-cooled reactors and the PWRs that the Government are intent on building that their wastes will not be reprocessed. We shall do as the United States has always done, and store wastes without reprocessing. It is possible to use dry storage for PWRs and AGRs. That involves much cheaper technology than other methods of storing, and it is environmentally much more acceptable than reprocessing.

Where does that leave Sellafield and the thermal oxide reprocessing plant? It is at THORP that the big expansion at the Sellafield plant lies. THORP will be used to reprocess oxide fuel. It seems that too much money has been spent there already. Contracts have been signed that may be expensive to cancel. The costs of THORP will be £1·5 billion, five times the original estimate. The justification for it is that there are orders in the pipeline for £4 billion-worth of waste to be reprocessed over the next 10 years.

The Minister appeared to be proud in Committee that 70 per cent. of the orders are from overseas. Should we be proud that we are importing nuclear wastes? Surely that comes within the same category as the importation of toxic wastes. It is nothing to be proud of. Most of the British people would prefer not to import massive quantities of toxic wastes for landfill and for incineration, and the same goes for nuclear waste. They do not want to see Britain becoming the nuclear dustbin of the world, but that is what THORP is all about. It is only that activity that makes it financially viable.

What will happen to the wastes from Japan and elsewhere after they have been reprocessed at THORP? What happens to the plutonium and, most especially, the long-lived radioactive wastes, the caesium 137 and the strontium 90? Will they be sent back to Japan and elsewhere? Will that happen in five years, 10 years, or in the indefinite future? The British people are fed up with waste importation.

I am disappointed that the Government could not agree that the Bill should be amended so that it became the duty of any private or public company holding or operating nuclear installations to publish annually the current estimated cost of decommissioning such installations. Decommissioning is a critically important cost. Decommissioning nuclear installations could be much more expensive than constructing them. It is fair to ask for annual estimates of decommissioning costs. The facts should be available to the British public. During consideration of the Electricity Bill, we heard calls for transparency in the costs of nuclear power. We want the costs of decommissioning to be transparent. The costs should appear in the accounts of British Nuclear Fuels plc every year and in those of the Central Electricity Generating Board. There should be a detailed explanation of the technology and detailed estimates of the costs.

It is revealing that the nuclear industry used to think that, when nuclear plants became clapped out, they could be disposed of at sea. That view is incredible, now that we

know more about nuclear wastes and radiation. At one time, however, the nuclear industry thought that clapped-out reactors and plant at Sellafield, for example, that came to the end of their life could be disposed of at sea. I am glad that we have moved on slightly since then. However, the fact remains that we need accurate estimates of decommissioning costs, and these should be revised annually.

We know that the decommissioning of nuclear power stations is to be deferred to stage 3, to 100 years hence. What if it is possible technically to decommission them within 20 to 30 years? Since it is technically feasable to decommission nuclear installations at the end of their life, they should be restored to green sites as soon as it is technically feasible to do so. That means that the 2 per cent. discount rate becomes much less relevant. The cost of decommissioning multiplies by a factor of two, three or four. We should have reasonable estimates of the costs and they should be prepared annually. The technology and the estimates should be in line with international experience.

8.55 pm

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): It appears that the Minister is not living in the real world. He is such a nice chap outside the Chamber, but when he speaks from the Dispatch Box he is as vicious as I do not know what. He becomes really nasty when he talks about nuclear power.

The Minister has spoken about the Labour party's policy. Ministers take every opportunity to attack the Labour party. We are approaching the European elections and the Minister is probably electioneering on behalf of Conservative candidates. The Labour party has never changed its policy on nuclear energy—the Minister appears to be surprised. It seems that he does not do his homework. He should not attack the Labour party for its nuclear policy when its spokesmen are really reiterating what they have said in the past.

Mr. Michael Spicer: That is an extraordinary comment. I am prompted to ask the hon. Gentleman how it was that, when his right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) was Secretary of State for Energy, he launched a massive nuclear building programme. He was a member of the Labour party, and I believe that he still is. The same party is committed now to destroying the programme which he almost invented.

Mr. Haynes: An individual is entitled to express his own opinion. I am talking about Labour party policy on nuclear energy. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) may have done what the Minister suggests, but I stand in the Chamber as a Labour Member who believes in the Labour party's policy on nuclear energy. The Minister should come off it and get his facts right before he makes such stupid remarks from the Government Dispatch Box. Mind you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he makes one or two such remarks on these matters and on others. I know that, as I served as a member of the Committees that considered the Electricity Bill and the Bill that is before us.

The Minister has made other stupid comments. This is really a cover-up. The Secretary of State for Energy and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy often refer to the president of the National Union of Mineworkers. That really is rubbish. I have some news for the Minister. The president of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers has applied to join the Labour party. I hope that the Minister has taken that on board and can understand the feelings about nuclear energy which are prevalent in Nottinghamshire. I am convinced that those feelings are related to the Government's nuclear policy. People are reacting against it. The Minister can come off it and stop referring to the president of the NUM across the Dispatch Box.

In his argument tonight and in Committee upstairs, the Minister has always argued that the provision of fossil fuel for the electricity industry is more expensive than nuclear energy. What a load of rubbish. That is another cover-up. We know that the cost of nuclear power will be way above the cost of fossil fuels.

My hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) was right to refer to the cost of decommissioning. That cost is in addition to the provision of PWRS. My hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) suggested that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) would not have a nuclear power station in her constituency. I will tell the Minister why she would not have one. She would not use the argument that she was against nuclear power. Instead, she would claim that Derbyshire was a nuclear-free zone. She is right; Derbyshire is a nuclear-free zone.

Recently, there were county council elections in Derbyshire and the Labour party took more seats in Derbyshire even though there is a great deal of expenditure on the people, especially on people in need. Of course, there is also expenditure on advertising the fact that Derbyshire is a nuclear-free zone.

In Committee on the Electricity Bill and on the Atomic Energy Bill, the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Mr. T. Skeet) was thrashing the issue. He wanted to make more progress. He did not want four PWRs as planned; he wanted the eight which were decided in the first place.

Mr. Barron: Where is the hon. Member now ?

Mr. Haynes: He is not in the Chamber tonight. He has a problem: I read in the press over the weekend that his constituency party has decided to ditch him.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. A Third Reading debate is not an easy debate. The hon. Gentleman is extremely experienced and he knows that the debate must relate to what is in the Bill. The matters which the hon. Gentleman has raised now are not in the Bill.

Mr. Haynes: I was about to refer to a PWR being situated in Bedfordshire, North. The hon. Member for Bedforshire, North was pushing for PWRs in Committee, but he made it clear that he did not want one in his constituency.

When we drive down the motorway, we can all see the notices which have been painted on the bridges—all the notices are illegal—stating, "We don't want nuclear dumping here." However, the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North was pushing like mad in Committee for PWRs, nuclear power, and all the blooming rest of it. However, it seems that he is going to be dumped for pushing for those projects. He has had his come-uppance. He may stand as an independent, but we shall see.

The argument is all about cost. People write to me and attend my surgeries because they are concerned about the Government's nuclear energy programme, particularly

[Mr. Haynes]

their new PWRs. Where will those PWRs go? We do not want one in Ashfield. I can tell the Minister, on my constituents' behalf, "We ain't gonna have one." That is something else that he can put in his pipe and smoke—although he does not smoke a pipe. The people are making themselves heard and I am speaking on their behalf.

Many Conservative Members push like mad for nuclear power and the new PWRs. They support them in the Division Lobbies. However, they do not want them in their own back gardens. It is rather like the planning applications to which the Secretary of State for the Environment says, "Not in my back garden, but they can be in someone else's." I hope that the Minister gets the message. There is no doubt that the Government will get their Bill, but we shall continue to fight it.

The Minister never takes any notice when I am talking to him. He is always doodling. When I was addressing the Minister in a very important debate on mining subsidence recently, my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) said, "He's doodling." He was not listening to me.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I am making notes on the hon. Gentleman's points.

Mr. Haynes: If the hon. Gentleman is making notes, that is different. I hope that he will say something that I can enjoy and really take on board, and which I can take back to my constituents.

I repeat: when it comes to the next general election, the Minister will get a shock. Nuclear energy policy will change when my right hon. and hon. Friends and I are on the Government Benches and when Conservative Members are in opposition.

9.5 pm

Mr. Michael Spicer: The hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) asked about repatriation of nuclear waste. As the hon. Gentleman is knowledgeable on such matters, he should know that, since 1976, all contracts with foreign countries incorporate options for the repatriation of nuclear waste arising out of reprocessing. The Government's intention is that those options will be exercised, so I hope that reassures the hon. Gentleman.

I made one or two notes on the interesting speech of the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes), who accused me of not living in the real world because I do not agree with his view that Labour party policy on the nuclear industry has been consistent. The hon. Gentleman's party, which now wishes to destroy the nuclear industry, is the same party that spawned the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). At the time in question, the then right hon. Member for Bristol, South-East was not just any member of the Labour party and entitled to hold offbeat views on nuclear energy, such as those that some of his right hon. and hon. Friends expressed recently; he was the Secretary of State for Energy. In that capacity, he launched a number of nuclear power stations.

Some of them have not worked as well as he imagined, whereas all those launched during the period of office of the present Government show every sign of doing so. Any shortcomings should not all be laid at the feet of the right hon. Gentleman. Nevertheless, he formulated present nuclear policy and the power stations associated with it.

I say to the hon. Member for Ashfield something that he often says to me: "Come off it." It is nonsense for the hon. Gentleman to suggest that there has not been something of a volte-face by the Labour party. It is extraordinary that, if Labour ever return to government—which most people in this country who think about such matters hope will never happen—they will be dedicated to the destruction of the nuclear power industry.

The Labour party's inconsistency is not confined to the past. I have an invitation to a national conference entitled "Energy for the Future", sponsored by the Scottish Trades Union Congress, at which the speakers making the case for the fast reactor will include the hon. Members for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) and for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). There is inconsistency not only between the Opposition's present policies and those to which they have devoted themselves when in government, but within their own ranks. When it suits them, Members of Parliament representing interests that are served well by the nuclear industry appear at conferences supporting its future, while the mainstream element of the Labour party now apparently wishes to ditch its past policies. It is entirely wrong for the hon. Gentleman to suggest that there is any consistency with past policies.

Mr. Haynes: Smile.

Mr. Spicer: The hon. Gentleman asks me to smile, but the future of the nuclear industry is a serious matter.

The hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) asked me what the Government's policy was on the future of the industry. He claimed that he now had a firm policy, and suggested that the Government did not. The Government's position has been made clear several times: we will ensure through the non-fossil fuel obligation that the nuclear industry is maintained at about its present capacity, which means building four pressurised water reactors to replace the aging Magnoxes.

Mr. Barron: Is the Minister contradicting the paper presented to the seminar held by the Prime Minister on 26 April? That paper, introduced by Mr. Ken Currie of the energy technology support unit, dealt with the options for mitigating the greenhouse effect and suggested the physical possibility of building 24 new PWRs by the year 2020. Is the Minister saying that the paper was wrong, and that the four PWRs that are public knowledge are the only ones that were in the Government's mind either before or after the seminar?

Mr. Spicer: The papers presented at the seminar contained the views of those who presented them. The reason why there is such a thing as collective responsibility—the reason why there are Cabinets, and why policy becomes policy only when Ministers have announced it to Parliament as such—is that discussion must take place, in some cases on the basis of hypothetical material in papers. That particular paper gave the views and the prognosis of one individual, which is all that it claimed to do.

Discussion takes place both inside and outside Government about all sorts of possible scenarios, but the Government's policy is absolutely clear: we need four PWRs if we are to maintain our present nuclear capacity. What is not clear is the Opposition's policy on the environment. They spend a great deal of time talking about the environment, but things are different when it comes to hard practical reality.

Let us assume that what is meant by "impingement" on the environment is the effect of, for instance, carbon dioxide emissions on the atmosphere. The Opposition must explain how they would satisfy what is expected, according to every assumption that I have come across, to be a rising demand for electricity——

Mr. Alan W. Williams *rose*——

Mr. Spicer: May I just finish this point? There will be a rising demand for electricity, even if conservation measures are taken into account. Perhaps that is what the hon. Gentleman wishes to say. How are the Opposition to satisfy that rising demand with what is essentially a coal-based power station system? Everyone knows that most emissions of CO_2 are from coal-fired power stations. How on earth will the Opposition be able to develop an honest policy toward the environment if they maintain their anti-nuclear stance?

Mr. Williams: I am pleased that the Minister corrected himself in mid-paragraph when I rose to intervene. I thought that he made it abundantly clear during the proceedings on the Electricity Bill that the Bill said nothing about the environment and conservation, or about environmental pollution. The fact is that four pressurised water reactor power stations would make a very small contribution to environmental protection. If the money that is to be spent on their construction were to be invested in energy conservation, it would make a far greater contribution to environmental protection. It is baffling that the Government and the Minister should be deaf to the pleas of so many people to take an interest in conservation. They will have to take it seriously at some stage.

Mr. Spicer: Everything associated with the Electricity Bill relates to the environment. If one thinks through what the electricity industry does to the environment, it has—*[Interruption.]* I see that you are growing a little restless, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I have been asked specifically about the environment and I ought to deal with it. The future of the nuclear industry is bound up with the question of whether additional money is to be given to British Nuclear Fuels, plc. One constraint on the future of the nuclear industry, and therefore on the money that is given to it, might be the environment. That is why I was briefly addressing the question, and I hope that I shall be permitted to answer the hon. Member for Carmarthen.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I should be obliged if all hon. Members, whether speaking from the Back Benches or the Front Benches, would deal only with the Bill which is having its Third Reading.

Mr. Spicer: Perhaps I may be allowed briefly to answer the question raised by the hon. Member for Carmarthen about the effect of the nuclear industry on the environment. Clause 1, in particular, deals with the provision of additional money for the industry. That ought to be welcomed by hon. Members. British Nuclear Fuels plc will be making major new investments in cleaning up the pollution caused by the industry. The hon. Gentleman says that it is untrue for the Government to argue that the nuclear industry will benefit the environment. The Electricity Bill requires all companies to have regard to environmental questions. It does not require them to enhance the beauty of the landscape. Unlike the water industry, it is not that kind of industry. However the Electricity Bill and this Bill will ensure that the industry has a multiplicity of sources of supply, in addition to coal.

The fact that the industry pollutes the environment by emitting SO_2 and CO_2 is directly addressed in the Bill. The Opposition grumble about the Bill and make speeches against the use of nuclear power. An industry that was exclusively dependent upon coal would pump even more CO_2 into the atmosphere, even allowing for conservation procedures. We consider that the Opposition are hypocritical to adopt that posture when a Bill such as this will provide additional finance for the nuclear industry to protect the environment.

We have never denied that coal will play an essential part in the future, but when considering whether more money should be allowed for investment at BNFL, we think it is essential that nuclear power should be a component of electricity generation. We believe that fervently for many reasons, not the least of which is that which the Opposition always try to cram down our throats —improving the environment.

9.19 pm

Mr. Barron *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Does the hon. Gentleman have the leave of the House to speak again?

Mr. Barron: Yes.

I asked the Minister more than the one question, which he avoided in his attempted answer. I asked about the breakdown of decommissioning costs in the Central Electricity Generating Board and the South of Scotland Electricity Board. If he does not have those figures, I am quite prepared to have them by letter.

Mr. Spicer: I apologise for not giving an answer on the BNFL breakdown, but perhaps I can help by saying that the £4·6 billion covers all the BNFL sites and includes the reactors at Calderhall and Chapel Cross. BNFL estimates that it will cost about £750 million to decommission those reactors—there are four at each site. I hope that that gives the hon. Gentleman some of the information he wants.

Mr. Barron: It goes some way towards an answer. We shall have to go into more detail about the decommissioning costs of each generator, but I am grateful for the information.

We support the Bill. We said at the outset in the debate on the limitation on borrowing powers that we wanted to make specific points about this industry and its expenditure. The growth of nuclear reprocessing costs has been quite astounding. The Government have been very honest in their defence of reprocessing and the disposal of nuclear waste. I am sure that the Minister's phrase about it being an environmentally pure industry will go down for posterity. I know few people who will defend that position.

The Minister went on at some length about the Labour party's stance. Would he accept a PWR in his constituency? Would his constituents accept a waste disposal facility? We have yet to hear where the Government, who seem to be in favour of the expansion of the nuclear industry, will site these reactors. I am prepared to give way to the Minister if he will tell me whether his constituents are prepared to provide an inland site for a PWR. I asked that question throughout the Committee

[Mr. Barron]

stage and it was unanswered then just as it is unanswered now. Everybody knows it is not environmentally pure. Rather, it is a legacy for future generations.

We shall support the Bill. We are pleased about the international convention which has been brought about because of the accident at Chernobyl. This and any future Government will help if such a disaster should ever befall the earth again.

While we support the Bill, we cannot support this industry, which the Minister believes should be a component of our electricity generation. It is too expensive in terms of the economics of electricity generation, the economics of the nuclear fuel cycle and the cost of the legacy of nuclear waste for future generations.

We support the Bill but we do not support the Government's rush to expand a nuclear power industry that has failed the British people and the people of the world during the last 30 years.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, with an amendment.

Financial Provisions (Northern Ireland)

9.24 pm

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Ian Stewart): I beg to move,

That the draft Financial Provisions (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 17th May, be approved.

The order is the latest in a series of such orders, the last of which was passed in 1986. Their main purpose is to adjust, as necessary, certain limits imposed by statute on financial operations and to deal with other routine finance matters, including the simplification and rationalisation of accounting procedures. Those are described in the explanatory memorandum. The only article to which I need draw the attention of the House in particular is article 3, which will enable a capital surplus of some £365 million in the Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund to be used to write off some of the loans to be made over the years to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

The surplus came about because the 1986 Financial Provisions Order abolished a number of obsolete funds and transferred their assets to the Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund. Savings on interests charges on loans written off will release resources of some £50 million a year for alternative and more productive public expenditure. I therefore commend the order to the House.

9.26 pm

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): The House will be pleased that I do not intend to speak at length. I thank the Minister of State for taking us so quickly through the provisions of the latest draft order.

The Minister referred to the most recent draft order, that of 1986. My research shows that the one before that was in 1984. The only Member of the 1984 Parliament and certainly the 1986 Parliament who fully understood the orders, with the exception of the Minister who initiated and replied to the debate, was the right hon. Enoch Powell. He certainly went through the draft orders meticulously and, as usual, with a fine-toothed comb, and found something useful to say about them. I wish that I had that insight and strength of character to say that I had done the same. Unfortunately, the truth is that I have read through the order and cannot find a great deal to say about it.

The order does not deal with the appropriation of cash for public services in Northern Ireland, a point that the Minister did not mention, although his two predecessors did so in previous debates. I regret that, because, had the order dealt with the appropriate of cash, the scope for the debate would have been far wider and we would have been able to call into question the global sums of public expenditure in Northern Ireland and the allocation of those sums between the various services in the Province.

I notice that the hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) is getting a little agitated as she sees the time moving on. I presume that she has her eye on a Bill further down the Order Paper.

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): I am not remotely agitated.

Mr. Marshall: We might disagree about the verb, but I feel that the hon. Lady wishes to discuss a Bill further down the Order Paper.

It is perhaps regrettable that the order does not deal with appropriation, as it would have provided the opportunity to discuss Government policy on public expenditure in Northern Ireland. The Minister knows that on many previous occasions I have given the Government credit for the level of public expenditure in the Province. Nevertheless, I repeat that, although the present levels of public expenditure are commendable, in view of the economic and social difficulties and problems, there is still a strong case for even greater increased levels of public expenditure in Northern Ireland. Perhaps that is a point we can pursue in the next Appropriation Order debate.

I recognise that the Government need the order to be passed quickly. Perhaps that is why it was laid before the House last week and is being discussed today. If one reads in detail the explanatory memorandum, one sees that the Northern Ireland Estimates for this year were passed on the assumption that the draft order would come into effect in June. If the Government fail to meet that deadline—it is not my intention to engineer that—public expenditure in Northern Ireland will be reduced by £1 million per week, or nearly £5 million per month, or £60 million per year. That would affect the allocation of public expenditure in the North of Ireland. If the order is not passed and the money is not available, it will affect many expenditure programmes, including that of the Housing Executive, as well as expenditure on education and health. It would also affect the Government's privatisation policies in the North of Ireland.

I should like to say a few words about Shorts, a subject I raised with the Minister during Question Time last week. The Minister knows that my party's view remains that the company should continue to be publicly owned. However, I recognise that that battle has now been lost. It is essential to secure and expedite the company's future. We have to have decisions quickly. We all know that the Government have only two bids to consider. The first bid is from Bombardier—I apologise to the company for mispronouncing its name last week—and the second is from GEC-Fokker. It should not take a great deal of time to choose between them. It seems to me and to many other hon. Members that the top management at Shorts has already made a decision and would welcome a takeover by Bombardier. I assume that the recently announced reorganisation of the operational divisions of Shorts is a preliminary step towards that end.

Whatever the truth may be, we have to end quickly the uncertainty over the future of Shorts. That requires a speedy decision by the Government. I press the Minister again to give an assurance that the Government will make their view known within the next two weeks.

Having said that, without further ado I accept the order and commend it to the House.

9.34 pm

Rev. Martyn Smyth (Belfast, South): I wish to put one or two points on the record. I notice that the order was issued on Wednesday when in Northern Ireland we had a slight local distraction which continued on Thursday and Friday. Therefore, I join the hon. Member for Leicester South (Mr. Marshall) in his tribute to my colleague of past days, the right hon. Enoch Powell. He is a master of figures and he would have studied in detail the draft order.

It has been said that there will be a shortage of funds for education, but education is not mentioned in the order. Reference is made to funds being given to the Housing Executive, thereby enabling funds to be released for other work. Will those other funds be for housing? Will people who have been trying for months to obtain grants—especially older people who have been trying to modernise their homes—but have been delayed by insufficient funds be given grants, or will they be left waiting because tenders will be out of date by the time funds are made available to help them? Will the funds that are released be retained by the Housing Executive, or will they be given to another Department?

Article 8 makes a change, and is a sweetener to attract Northern Ireland Members, by bringing Northern Ireland into line with current British practice. It provides that the Department of Finance and Personnel, unlike the previous mandatory provisions, may direct departments when to prepare trading accounts. How often will such accounts be prepared?

It is part of the task of hon. Members to monitor supply and expenditure. It has been exceedingly difficult to monitor certain Departments in Northern Ireland, in which expenditure has been rampant over the years. Surely it would have been better to bring Britain in line with practice in Northern Ireland so that there would not be a long lead time before the accounts are published of the various commercial, trading and manufacturing services that Departments might operate. The House should have had such monitoring machinery earlier, but it is being offered now, perhaps to save on administrative costs and perhaps, in the long run, to cover the other losses of millions of pounds that we have been unable to monitor.

This is not an appropriation debate, so we cannot probe funds more carefully, but do the new regulations providing loans for the Northern Ireland Electricity Service mean that the Government have decided not to go ahead with privatisation of the NIES, which would please many people in Northern Ireland? Does it mean that the Government have discussed a new link between Northern Ireland and the Republic, or does it mean that the Government are prepared to go ahead with the Scottish link, which would keep the United Kingdom and the EEC together for the good of our people?

9.38 pm

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): Having had the opportunity to speak earlier this evening, I shall intervene only briefly.

I should like to follow the point made by the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. M. Smyth) about the funds that will be available to the Housing Executive. Will the Housing Executive be able to make the grants that many people in North Down have been asking for and carry out vital repairs on its estates?

I hope that, before long, the people of Northern Ireland, not English Ministers in Westminster, will be able to decide financial provision, because Stormont is where such matters should be dealt with.

9.39 pm

Mr. Ian Stewart: With the leave of the House, Mr. Speaker. I think that many of us would welcome progress towards devolution of responsibility to elected representatives in Northern Ireland, and I endorse what the hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) has said.

[Mr. Ian Stewart]

The hon. Members for North Down and for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) made specific points about the Housing Executive. The funds released for public expenditure purposes in general by article 3 are not hypothecated in housing, but they influence the amount made available over all the programmes in the current financial year. The resources used to write off the Housing Executive loans are not funds which arose from housing but are the result of closing a number of obsolete accounts containing money which went into them for various reasons. There is no particular case for applying them to housing. Nevertheless, there are housing needs, and that is why we have sustained a substantial programme in this area of public expenditure. As the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) said, the order will increase the funds available for public expenditure by about £1 million per week, and that will continue throughout the current financial year and in the future. This has enabled us in the last annual public expenditure round to see higher public expenditure figures than we would otherwise have had.

The hon. Member for Belfast, South asked about article 8 and how often discretion would be used by the Department of Finance and Personnel in respect of formal trading accounts. For example, there are at present only three trading accounts in respect of services operated by the Department of Agriculture—a fish farm, a pig testing station and the forest service. Of those, only the forest service is a true trading activity which would require formal trading accounts. When the order is implemented, the Department will probably dispense with the need for trading accounts for the other services. It will be a matter of using discretion, but it should enable quite a lot of rather pointless bureaucratic exercises to end.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I appreciate the Minister's answer. I was thinking also of the development of privatisation and in-house trading within, for example, the Department of Health and Social Services.

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman is going rather wider than the matter in hand. I will let him know whether I have any further comments. I should not like him to think that these decisions have been taken in advance because they have not, but it is sensible to have this measure available and to see when it can properly be applied. It may therefore be a considerable time before any sensible answer to the hon Gentleman's question is available.

The hon. Member for Belfast, South asked me whether article 6 had any implications for privatisation of electricity or the connector link. It has no implications one way or the other. It is designed simply to ensure that any Government loan to the Northern Ireland Electricity Service is automatically secured on the assets and revenue of the service without having to go to the bother of constructing a special legal mortgage or other document. It should simplify the financial arrangements for the Northern Ireland Electricity Service and the Government agency making the loan.

It would not be right to comment at this stage on Shorts, when the bids are being carefully assessed, but I assure the hon. Member for Leicester, South that it is not the Government's intention to delay that process longer than necessary to deal with the matter properly, as he would wish.

On the general scope of the debate, I am sorry that I never had the opportunity to take part in one when Mr. Enoch Powell was still in the House, but I know of his formidable debating skills from my time as a Treasury Minister and I have no doubt that he would have found all sorts of ins and outs in the document before us. As the hon. Member for Leicester, South recognises, however, the order does not go into specific matters of appropriation, for the simple reason that it is concerned largely with technicalities. There are other occasions on which we can debate appropriation and public expenditure generally. If the normal pattern is followed—I have no reason to think that it will not be—we shall have another appropriation order debate before too long when we can look into more general matters of public expenditure.

I am grateful to hon. Members who have taken part in the debate and for the support given to the order, which I hope that the House will now pass.

Question put and agreed to.

Ordered,

That the draft Financial Provisions (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 17th May, be approved.

HUMAN ORGAN TRANSPLANTS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Motion made, and question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 90(6) (Second Reading committees), That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Human Organ Transplants Bill *[Money]*

Queen's recommendation, on behalf of the Crown, signified.

9.46 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Roger Freeman): I beg to move,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Human Organ Transplants Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of the expenses of any authority exercising functions under that Act.

Clause 2(4) of the Bill contains the provision that authorises payment out of moneys provided by Parliament. The financial effects of the Bill will be limited to the expenses of running the authority. The sum involved is very small—£20,000 per annum—which is considered the maximum total cost likely to be incurred by members of the authority in carrying out their functions under the Act. Expenses of the authority will cover such items as claims by members for travel, subsistence, overnight accommodation and meeting postage and telephone costs. Also, some minor items of office equipment, including stationery and computer software, may have to be made available to members of the authority.

We envisage that members of the authority will wish to meet frequently, following the Bill's enactment, to familiarise themselves with the handling of referrals and adopt a common approach. In time, we expect members to carry out their functions mainly by post and telephone with occasional meetings to review progress. The final decision about such arrangements, however, will rest with the chairman and members of the authority. We also expect that the authority will wish to maintain a record of cases referred to members. Some dedicated computer equipment will be provided to the authority for this purpose. This is a modest sum for a specifically limited purpose and I commend the resolution to the House.

9.48 pm

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): It seems that the money resolution, which my hon. Friend assures us is only for a small sum, is remarkably open-ended. It relates to an unspecified authority which is to be set up by as yet unpublished regulations. My hon. Friend talked about members of the authority and that is the first time that I have heard him make reference to a membership of the authority, for there is nothing in the Bill that refers to members of the authority. That membership was not referred to on Second Reading. What sort of authority will we be setting up? What do we want that authority to do? From Second Reading, we know from my hon. Friend that the policing of this Bill is central to its effectiveness, and that therefore how the Bill is to be policed must be spelt out in detail at some stage in the Bill's progress through Standing Committee, through the final stages in this House and in the other place.

We also know from Second Reading that there will be a register. Presumably it will either be held centrally, with copies in all the hospitals that are equipped to carry out transplant operations or, alternatively, a register will be held in each hospital that is capable of carrying out such operations. I am guessing at the details, but operations involving the transplant or removal of organs will be detailed in the register. Presumably it will spell out who performed the operation, who gave the organ and to whom it has been given.

However, that still leaves me wondering whether we shall be any the wiser about whether the organ has been obtained legally or illegally. What mechanism can my hon. Friend suggest to guarantee that organs will be donated legally? I am also left wondering whether a specific duty to maintain the accuracy of the register will be imposed on hospitals that perform transplant operations. If such a duty is to be imposed, what penalty will be incurred by a hospital where the register is found to be neither up to date or accurate?

My hon. Friend the Minister has told the House that he estimates that £20,000 will be required to police the Bill. However, he told the Standing Committee with great honesty that the size of the Bill's task is unknown. The Government do not know how many commercial sales of kidneys have taken place at any stage during the past decade. In those circumstances we do not know whether we are talking about a very small number of such sales or whether they are common practice. To some extent my hon. Friend is guessing both about the Bill's task and about how he will police a system which, at the moment, appears to be outside anybody's control.

I say this with the greatest respect—I have the greatest respect for my hon. Friend—but he is estimating, or at least his advisers are telling him, that for £20,000 he can set up an authority, cover its travelling costs, fund the bureaucracy that such an authority may need and hold a register, whether centrally or in the hospitals. He believes that he can do all that for £20,000, but we all know that the price of a good secretary is at least half that sum. I suggest that he will be hard pressed to introduce a workable scheme for that very small sum.

I began by saying that this money resolution is open-ended and I think it is probably better that way. Perhaps at this stage, before he has brought forward regulations and spelt out the details of the authority, my hon. Friend might be wiser not to state the figure that he thinks will be required. I have an uneasy feeling that he might find that he has considerably under-estimated.

9.53 pm

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): Although I am addressing my remarks strictly to the money resolution, I regret and feel sad that the Second Reading of the Bill was not taken on the Floor of the House. In principle, the Bill has universal support in the House and I cannot believe that any harm would have been done by allowing those of us who have strong feelings on certain aspects of the Bill an opportunity to debate it in full on the Floor of the House. Whatever the arguments—there certainly are some—for curtailing amendments which merely prolong discussion of the Bill, I cannot see any arguments against taking Second Reading on the Floor of the House, and I am sorry that that was not done.

Before you call me to order, Mr. Speaker, I will return to the money resolution. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) I doubt very much, although for different reasons, whether what is proposed could be carried out entirely within the modest sum that my hon. Friend the Minister has suggested. If I were a member of the authority concerned, faced with a rule as vague as that in clause 5, I should spend a great deal of

[Miss Ann Widdecombe]

time and incur a great deal of expenditure simply attending meetings to decide what on earth the rule meant and where the remit of the authority began and ended.

Clause 5 states:

"In this Act 'organ' means any part of a human body consisting of a structured arrangement of tissues which, if wholly removed, cannot be replicated by the body."

At first sight, that seems quite clear, but at what point is it a "structured arrangements of tissues"? Presumably, tissue itself is not included because that can be replicated, at least by a live body. Let us suppose that a brain is removed for the use of part of it. Will that be covered by the Bill or, will it not be covered because the entire organ is not being used? I envisage a great deal of lawyers' time being spent, as well as a great deal more than the £20,000 allocated, in trying to sort out exactly what the Bill means. For instance, when referring to the human body, do we mean both pre-birth and post-birth human bodies, or only one or the other?

My hon. Friend the Minister is well aware of the concern about the use of foetal tissue. Currently, it is only the tissue that is used, and presumably my hon. Friend believes that that does not have to be dealt with at quite the speed that he has had to deal with the sale of organs. However, as there are not even regulations for the definite separation of procurement and use of foetal tissue, what is to prevent the sudden discovery that such tissue is being sold? A year ago we would have said that we could not even contemplate the sale of organs, certainly not in this country, but we have since learnt to the contrary. If we also learn to the contrary that tissue, foetal parts or organs are being sold, will that be covered by the Bill, or will the authority have to discuss at great length whether it is within its remit to act under the Bill? What exactly does the Bill cover?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Lady will not delve too deeply into the merits of the Bill, important though it is, because the Bill has had a Second Reading. There will be opportunities on Report to deal with the matters that she is now raising. The money resolution is narrow.

Miss Widdecombe: I have a feeling that the Report stage will be even narrower if it is treated in the same way as Second Reading. I am sure that you, Mr. Speaker, will appreciate that there are perfectly good reasons, which I do not dispute, for hurrying through the Bill. I have related my remarks to the fact that we have been told that the authority is to operate at a total cost of £20,000. The Bill is vague and leaves many questions unanswered. Developments during the past year have clearly shown that there could be further developments, so that the authority could not possibly carry out its activities for the sum of £20,000. I am therefore relating my remarks strictly to the money resolution although I am aware that I might be slightly trying your patience, Mr. Speaker.

If my hon. Friend the Minister will not respond to my remarks under the terms of the money resolution—I suspect that there is not a great deal of will to deal with the problem of foetal tissue—will he say at what future stage of the Bill he expects hon. Members to have the opportunity to discuss these wider issues on the Floor of the House and not in some Committee to which we do not all have access? They are important issues which have been crushed out. It would try your patience, Mr. Speaker, if I recited the history of their being crushed out, so I merely state that they have been.

9.58 pm

Mr. Freeman: With the leave of the House, Mr. Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) has, once again, raised the quality of the debate. He asked me four questions relating to the money resolution. It was never contemplated that the authority would have any policing responsibility. There might have been some misunderstanding about that. Its job will be simply to review cases where there is a live donation in the offing and the donor is not closely related genetically to the recipient.

The authority will have no responsibility for the wider policing of the Act relating to donations from those who have died. Such donations account for the vast majority of kidney transplants. Therefore, the authority's role and scope are limited. Membership and procedures will be detailed in regulations, subject to procedures in the House. I can assure the House that, in Standing Committee, I will certainly ensure that there is a proper briefing for members of the Standing Committee and other hon. Members about our thoughts on the authority. We are discussing with the legal profession at this moment how the authority should proceed and operate. I understand my hon. Friend's concerns, and I hope that I have allayed them.

Rev. Martin Smyth: The Minister has said that the authority does not have a policing role and that it will deal with donations. How can donations be verified? Years ago, I asked questions about trade in foetal tissue, and I found a stone wall and ambiguity. Surely there should be a policing role for the authority.

Mr. Freeman: The authority will be charged with reviewing the relatively few cases of proposed donation from non-genetically related individuals. It will certainly wish to investigate the relationship between the donor and the recipient and whether there is evidence of any money having been passed in this country or abroad. It must use its own judgment. When a donation is required, judgments cannot wait for weeks or months, they must be made quickly.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newbury asked about the register and the implications for expense. The register is not covered by the Bill. The register that we are discussing with the medical profession is essential not only for recording donations, particularly live donations and all transplants, but for the recording of clinical information. I am sure that it will be helpful for clinical research purposes. It is not covered by the money resolution. The expenses incurred in setting up a register will be covered to the extent that they fall upon the National Health Service in the normal course of events—that is to say, through district health authorities.

My hon. Friend asked also about the task that the authority will perform in relation to the amount of money provided for in the money resolution. There are about 200 live organ donations each year. Only a small percentage of them are between non-closely genetically related people. Therefore, the balance, which is a small minority, will be those cases that the authority will examine.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): I wrote to my hon. Friend's Department pointing out that there was a

historical post within his Department, Her Majesty's inspector of anatomy. The post was created on the basis of tissue and cadaver sales. I wonder whether we should increase the responsibilities of that post to police that very problem.

Mr. Freeman: I will certainly examine that point. I have not yet had the chance to read my hon. Friend's letter. It does not directly affect the money resolution except in so far as it relates to the number of people involved in reviewing proposed donations. We need a collection of wisdom, including clinical judgment. I doubt whether the job could or should be delegated to an authority, which presumably means officials, and perhaps one person in particular. Flexible judgment is required in terms of a collection of individuals who are appointed for their eminence in this medical specialty rather than as a group of officials.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: Is my hon. Friend effectively saying that he expects someone in hospital to get in touch with the authority to say that he is concerned that an organ transplant may be taking place that is not within the terms of the law and that therefore he would like the authority to investigate? Is that how my hon. Friend considers the mechanism will work?

Mr. Freeman: I am sure that we shall go into this in greater detail in Standing Committee, but the brief answer is yes, I expect such notification to be made, although I do not envisage a detailed examination of each particular case at the hospital concerned. However, I hope that the procedures can be expedited and a quick response given.

My hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) drew my attention to clause 5, and doubtless we shall debate that clause in Committee. My hon. Friend asked about foetal tissue. As to the foetal tissue not convered by clause 5, I explained in the Second Reading Committee that a committee due to report shortly, the Polkinghorne committee, will review entirely the regulations governing the use of foetal tissue for research. I am not, however, aware, of any commercial trade in foetal tissue and therefore, as far as clause 5 is concerned, it does not affect the money resolution, which I commend to the House.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Human Organ Transplants Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of the expenses of any authority exercising functions under that Act.

Recreational Land

Motion made, and Question proposed. That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. John M. Taylor.]*

10.5 pm

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): It is a great *pleasure to address* you, Mr. Speaker, at this unusually early hour for an Adjournment debate.

Every four years, a large section of the British public pays its homage to sport. Furnished with high-cholesterol food and drink, such people park themselves in front of the television and marvel at the prowess of Olympic athletes. At other times they watch "Match of the Day" and the cup final, read the sport pages and engage in the gentle activity of walking to and from their cars. They die of heart disease, obesity and chest complaints.

We are lectured, sometimes rather confusingly, about what we should eat. We bemoan the fact that Britain has one of the highest rates of heart disease in the world, and we tell people not to smoke. Apart from advice, we do little in a practical manner to encourage regular physical exercise. Even when we do consider sporting facilities for the public our thoughts are more likely to centre on artificial playing surfaces, expensive well-equipped sports stadiums or recreational land on the fringes of our cities, which is accessible only to those with cars.

Every year, however, bit by bit, acre by acre, inner-city recreational land is lost for ever to development. The Central Council of Physical Recreation estimates that 100,000 acres has been lost, a figure that the Department of the Environment is unable to substantiate because it has no statistics on that appalling erosion. In the west midlands, half the private sports grounds have disappeared. In Bristol, in the past 15 years there has been a net loss of 69 acres and another 8·5 acres are under immediate threat.

Everyone agrees that sports are a good thing. They improve the nation's health and productively channel the pent-up energies of young people; and team sports foster co-operation with and consideration for others. On 19 April, however, in response to a series of written question from me, it became clear that the Department of the Environment had no idea how much recreational land there is, where it is, or whether the amount of such land is increasing or decreasing. It did not even know what should be the optimum availability of such recreational land.

Labour and Conservative Governments have been at fault. Because they have not perceived the problem, no facts have been compiled, and because no statistics have been kept, Governments have not perceived the problem. In consequence, although since 1970 there have been seven circulars, two development control policy notes and two planning policy guidance notes relating to housing development, and three circulars and one planning policy guidance note relating to retail development, the present Government circular dealing with recreational land is 18 years old. Although I accept that the Department, in response to requests from myself and others, now intends to issue a planning policy guidance note towards the end of the year covering sport and recreation, its action is belated. Much damage has been done, and further delay would be intolerable.

Everyone acknowledges the value of the royal and other parks in London, of Hampstead heath and of Epping forest. We recognise that the greatness of our cities

[Mr. Jonathan Sayeed]

lies in grand public buildings, sweeping crescents and imposing squares and in the delight of trees and the glimpses of green, the visual and environmental refreshment that these green lungs give to us all. No Government would dare license the development of St. James's park or Hampstead heath, yet bit by bit, acre by acre—this is unseen, unnoticed and uncounted by the Government—recreational land that in area is far in excess of all the inner London parks is lost to development.

In areas where there is no habit of travelling to take part in sport, where money is tight, where people need encouragement to be more than mere spectators, where juvenile crime is widespread and where early death through ailments associated with lack of exercise are more common then elsewhere, the erosion of recreational land is the fastest.

Inner-city sites are extremely valuable, and they are easy to build on. In consequence, they are more profitable to developers. The lack of statutory support that is given to local authorities to resist on planning grounds the loss of recreational land results in developers appealing successfully against local authorities' decisions to deny planning permission. It is not adequate for the Department of the Environment to rest its case on the lack of local structure and development plans. Such plans do not have the status of planning circulars or guidelines. Their period of gestation is so long that they are often out of date as soon as they are published.

With each planning inquiry being decided in isolation, without knowledge of the wider picture, it is unsurprising that developers are taking the easier course of infilling on green field sites rather then doing what we would all prefer them to do—revivifying our cities by returning to productive use decayed and derelict inner-city areas. One of the pressures on inner-city land comes because it is difficult to build in the countryside, but it should be possible to satisfy the needs of the cities and to retain England as green and pleasant land.

I am sure that the proposed PPG will take into account the White Paper, which is entitled "The Future of Development Plans". I trust that it will also recognise that sport and recreation are of national importance. Just as planning policy guidance specifies how land should be allocated for housing, as new homes give rise to the need for more recreational space, so the Department should define the level of provision. This form of calculating need must be clear and resistant to challenge and should command wide support.

The PPG must include consideration of latent demand, recognise the special need for open space within low-income areas, accept that all-weather surfaces should be complementary to grass pitches rather than substitutes for them and appreciate the role that sports grounds belonging to educational establishments and in private hands play in protecting and enhancing our environment.

Present charity law imposes an obligation on a charity to sell its assets for the highest value. We have seen this requirement in operation in Bristol. Even if the vendor is prepared to sell at the lower recreational use value, he is prohibited from doing so. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to raise this matter with our right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, who has recently published a White Paper on charities, and with the Treasury. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment should consider extending the concept of the green belt and provide greater statutory inspection for open-air recreational land by implementing a green space policy for inner-city land. I particularly believe that that is necessary for publicly owned land, and land held by charitable institutions. However, as I recognise that we do not want creeping nationalisation, possibly there should be different rules for open space which is held in private hands. Just as the clean air legislation and the green belt policy has protected us all, so an urban green space policy will be recognised by generations to come as the action of an enlightened Government.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Mr. Hayward) is anxious to speak. I understand that he has permission to intervene from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope), and he certainly has my permission as well. He wants to refer to specific problems in Bristol. However, I cannot finish without pressing on my hon. Friend the Minister the fact that, if we wish to have dirtier air in our cities, we need to get rid of the green space. If we want health to decline, we need to continue to dissuade people from taking part in physical sports. If we want to channel children's energy into crime, we need simply to remove the sports pitches which help them to burn up their energy.

Inner-city and urban-area open recreational space is a very valuable commodity. If we build on it, we will lose it for all time. I trust that my hon. Friend the Minister will remember that.

10.16 pm

Mr. Robert Hayward (Kingswood): It gives me great pleasure to support my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed), because I believe that recreational land is important to Bristol and to the nation generally. I am disappointed that there are no Opposition Members present to hear the debate.

This subject was originally drawn to my attention partly through my activities as a rugby referee, and also by the Bristols sports consultative committee. My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East and I both want to pay tribute to the efforts of that committee in pressing hon. Members, councillors and others into public awareness of the problems which are developing in Bristol.

As my hon. Friend said, there are a series of serious threats throughout Bristol in terms of loss of land. In general, within the immediate inner city of Bristol, what limited land there is, is protected. The real problem arises from that progressive erosion to which my hon. Friend referred, particularly in what I might loosely describe as the outer inner-city belt, which in my constituency is represented by areas such as St. George, Hillfields, Speedwell and the Fishponds area, where recreational land is limited and is substantially under threat.

As my hon. Friend said, the planning guidelines date back to 1970. They are not much use to people who want to oppose a proposed loss of a sports field or for the city council opposing a proposed development.

The guidelines are unclear. Even where there is a proposal for limited development of part of a sports field which may, in some cases, save a sports club, residents and the city council oppose the development because they feel that salami tactics will develop. While one piece of land

might be lost, the automatic response from residents is that, if it is lost, in two, five or eight years the next bit of land might disappear, until there are no sports fields left in the area. I support my hon. Friend in claiming that we need a clear, coherent and urgent planning policy guidance note for all concerned.

In Bristol recently, questions have been raised about the major sports developments at Imperial, about which my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East has made representations to the Hanson Trust. He received an assurance that at this stage there are no proposals to build on any part of that sports facility. It is one of the greatest assets on the southern side of the city and would be a disastrous loss to what I described in respect of my own constituency as the outer belt of the inner city. I hope that it continues to be the case that there will be no plans to develop it.

In my own constituency and just outside it there are proposals to develop the Butler memorial ground, part of Cleeve rugby club, and Kingswood rugby club. Some of the proposals have the support of the sports club. I do not expect the Minister to comment specifically on those proposals, and I shall not do so either. Instead, I shall highlight the threat to sports grounds at this moment.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East said, it is worth considering the number of grounds lost over the past few years. According to Bristol city council calculations, those losses amounted to about 69 acres. I believe that that is an under-estimate. In the last few years we have lost the Eastfield road site of the Clifton rugby club, although that was replaced by an alternative site; part of Golden hill; Water lane, Hungerford road, Broomhill road, Brentry hospital; Southmead hospital; Frenchay road, part of Coombe Dingle; another part of Golden hill; Burchells green; and Manor park hospital sports fields. That is a litany of lost land, most of it concentrated in the outer inner-city belt. It has all been lost to housing, and therefore it has been lost for all time.

I said that the city council had under-estimated the land lost, because, from reviewing that list and other documents that the council provided, it appears that it failed to identify the loss three years ago of the Scott Musson Thrisell football field, on which my own house was built, and that of Eastville stadium, where Bristol Rovers previously played. Technically, that is still an open space, but not for much longer. The scale of the problem, even in a city such as Bristol, is larger than one may imagine.

It would be unfair to expect a full response from my hon. Friend the Minister this evening, but I hope that clear guidance will be given. What do the Government expect of Bristol in terms of a policy, so that the city can identify land that it intends protecting as sports fields for all time —particularly in advance of a Bristol development plan? It is all very well the Department of the Environment saying that, once that plan is clear, everyone will know precisely what land will be protected. Unfortunately, as we all recognise, development plans take a long time to prepare, and meanwhile we could lose a substantial part of the playing fields to which I referred.

I shall be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister will say whether Bristol is out of step with other cities. Is it losing more sports fields? Has it protected its sports fields inadequately? Are there ways in which the city council, if it pursued policy correctly, could be more successful at protecting open spaces within areas of very high housing development than it is at present?

I share the concern of my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East about the continuing loss of playing fields in Bristol and in the country as a whole. If anything proves how difficult it is to regain such land after it has been lost, it is the example of Eastville. A few years ago, Bristol Rovers moved out of Bristol and now play at Chirton park in Bath, but they seek site after site to relocate within the city. They are finding it virtually impossible. That shows how difficult it is to replace land that is lost, even if it is on the outer side of city areas.

10.23 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed) on raising the subject of this Adjournment debate. It is one of concern not only to his constituents but to many others throughout the country. Because of my Friend's persistence, his activities have taken on the characteristics of a national campaign, and it is none the worse for that. The contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Mr. Hayward) ensured that the debate was even fuller than otherwise is would have been.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East knows, it is the Government's policy to encourage sport and physical recreation in its widest sense, and to provide more oppportunities for all members of the community to enjoy the increasingly wide range of activities that are now attracting interest. We know the tremendous benefit and pleasure that people derive from sport and recreation, both as participants and as spectators, and we are keen to see that there is as much opportunity for them as possible.

I hope that my hon. Friends will take some encouragement from the statistics. In 1983-84, 10·6 million men and women took part in indoor sports and 12·6 million in outdoor sports. By 1987-88, the figures had increased to 12·2 million and 13 million respectively. That shows the increasing participation in sport.

One important way in which to increase participation is to provide local and regional facilities. During 1987-88, the Sports Council provided grant aid of nearly £9 million to stimulate and promote new schemes. In the south-west region alone, there were 103 schemes, including 29 new hard sports facilities and seven new outdoor grass pitches.

The regional councils of sport and recreation have carried out local studies of the availability of recreational land in their areas. Those studies suggest that, although the position varies from area to area, the overall provision of recreational land has remained fairly static. In some areas the pattern of ownership has changed—for example, there has been a reduction in the number of playing fields in industrial ownership. That has been matched, however, by a substantial increase in both the quality and quantity of provision in the voluntary sector, with, for example, some 100 new artificial turf pitches being provided in the last 10 years.

Further evidence of the Government's support for sport and recreation can be found in the comprehensive approach of our action for cities initiative. The promotion of facilities for sport and recreation is an important element of that initiative, and funding for such facilities is available through the urban programme, city grant and inner city task forces.

In 1988-89, urban programme funds amounting to £17 million were granted to a total of 3,358 sport and

[Mr. Christopher Chope]

recreational projects, which attracted a total of over 63 million users during the year. One city grant scheme that will be of particular interest to my hon. Friends involved a grant of £145,000 to the Bristol Hawks Gymnastics club towards the cost of converting a disused building into a gymnastics centre.

My hon. Friends have concentrated on the loss of recreational land in Bristol. Although in the 15 years from 1973 to 1988 there has been a net loss of—according to our calculations—19·2 hectares of recreational land to development, Bristol can claim to be well provided with open space generally, and few places in the city are far from such space or from the countryside. That, of course, is no reason for complacency, and my hon. Friends are certainly not complacent: they are anxious that Bristol's existing character should be maintained.

My hon. Friends will appreciate that I cannot comment on any specific recent or prospective planning cases, but I assure the House that the views that have been expressed today will be borne in mind when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State makes decisions on the cases currently before him. Each proposal must, of course, be considered on its individual merits, and we must weigh the need for recreational land against the claims for other uses competing for it. That can lead to some difficult decisions, and, as my hon. Friends will know, it is seldom possible to reach planning decisions that meet with everyone's approval; that is one of the delights of being Secretary of State for the Environment.

One piece of advice that I can give is that one of the best ways to safeguard public recreational land is for local planning authorities to include policies with that objective in their local development plans. Such plans and policies will not provide an absolute guarantee, as they will be only one of the many material considerations that planning authorities and inspectors must take into account when determining planning applications and appeals. Nevertheless, up-to-date local plans, consistent with national policies and with the relevant provisions of the structure plan, will carry considerable weight both in local planning decisions and in appeals and other cases decided by my right hon. Friend or his inspectors.

I would give the same advice to people concerned generally about the intense pressure for development that undoubtedly exists in some urban areas, whether that pressure affects gardens, recreational land, or other public or private open space. There is no substitute for a well thought out, thoroughly debated and properly adopted local plan containing policies dealing with these issues. The plan should be realistic and must not, for example, simply seek to outlaw all development, but provided the plan demonstrates how housing and other necessary development can be accommodated, it will be legitimate for it also to include firm policies on issues such as housing densities and the protection of the open spaces that make such a vital contribution to the character of our towns and cities. If realistic policies are in properly adopted local plans, they will carry considerable weight.

This is the essential message of the planning policy guidance note on local plans that we issued last November. That note draws attention to the fact that large areas of England and Wales are still without formally adopted and up-to-date local plans. It urges local authorities to make full use of this key component of the planning system to provide a clear basis for sound and sustainable development control decisions.

Until very recently, there was no up-to-date adopted local plan containing policies for the protection of recreational land in Bristol. There is now an adopted local plan for Bedminster, which includes policies to increase recreational opportunities, especially for young children. Elsewhere in Bristol, the city council relies on a non-statutory 1984 report entitled "Open Space in Bristol" when determining applications and arguing its case on appeal. That report, while better than nothing, does not carry the same weight as a formal local plan which has been through the proper process of public consultations, modification—as necessary in the light of comments—and, finally, adoption.

Both the city council and local authorities may be assisted in the task of devising appropriate policies for protecting open spaces by the results of a research project that my Department has recently commissioned from Birmingham polytechnic. One of the aims of this project is to examine the role of local authorities in creating new and retaining existing open spaces in inner-city areas. The results of that project should be available towards the end of the year.

The important role of local plans will be one of the messages in the new planning policy guidance note. My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East claimed credit, quite rightly, for having elicited a commitment from the Government to implement a revised planning policy guidance note on the subject of sport and recreation. The aim of the note will be to consolidate existing guidance —some of which is, on any view, outdated and spread between several different departmental circulars—and to update that guidance as necessary. We hope to issue the note later in the year.

The note will focus on issues that are legitimate concerns of the planning system. The extent to which there is a shortfall in provision will be a local matter to be dealt with in local plans. It will be for the local planning authority to identify deficiencies in provision and to justify the amount and location against other competing pressures for the use of that land. The note will remind local planning authorities of the importance of public consultation in the preparation and amendment of local plans and of the need to consult the regional councils for sport and recreation about their policies and about individual development control decisions, as necessary.

My officials have had preliminary discussions with officers of the Sports Council about the scope and content of the proposed planning policy guidance note. I have also noted the constructive and helpful suggestions put forward on behalf of the Bristol sports association and by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East. I can assure him that all these suggestions will be taken most carefully into account as work on the note proceeds.

To answer the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood about what can be done now—because the implementation of these plans takes time—even at the preliminary stage a plan that is about to go out for consultation carries more weight than a plan that has not been drawn up. Although the plan that carries the most weight will be the one that has been fully adopted, even at an intermediate stage a plan that is still under

discussion can be a useful mechanism for a local authority that wishes to impress the inspectorate with its policies for the protection of recreational land.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East referred to charities. He is in as strong a position as anybody to raise these matters with our right hon. Friends the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Home Secretary, but I shall raise them, too. My hon. Friend knows that a White Paper on charities has been published recently. It is a topical subject for discussion in the House, and I am sure that my hon. Friend will have opportunities to develop further his ideas.

I thank my hon. Friends for raising this issue. It is now a national issue. I hope that I have satisfied the House that the Government are addressing it.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-six minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 23 May 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

MIDLAND METRO BILL

Read the Third time, and passed.

ASSOCIATED BRITISH PORTS (HULL) BILL

ISLE OF WIGHT BILL

TYNE AND WEAR PASSENGER TRANSPORT BILL

Considered; to be read the Third time.

Oral Answers to Questions

HEALTH

Wheelchairs and Artificial Limbs

1. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to improve the provision of wheelchairs and artificial limbs.

The Minister of State, Department of Health (Mr. David Mellor): The Disablement Services Authority was established for this purpose. Its first annual report was published in 1988, detailing the improvements made in the service to date. A copy of the report is available in the Library. The annual report for 1989 is being prepared and will be published in August.

I am sure that the authority will be happy to answer any particular questions that the right hon. Gentleman may have.

Mr. Ashley: I am grateful for that full reply. Will the Minister exercise his influence to ensure that every disabled person who acquires an artificial limb or a wheelchair receives an appropriate one soon, that outdoor power wheelchairs are soon made available, and that the funds of the Disablement Services Authority are increased to enable it to provide these?

Mr. Mellor: I and my hon. Friend the Minister responsible for the disabled are in regular contact with Lord Holderness. It is certainly our commitment that everyone who needs a wheelchair or artificial limb should have one. Work is going forward, as the right hon. Gentleman knows, on the indoor-outdoor occupant-controlled powered wheelchair, and we hope that it will be possible to set up studies of its effectiveness in actual use. We are also keen to develop an active-user wheelchair for younger and more active disabled people.

Mr. Thurnham: Will my hon. and learned Friend support the appeal by Professor McColl to doctors who prescribe wheelchairs, to the effect that millions of pounds could be saved on wheelchairs that are hardly ever used or are not returned when they are no longer required? That money could be used to upgrade heavily used wheelchairs.

Mr. Mellor: To my mind, that is a useful additional point to that made earlier by the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley). Just as it is our commitment that everyone who needs an artificial limb or wheelchair should have one, we believe that it is a waste of resources if people who do not need wheelchairs or artificial limbs are prescribed them. We need sensible prescribing which meets the needs of disabled people. Otherwise, as Professor McColl has pointed out, limbs and wheelchairs are stored and never used.

Mr. Wigley: Does the Minister accept that there has not been rapid enough progress in recent years in making available to people in need of them special wheelchairs which are suitable for their circumstances? So far, there has been a general approach and a standard wheelchair which has failed to meet the needs of many people. Although we are waiting the outcome of studies, is it not possible to be more flexible and responsive to individual needs?

Mr. Mellor: I sympathise very much with what the hon. Gentleman says, in that I certainly believe—I hope that I conveyed the flavour of this point in my initial answer—that wheelchairs need to be more tailored to individual needs. That is why we are keen on the active-user wheelchair and keen that the studies on the indoor-outdoor occupant-controlled powered wheelchair should go ahead. It is also why I had a most useful meeting with Lord Holderness the other day. I know that the Disablement Services Authority is keen to make progress, too.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Is it not now extremely urgent for the Minister to press the Disablement Services Authority for a commitment to provide outdoor powered wheelchairs and to supply the resources? Has he read the article in the *British Medical Journal* by Dr. Graham Mulley which shows that only one in four hospital wheelchairs is safe and in good order, with the result that patients suffer pressure sores, fatigue, falls, shin injuries, chafed heels, penetrating foot injuries and lacerations? Does the Minister agree that that is deeply disgraceful, and what action has he taken since the article was written?

Mr. Mellor: The action that we have taken, as the right hon. Member knows, preceded the article in the two respects that he mentioned. First, on the indoor-outdoor powered wheelchairs, he will know that the Disablement Services Authority started a 12-month pilot study in January, and I hope that that will proceed successfully. The right hon. Gentleman will also know that the report in 1986 by the McColl committee, which was established by the Government, first drew attention to the large number of inadequacies in wheelchair repair arrangements. The wheelchair repair service was open to competitive tendering in 1988-89. Some 79 contracts have been awarded, and we intend to ensure that the service is much improved. We certainly do not mind articles pointing out its deficiencies as that is a spur to further achievements and improvements.

Cervical Cancer Screening

2. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether any improvements have been made to the time in which results of cervical cancer screening are issued as a result of the use of private sector laboratories.

Mr. Mellor: I am pleased to say there has been a further improvement in the time taken by National Health Service laboratories to report on cervical smears. More than 85 per cent. are currently meeting our target time of one month. This is due partly to the use of private laboratories. Other measures taken have included employment of additional staff, overtime working and use of other NHS laboratories.

Dr. Twinn: I am grateful for that encouraging answer. Does not this successful co-operation between the private sector and the NHS have wider implications?

Mr. Mellor: Yes. I am sure that such a partnership will be useful in a whole range of NHS activities. Fortunately, examples of co-operation between district health authorities and the private sector over a whole range of NHS activities are legion.

Dame Jill Knight: Will my hon. and learned Friend ensure that his Department loses no opportunity for co-operation with the private service in any way, as this often cuts worrying waiting time for patients after tests, and leads to much better treatment?

Mr. Mellor: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. We have the highest hopes for our extremely complex cervical cancer screening programme, but obviously much of that is set at naught if there are long waiting times. I am glad to say that while in December 1988, in 43 districts results were taking more than four weeks to come through, by the end of March 1989 the number was down to 25. I hope that by improvements in NHS laboratories and, where appropriate, use of private laboratories we shall be able to reduce that figure still further.

"Working for Patients"

3. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total number of representations received by his Department since the publication of "Working for Patients" which express criticism or anxiety in regard to present Government health policies.

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): So far, I have received more than 5,500 representations on the White Paper, "Working for Patients". Many ask questions, many support all or some of the proposals, and some refer only to specific aspects. It is not possible to distinguish the letters in the way that the hon. Member suggests.

Mr. Hardy: Does the Minister expect to receive more letters, not just about resources and the apparent commitment to destabilise the service but in response to yesterday's announcement, which seems to reveal an assumption that a captain of industry is very much in a part-time position, while nurses are so busy caring, in a way that the Government do not reveal, that they cannot be spared to serve on the policy decisions board of the NHS?

Mr. Clarke: The people who will be given much more local responsibility for managing and delivering the service will be encouraged to see that we are able to recruit to the policy board the services of some high-powered and successful people with experience of large organisations. We also have an important job of nursing management to do. That is why there is a director of nursing on the management executive who is charged with that part of the management responsibility that has to be done from the centre.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: In the correspondence that my right hon. and learned Friend is receiving, is he getting the sort of letters that many of us are getting from elderly patients who are being scared by the British Medical Association, through their doctors, with the most vicious lies and propaganda? What does he intend to do to make the BMA realise that it has a duty not to scare patients?

Mr. Clarke: I have written to every general practitioner pointing out that the leaflets that they were distributing were inaccurate and untrue. I hope that many have withdrawn them as a result, but I cannot approach every GP who uses the tactics described by my hon. Friend. It is grotesquely unfair to make such claims to elderly and vulnerable patients in pursuit of some perceived interest. Now that we have settled the GP contract, I hope that there will be much less of that, and much more of the sensible discussion that I have made it perfectly clear that I am open to having with the BMA.

Mr. Fearn: Can the Minister confirm that among those representations and anxieties, many members of the nursing profession have written pointing out that no one from their profession has been elected to the board that he has announced? Why did he not make a statement to the House about that board? Also, what representations has he received from medical secretaries who are having a tough time at the moment?

Mr. Clarke: I have not yet received many letters from nurses about the make-up of the policy board. As their general secretary has written to me, I shall no doubt be receiving some more, but they will be given the same explanation—that the policy board is not a representative committee. *[Interruption.]* Looking back, I believe that it was an extremely bad tradition of the Health Service that everything had to be subjected to a committee consisting of one doctor, one nurse, one administrator and one treasurer, so that prolonged multi-disciplinary deliberations took place before, in most cases, no decisions were reached. The policy board is charged with the overall strategy for the service. On the executive charged with the management responsibilities it is essential to have a director of nursing, and we have such a director.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: Will my right hon. and learned Friend commend the approach taken by the general manager of the Queen's medical centre in Nottingham, who said that his hospital was extremely interested in becoming an NHS trust hospital so long as that was in the interests of the patients whom it served? Is not that a constructive approach to the White Paper and one which contrasts substantially with the general approach taken by the BMA?

Mr. Clarke: I agree entirely, and I believe that the decision has been supported by the majority of the medical

staff at the Queen's medical centre. I take that as an expression of interest because potentially the proposal could benefit patients. I agree with the general manager that after a great deal more discussion, which has to take place, the decision as to whether the hospital becomes self-governing will depend on whether that is in the interests of the patients, the hospital and the staff.

Mr. Turner: Has the Secretary of State seen the open letter published in the Wolverhampton *Express and Star* last week from more than 50 per cent. of Wolverhampton consultants, saying that they could not now guarantee the inhabitants of Wolverhampton a comprehensive health service due to lack of resources and threatened ward closures? What has the Secretary of State to say about that parlous affair?

Mr. Clarke: I am afraid that in all branches of politics and public life it is easier to get people to sign round robins and petitions than to give serious views and discussion. I cannot think that the majority of Wolverhampton consultants believe such nonsense.

Mr. Turner: They signed it.

Mr. Clarke: There is nothing in the White Paper to justify making such alarmist allegations to the population of Wolverhampton.

Mr. Hayes: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is time for the hyperbole and scaremongering by the BMA to stop because it is very confusing for patients and adds nothing to the debate? As a conciliatory gesture, is my right hon. and learned Friend prepared to meet the BMA without any preconditions whatever just to talk about the proposals which will help patient care?

Mr. Clarke: When the BMA announced last week that it wished to meet me for discussions, I announced my readiness to have such discussions. The precondition has to be that we all agree on the aim of improving the National Health Service. I look forward to the BMA putting forward positive ideas for improving the National Health Service. I am still waiting for a date to be arranged for the discussions. It is a great pity that after announcing its wish to talk about the proposals, the BMA has now started publishing whole-page newspaper advertisements containing a great list of blatant untruths, which I do not think for one moment that the BMA believes but which are designed merely to frighten patients in the hope that that will somehow strengthen the BMA's bargaining power in discussions with me.

Mr. Robin Cook: What representations did the Secretary of State receive to the effect that what the Health Service needed was three industrialists all clutching their private medical cover? Is he aware that the chief contribution of Sir Graham Day and Bob Scholey to the public sector has been in closing large chunks of it and privatising what was left? Is that why they have been chosen to run the Health Service? How could the Secretary of State find places for four business men on the health policy board but no room for even one nurse? Have not those who know how to care for patients got at least as much to offer the Health Service as those who know only how to read a balance sheet and close a factory?

Mr. Clarke: It is a serious criticism of the hon. Gentleman that he reminds me so much of his hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) reacting to the Griffiths report on general management in the Health Service four or five years ago. The hon. Gentleman talked a lot of nonsense about supermarkets and how the proposals were not suitable, but the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) knows that he would not wish to reverse the great management improvements introduced by Sir Roy Griffiths from Sainsbury's. He knows that a giant organisation requires people able to cope with providing leadership and guidance for managers who will be charged with such great responsibility in the service. The hon. Gentleman should not resort to such populist nonsense when his own proposals are simply that every health authority should be dominated by local councillors and trade unionists, who I suppose he imagines will bring a dynamic new improvement to the way in which care is delivered.

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: Would my right hon. and learned Friend like to hazard a guess as to how many of the innocent patients who are writing to us as a result of being lobbied by rather unprofessional and unscrupulous doctors—*[Interruption.]*—have any comprehension of the true nature of our reforms? Rather than feeding patients a diet of misinformation, would not doctors be better advised to tell them the true facts and acknowledge the Government's responsibility in overhauling a National Health Service system which was creaking under the strains and demands placed on it?

Mr. Clarke: I have had the same experience as my hon. Friend. There is one village in my constituency from which I keep receiving letters, mainly from worried and elderly people, beginning "I agree with my doctor that" and then giving some nonsense description of the White Paper. I am having to write to reassure those people. That is in contrast with the large meetings that I have had in the past week —there were two in Yorkshire and one last night in Winchester—which were attended by many general practitioners and where there was much criticism, I concede, but much constructive discussion as well. It is ridiculous that when we agree with the profession that we want to make a better National Health Service for our patients, some GPs have to resort to the low-level propaganda from which my hon. Friend and I have suffered.

Nurses (Regrading Appeals)

4. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the nurses regrading appeals in the Leicestershire health district.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Roger Freeman): The grading appeals are being dealt with under a long-standing agreement between the management and staff sides of the general Whitley council on procedures for settling differences over NHS employees' conditions of service. Detailed arrangements for operating the agreement are for local decision.

Mr. Vaz: Does the Minister agree with the statement made by the director of personnel of the Leicestershire health authority that the appeal procedures are a major distraction from the work of the National Health Service? Does he also agree that in processing the 1,500 appeals that have been made it will take up to two years—until mid-1991—to clear the backlog, which will be a substantial

hardship for those who have appealed? Why does he not just allow those appeals and enable the nurses to get the salaries that they so obviously deserve?

Mr. Freeman: More than 500,000 posts in the National Health Service were subject to regrading last year. Some nurses have appealed, and those appeals are progressing at local level under a procedure agreed with the trade unions. The vast majority of nurses are satisfied with their new grading and pay last year went up by an average of 18 per cent. as a result.

Mr. Tredinnick: Is it not a fact that whereas under the last Labour Government nurses' pay was actually cut, under the Conservative Administration it has increased by 44 per cent., including a rise of 25 per cent. in the past two years?

Mr. Freeman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The statistics show that in the five years to 1979 nurses' pay went down in real terms by 21 per cent.

British Medical Association

5. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what matters were discussed at the last meeting with the chairman of the British Medical Association.

9. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met representatives of the British Medical Association; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I last met the chairman of the BMA formally on 22 February when I discussed with him the remuneration of hospital doctors. I have since then met the general medical services committee's negotiators on 4 May to discuss the remuneration of GPs under the new GP contract.

Mr. Hughes: Will my right hon. and learned Friend discuss the current advertising campaign with the chairman of the BMA and point out that there are so many inaccuracies in it that it is difficult to believe that those responsible for it have even bothered to read the White Paper? Will he seek a further meeting so that he can present a copy of the White Paper to the chairman, together with one for the chairman's advertisers, so that they can reprint the adverts but this time tell the truth?

Mr. Clarke: I was astonished that just three days after the BMA said that it wanted to see me and to have discussions, those advertisements were produced. I was equally astonished that the chairman of the BMA has kept saying that he entirely shares the Government's aims as set out in the preface to the White Paper, and that he and most of his colleagues believe that there is a great deal of good in the White Paper and want us to experiment with and pilot the rest, but followed that with advertisements containing not one word about those positive sentiments and a lot of totally untrue allegations which are simply designed to alarm elderly and chronically sick patients. I should like the BMA to stick to its more constructive proposals and to have a formal word with me about the White Paper for the first time since I presented it to the BMA.

Mr. Hind: How can the BMA, the doctors' trade union, describe the NHS as,

"underfunded, undermined and under threat",

when the Government have increased spending on the NHS since 1979 from £8 billion to £26 billion, which includes a substantial rise in doctors' pay? Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the advertising campaign is misleading and that it is ovepriced, overwrought and certainly over the top?

Mr. Clarke: I do not criticise the BMA for using advertising agencies appropriately, but I advise it not to leave the text entirely to the copywriters. It is best to give instructions to the agency about what one wishes to say that is positive and then to make sure that the text is written by someone who has read and understood the proposals. The BMA has not followed either rule. My hon. Friend's slogan in certainly as effective as that of the BMA.

We all agree that the NHS needs more money, although the Government have increased spending on it by 40 per cent. in real terms since we came to power. That money will have the best effect for the patient if it is spent more sensibly and by a better-run Health Service. I am still waiting to hear what positive ideas the BMA might have for improving the running of the Health Service.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Are not GPs in Kent up in arms over the Secretary of State's proposals—[HON. MEMBERS: "Where?"] In Kent. Is opting out a solution to the problems of the people of Sevenoaks, who face the closure of Emily Jackson house and the rundown of acute services at Sevenoaks hospital? What about the League of Friends at Sevenoaks, which raised £100,000 for acute service support facilities but finds that that money has been wasted? What about the Tory Members from Kent who bleat to their constituents about what they are doing in Westminster but vote with the Government on all these stupid proposals about budget cuts?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman's new guise as a man of Kent is intriguing but I suggest that he should do a little more homework on the county before he launches into local politics there in competition with my hon. Friends.

Expressions of interest in self-governing hospitals will come to me and my Department only at the end of this month. They are expressions of interest by doctors, managers and those involved in the hospitals who can see the potential of our proposals to improve the service in their area and give them a greater ability to control what happens in Sevenoaks or wherever. The hon. Gentleman will have to wait and see whether that is pursued in Sevenoaks. Those who are interested will enter into a process of discussion with us so that we can ensure that any hospitals which become self-governing will raise the quality of service for the people whom they serve.

Mr. Duffy: What will be the Secretary of State's response to the BMA representatives who voiced the concern of their colleagues, notably in Sheffield, that patients most in need of care, such as the chronically sick and the elderly, stand to be penalised through budgetary considerations arising out of his new proposals?

Mr. Clarke: People in Sheffield are still complaining about the contract. Frankly, they would be well advised to take the advice of their negotiators who are commending a package that is fair to doctors and will pave the way for a big improvement in the quality of the family doctor service in this country. The hon. Gentleman's comments on the elderly and chronically sick are the opposite to the truth. There is a greater variety in the quality and range of

service provided for the elderly and chronically sick than there is for most other people. The introduction of the new systems of clinical audit and charging district health authorities with the responsibility to use their money to most effect for the services that local residents need most will have the effect of raising the overall quality of care for the elderly and chronically sick. The scares about them are part of the background to the dispute over the new contract for GPs, which I hope is now resolved.

Miss Widdecombe: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, bearing in mind the assessment of Kent by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), the hon. Gentleman would be better advised to spend his time looking after his own constituency in Cumbria? Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree further that all doctors in Kent have had the opportunity to consult their patients and that many of them have expressed approval of the new plans, and that, where there is interest in self-governing hospitals, it is because they believe that it will be in the interests of the provision of better service for the people of Kent?

Mr. Clarke: I am sure that the attempt by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) to be a latter-day Wat Tyler and raise the population of Kent will be highly unsuccessful. My hon. Friend is quite right to say that many people are interested in the proposals. Among them are medical staff and others in Kent. Kent has a tradition of being an extremely go-ahead county in the forefront of many reforms in medical care and social services. Many people in Kent will be eager to see the opportunities that our White Paper gives them for improving their ability to deliver good quality services.

Mr. Robin Cook: When the Secretary of State next meets BMA representatives, will he answer their frequent questions about when he will respond to the Griffiths report on community care? Is he aware of the stark contrast between pushing through his proposals, which are opposed by everybody in the medical profession, and the year that he has taken sitting on the Griffiths report, which is supported by the health profession? Did he note the inquest last week into the death of Beverley Lewis who, blind from rubella, starved to death in the community? How many more scandals must there be before the right hon. and learned Gentleman recognises that a growing number of elderly and handicapped people in the community need better community care, and need it urgently?

Mr. Clarke: For 10 years we have been giving priority to the needs of elderly, mentally ill and mentally handicapped people. There has been the most enormous development in community services both in the National Health Service and local authorities over that time. As far as I can recall, the Labour party did nothing in that respect. We set up the Griffiths committee and we are now considering its extremely detailed proposals. I tell the BMA, as I tell everybody else, that we will report soon with our conclusions. It is an important and extremely complex problem, and we must determine how best to take forward the continuing development of good quality community services in this country.

Mr. Maples: When my right hon. and learned Friend next meets the chairman of the BMA, will he draw his attention to the enormous variations in unit costs throughout the NHS, which are clearly shown by the Department of Health's own performance indicators? Will he point out that they clearly show how much room for improved performance there is in the NHS and that the proposals for an internal market are designed to achieve that improvement?

Mr. Clarke: I certainly will. I hope that my hon. Friend will agree that high costs do not always mean the best quality of care and that it is possible to achieve extremely good quality at a reasonable cost and thereby extend the service that we give to patients. In an internal market we will ensure that far more is known than ever before about high quality care, what the variations in cost are and why, and then place doctors and managers in a much better position to make sensible decisions about how to maximise good quality care for their patients.

"Working for Patients"

6. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will pay a visit to the Glasgow, Central constituency in the next few weeks to meet local doctors in order to discuss the White Paper "Working for Patients".

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have no plans to do so at present.

Mr. Allen: That is a disappointing answer. Scottish Members of Parliament and, above all, my hon. Friend the Member for the Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Smith) will be particularly disappointed. As the Secretary of State is not to go to Glasgow, will he get in touch with and make representations to the Secretary of State for Scotland and ask him to ensure that the two dermatology wards at the royal infirmary in the Glasgow, Central constituency are kept open, as he plans to close both wards on Friday?

Mr. Clarke: First, I regard the Vale of Glamorgan as having been won in part by a campaign of untruths about the Health Service report. The local general practitioners, then in dispute about their contracts, persuaded some people that there was a threat that the Health Service was going to be privatised, or something of the kind. I accept that that influenced the result. In my experience, such campaigns cannot run for very long. I do not believe that they will run again in Glasgow, Central now that matters have already moved on a great deal since the last election. I advise the electors of Glasgow to beware of people from Nottingham who suddenly take an interest in dermatology in Glasgow for party political reasons.

Mr. Bill Walker: Will my right hon. and learned Friend bear in mind that if he reconsidered his decision to visit Glasgow, Central, he would be welcome in my constituency of Tayside, North to meet my GPs and discuss the changes proposed in the White Paper, particularly because the money will follow the patients? Cottage hospitals and other popular hospitals in Scotland can be kept open by the doctors directing the patients to them.

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's invitation. I have held three meetings in Scotland on the National Health Service White Paper and I found an extremely interesting reaction. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), are

responsible for delivering health care in Scotland. I know that they are pointing out to their colleagues in the Health Service the great potential advantages that our reforms open up for them.

Dr. Reid: I should like to express my deep, heartfelt and sincere regret at the fact that the Secretary of State is not to visit Glasgow, Central. If he does visit, I hope that he will be just as effective from everyone's point of view as he was in the Vale of Glamorgan.

If the Secretary of State goes to Glasgow, Central, would he care to take a 50p bus trip up the road to Motherwell to meet doctors from the health improvement service campaign for Lanarkshire? Will he have the guts to tell them to their faces what he and his colleagues have called them today, unscrupulous liars who are misleading the population, or will he recant and accept that they are non-political and fair minded people who welcome one or two of his proposals, but who conclude that in general the proposals will be the beginning of the end of the NHS? When he is in Glasgow, Central and Lanarkshire, will he explain why everyone in Britain with an interest in the Health Service is a liar and out of step, except him?

Mr. Clarke: I am always glad to visit Glasgow, and I did so often in my previous job, because it is one of the most successful examples of urban regeneration in the country in its inner-city area. It has benefited considerably from the revival of the British economy and the Government's enterprise in restoring life and prosperity to the city centre.

The hon. Gentleman said that the doctors conceded that there was a great deal to welcome in the White Paper. They came out with some slogan or other which the hon. Gentleman repeated. I must point out to the doctors that their advertisements are patently untrue. When I meet individual doctors in Motherwell or elsewhere, I find that they avoid the question when I try to get them to justify the statements put out in the name of their association. That is no way to campaign on a serious subject like the National Health Service. I welcome constructive discussion with doctors from Motherwell or anywhere else.

Mr. Yeo: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that there are many elderly and other vulnerable people in Glasgow, Central who are caused unnecessary distress by unfounded suggestions that the Government intend to privatise the Health Service? Does he agree that Opposition Members who try to fan such deliberate untruths are unscrupulously and uncaringly exploiting those vulnerable people for their own sordid political advantage?

Mr. Clarke: I do not think that it will work to their advantage as they believe it will. I agree with my hon. Friend that that is what they are doing at the moment. However, I cannot see how they will defend the Vale of Glamorgan when they must face a situation where there has been no privatisation, where a great deal more control and influence has been placed in the hands of local doctors in relation to local services and where the situation is plainly improving for patients. As we are getting on well with the implementation, I remain confident that that will be the position by the time we reach the next general election.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Returning to the original point about the dermatology units at Glasgow royal infirmary, will the Secretary of State reconsider his decision not to speak to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland because this is a vital issue? Does he realise that dermatology units have been quite separate from other wards in Scotland for more than three decades and that apparently none of the consultants involved have had discussions with Greater Glasgow health board on the matter? Would it not make more sense to await the outcome of the strategic review which was planned in 1984?

Mr. Clarke: I shall draw the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland to the representations that have been made on this important subject today, particularly when they come from an hon. Member who comes from north of the border and somewhat nearer to Glasgow than the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) who previously raised the matter. This is not a matter for me, but it is a serious matter which my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland will be considering seriously.

Women Doctors

7. **Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how the new general practitioners contract will affect women doctors.

11. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will make a statement on the response by general practitioners to the new contract announced to the House on 5 May.

Mr. Mellor: Women doctors are an asset to partnerships because a number of patients prefer to see a woman doctor. Our proposals for formalising part-time working and job-sharing arrangements will help women doctors seeking a reduced commitment—for example, because of family responsibilities. Women general practitioners will also benefit from retention of partnership average list sizes for calculating entitlement to basic practice allowance and the reduced threshold for full basic practice allowance from 1,500 patients previously proposed to 1,200.

On the overall contract, the negotiators undertook, as part of the agreement between us on the major outstanding issues, to commend the new contract to the annual conference of local medical committees on 21 and 22 June.

Mr. Sayeed: I am grateful for that helpful answer, but does my hon. and learned Friend accept that despite the BMA's propaganda, which was designed to mislead and frighten patients, the general practitioners' contract will formalise part-time working arrangements for lady doctors, help with job sharing and ease conditions for locum assistance?

Mr. Mellor: Yes, the contract will do all those things.

Mr. Latham: Is my hon. and learned Friend aware that those of us who were unhappy about the first proposal for the contract warmly welcome the flexibility that Ministers showed in putting forward the revised proposals which have now been accepted by the BMA negotiators? Is he further aware that those of us who pressed for changes now expect the BMA collectively to settle on the matter?

Mr. Mellor: I endorse what my hon. Friend says. We listened to what was said about the draft contract, including representations from hon. Members who had met their general practitioners. We listened and changes were made on both sides. This is a fair deal and I trust that the local medical committees will endorse it.

Mr. Morgan: Does the Minister agree that, although the new proposals are slightly superior to the unbelievably crass original proposals, the typical woman doctor who joins a general practice now has a list size of about 350, on which the change from 1,500 to 1,200 will have no bearing? Does he further agree that, although averaging will now be allowed, women doctors will probably not be allowed to become partners, and, since 50 per cent. of those now leaving medical schools are women, they will hit a brick wall and will become only employees, not partners, in general practice?

Mr. Mellor: None of that is right. Averaging will remove the principal point that the hon. Gentleman made. The BMA negotiators have agreed the contract. I appreciate that that means that the hon. Gentleman's fox has been shot—but there it is.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I welcome the Minister's reply, but will he confirm that, in practice, a two-doctor practice may be divided into three part-time practices, similar to one that we saw in Newcastle recently which wants to continue to give good service to its patients?

Mr. Mellor: I shall confirm that point in writing to the hon. Gentleman, but it sounds right to me.

Mr. Favell: Having heard what my hon. and learned Friend has to say, is it not now clear that the only doctor, whether man or woman, who has anything to fear from the new BMA contract is the bad or the idle?

Mr. Mellor: For the first time we have what many progressive doctors have been asking for for a long time —a performance-related contract that rewards initiative and those doctors who offer more services to their patients, not just those who are sick but those who need screening and better services to maintain themselves in good health. The capitation arrangement of 60 per cent. will ensure that there is a proper consumerist approach within the Health Service—and not before time.

Private Medicine

10. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research he has commissioned on the impact of private medicine on the National Health Service; and what have been the findings.

Mr. Freeman: Three studies have been commissioned from Sheffield university. These studies have been published and I am arranging for copies to be placed in the Library. We welcome the private sector's contribution, which adds choice and flexibility in health care.

Mr. Worthington: The Minister did not say what the findings were. He is aware that adequate research has not been done into the impact of the private system on the National Health Service. Is he aware that we really must get away from assertions and have adequate research? Is he further aware that the findings of that research would be that the private health service badly affects the NHS? Would the Minister agree with that?

Mr. Freeman: No, I would not agree. The research shows a very modest loss, of 0·3 per cent., of nurses each year from the Health Service to the private sector. The official Labour party policy, just published, is that Labour remains firmly opposed to the private sector. That is based on dogma. The private sector is complementary to the NHS. It offers choice and flexibility.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 23 May.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had a number of meetings. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today with ministerial colleagues and others.

Mr. Fatchett: Does the Prime Minister recall that three months ago she said that we were proceeding towards zero inflation? Will she take this opportunity to update the House on progress?

The Prime Minister: The steps that the Chancellor of the Exchequer has taken will deal with the problem—*[Interruption.]*—and get inflation down and on a downward course again. I remind the hon. Gentleman that 8 per cent. was low for Labour. It is unacceptably high for us.

Q2. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 23 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Holt: Following my right hon. Friend's successful visit to Teeside in November 1987, when she met the then unemployed Mr. Eric Fletcher, may I ask if she has seen last week's *Middlesbrough Evening Gazette* in which Mr. Fletcher is reported to be "doing smashing"? He is now buying his council house, has money in his bank and is grateful for the day he met the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: Yes. I understand that, on my advice, he took a good training course, that he did well on that course, that he has a job and that due to his own vigorous efforts, he has done well in that job. He is to be warmly congratulated. So should the Government, on having the right policies which enabled him to do that and which are bringing increasing prosperity to the north-east, among all other regions.

Mr. Kinnock: Does the Prime Minister recall saying last week that we picked up our inflationary tendency by trying to shadow the deutschmark? Will she say exactly who made the decision to shadow the deutschmark?

The Prime Minister: The policies are the policies of the Government—*[Interruption.]*—as are all our policies, and they have been infinitely more successful on inflation than the 26 per cent. that was reached under Labour.

Mr. Kinnock: So, the Prime Minister is saying that the reason we have 8 per cent. inflation and have picked up that tendency is that the Government, under her leadership, made a complete mess of it?

The Prime Minister: No. A complete mess would be the way to describe what Labour Members did when they were in office.

Mr. Onslow: As my right hon. Friend continues her commendable resistance to the threats of Socialist harmonisation by the bureaucrats in Brussels, may I ask her to seek also to promote some European initiatives to protect rain forests in Brazil and elephants in Africa?

The Prime Minister: Yes, and I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for those comments. We have policies to help protect rain forests in Brazil through our aid programme and through training people in Brazil and elsewhere to do precisely that. As for elephants and the worrying tendency to sell ivory, we agree with the international convention and we shall be raising the matter again at the next Environment Council. We believe that the sale of new ivory should be stopped altogether.

Q3. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 23 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Wray: Does the Prime Minister realise that the British Medical Association, the Royal College of Nursing, the Confederation of Health Service Employees, the National Union of Public Employees, patients and staff are all finding it difficult to convince the Secretary of State for Health to scrap his White Paper "Working for Patients"? What plans does the Prime Minister have for recovering the £11 million of unpaid bills left by people who have abused the private facilities of the National Health Service?

The Prime Minister: The White Paper "Working for Patients" will improve the Health Service by giving hospitals more choice and more say in their own affairs, and by giving doctors more choice in running their own budgets. And there has been an enormous increase in resources from £8 billion to £25 billion per year, which has enabled doctors—*[Interruption.]* If hon. Gentlemen cannot recognise correct accountancy, I am not in the least surprised. Perhaps they can raise the matter under the public expenditure survey, which shows that Labour spent £8 billion on the Health Service and that we are spending about between £24 billion and £25 billion now. That is the measure of the improvement to the Health Service.

Q4. **Sir Hugh Rossi:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 23 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Sir Hugh Rossi: Has my right hon. Friend seen the recent report concerning the low level of prosecutions and fines related to litter offences? Has she studied also the findings of several reports of the Select Committee on the Environment showing a similar situation in respect of very serious environmental offences? Does she agree that greater concern should be shown by the prosecuting authorities and by magistrates?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I saw the report—and clearly the situation varies greatly from one part of the country to another. In areas where the local people, magistrates, the Tidy Britain group and the prosecuting authorities are greatly concerned to have a tidy Britain, there is much more success in achieving that than in other places. I agree with my hon. Friend that prosecuting authorities and magistrates should have regard to the need for a tidy Britain, and I hope that there will be a sufficient number of prosecutions and sufficiently severe sentences.

Mr. Ashdown: Is the Prime Minister aware that the whole nation will welcome yesterday's announcement by the Foreign Secretary that he had renegotiated his treaty with the Prime Minister, so that the decision on the European monetary system will be taken by the Government as a whole? Will the right hon. Lady tell the House whether that decision will be taken on the basis of a majority vote or will it be, as usual, subject to her personal veto?

The Prime Minister: I recognise that the right hon. Gentleman has no experience of government. Under collective responsibility, we are all responsible.

Q5. **Mr. Wilshire:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 23 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Wilshire: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that her Government have no plans to reintroduce secondary picketing, to renationalise British Telecom, or to give away our nuclear deterrent in exchange for today's equivalent of a piece of paper from Munich? Does she agree that such policies amount to a cynical attempt to trade beliefs for votes, and if implemented would spell disaster for this country?

The Prime Minister: I confirm that we have no plans to reintroduce secondary picketing, to re-nationalise British Telecom, or to get rid of the nuclear deterrent. All our policies are sound—sound at home and sound for the best defence of Britain—and there is not a cynical policy among them.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the warm welcome that will be given to the report in today's *Daily Mail* that she has joined the fight against the extinction of the African elephant? However, is my right hon. Friend aware that the all-important convention on international trade in endangered species is not due to take place until October and that many elephants may be killed before then? Will she use her influence to cut through the red tape and to secure immediate action on that very important issue?

The Prime Minister: As my noble Friend, the Minister for Housing, Environment and Countryside announced yesterday, having just returned from an official visit to Kenya, he will call for concerted European support for a total ban at the next Council meeting of Environment Ministers, which takes place in Luxembourg on 8 June, considerably before the international convention is due to meet.

Q6. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 23 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Grocott: The whole House will appreciate the reason for the Prime Minister's total opposition to television viewers being able to see her performance at Question Time. Can she confirm that that reason is that this is one photo opportunity that she cannot stage-manage?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman talks his customary poppycock.

Mr. Wigley: In view of the indication by the Secretary of State for Wales of his preference for a different emphasis in economic regional policies, will the Prime Minister confirm that the entire reason for the existence of the Welsh Office—and of the Scottish Office—is to enable a different policy to be pursued where circumstances dictate it? Will she tell the House whether she has full confidence in the Secretary of State for Wales?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I have. The policies that are being pursued and are bringing such prosperity to Wales are Conservative Government policies, and I hope that everyone is very grateful and thankful for them.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the mendacious and inaccurate campaign being waged by the British Medical Association suggests some deficiency in diagnostic ability on the part of the doctors who are contributing to it? If their medical judgment is as bad as their political judgment, would not patients be well advised to find another doctor, and quickly?

The Prime Minister: I believe that my right hon. and learned Friends the Secretaries of State for Health and for Scotland have negotiated a very good contract with the doctors, and I hope that they will in general accept it. Among other things, the White Paper suggested that people who were not satisfied with their general practitioner could move from one to another more easily. Under Conservative Governments there have been more general practitioners, so the number of each list has gone down by about 300, giving doctors more time to spend with each patient.

Child Sexual Abuse

Q7. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to increase the amount of money being spent by Her Majesty's Government's Departments into research into the sexual abuse of children; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: We will continue to support research into child sex abuse. We have already increased our expenditure, and further research proposals will be considered in the light of the knowledge gained from existing studies.

Mr. Allen: Is not the Prime Minister ashamed that in 10 years her Government, through the Department of Health, has put just £1 million into this difficult and sensitive subject? Will she consider establishing a national institute for the study of the sexual abuse of children, as has been done in Canada, Australia, America and many other countries? The victims need help and the perpetrators need to be prevented. For a very small amount of money the Prime Minister could do a great deal of good. Will she take that suggestion away and consider it?

The Prime Minister: I do not think that it is a question of finding extra money. Well over £800 million is provided for basic research. It would be quite easy to put into that sphere and perhaps take a little away from others, but we must decide our priorities.

The real difficulty, as I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would know, is that of designing and conducting research and obtaining incontrovertible results. We need to ensure that projects are considered properly before they are commissioned.

Mr. Burt: Is my right hon. Friend aware that Bury district health authority will shortly be appointing two additional consultants, thus bringing to 16 the number of such consultants appointed in the area in the past five years? Will she welcome that contribution to the Health Service?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Are these consultants concerned with the sexual abuse of children?

Mr. Burt: No.

Q8. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 23 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Macdonald: Can I ask the Prime Minister to state her complete confidence in the prediction made by the Chancellor as recently as two months ago that inflation this year would peak at 8 per cent. and not go higher?

The Prime Minister: I have nothing further to add to what my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor said. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that our efforts to attack inflation will be infinitely more successful than those of the last Labour Government. The Labour party was the party of inflation and when it had got inflation up to 25 per cent. had not even the resources to inflation-proof pensioners' pensions.

Q12. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 23 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Mullin: Has the Prime Minister noticed that the people of Afghanistan managed to see off the Red Army without the need for nuclear weapons?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Sir; with a good deal of help from other people.

BILL PRESENTED

Riders of Equine Animals

Mr. Harry Greenway, supported by Sir Bernard Braine, Mr. Iain Mills, Mr. Stuart Randall, Miss Ann

Widdecombe, Mr. Ronnie Fearn, Mr. Michael Colvin, Mr. Robin Cook, Mr. Henry Bellingham, Mr. John Carlisle, Mr. Terence L. Higgins and Mr. Gerald Bermingham, presented a Bill to make provision for the wearing of protective headgear by under-eighteen year old riders of equine animals; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 9 June and to be printed. [Bill 145.]

Take Away Food (Biodegradable Packaging)

3.30 pm

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to require food sold as "take away" to be packaged in materials which shall be biodegradable and for connected purposes.

The problem of litter has quite rightly become the subject of much attention both within the House and throughout the country. Many initiatives have been suggested and some have been tried, but I think that the whole House will agree that there are no easy answers to the problem. Indeed, even within the food and packaging industries, there are different views, although there are efforts by the Industry Commitee for Packaging and the Environment to develop a policy.

The Bill which I seek to introduce today aims at one source of litter—the take-away food outlet. I wish to emphasise that this does not necessarily mean all fast food outlets, where, of course, food is often consumed on the premises. I address the specific problem of food sold to be eaten away from the premises, sometimes at home but more often walking along a street, in a car or in a lay-by. As we all know, this packaging is often discarded where it is finished with. It is a disgusting and disgraceful habit, but it happens.

Obviously, litter dropped on streets is relatively easy to clear up. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) has introduced a Bill to require the owners of such outlets to clear up outside their premises. It is not so easy, though, outside the built-up areas. Anyone driving through the countryside today can only be horrified at the amount of litter which lies on motorway verges, around lay-bys and picnic areas, in ditches and elsewhere. The majority of this material is the ubiquitous plastic, and it will remain where it falls for many months or years. Some effort is being made to introduce photodegradable material, but this only breaks down under ultra-violet light and we all know that, with the exception of the last two weeks, in this country that is a pretty rare commodity. Anyway, the litter often lies out of direct sunlight. Such a breakdown is not complete but only achieves fragmentation into dust, which remains as plastic in the soil.

There are, of course, arguments against using fully biodegradable materials, by which I mean materials which can be fully broken down by micro-organisms in the British climate. There is the argument that it will encourage litter dropping and discourage attempts to increase responsibility. I believe that to be a mistaken argument. Litter dropping is happening anyway and biodegradation does not take place instantaneously, as any responsible person will realise. I believe that this is a realistic approach to the problem.

The second argument relates to the plastics industry, which has developed recycling techniques. It believes that manufacturing waste of biodegradable materials is not recyclable and that used materials which have been recovered cannot be recycled. That is partially true, but it ignores the fact that such plastics derive from oil. Although recycling is a welcome effort to improve oil usage, the fact remains that we are talking about a finite resource being used for its primary function for perhaps five or 10 minutes. It seems absurd that we use the container for those five or 10 minutes but that it will lie in or on the ground for five or 50 years.

The third argument relates to disposal. Biodegradable materials are less stable as landfill materials where future buildings may be constructed. That is a short-sighted argument. The fact is that we are desperately short of landfill sites in this country. We cannot go on for ever with that method of disposal. We need to look at alternatives. Primarily, that will be incineration, for which biodegradable materials are well suited.

Advances in science now mean that totally biodegradable materials are available, or will soon become available. They are often made of plant material. Paper and cardboard are long established but usually need to be coated with a film to ensure adequate protection of the food. Such a film is usually a plastic, such as polythene, which is not biodegradable. Furthermore, it prevents penetration by water and micro-organisms to the paper or card. It must also be realised that some 80 per cent. of packaging board is recycled material, anyway. Wimpy has ceased to use polystyrene packaging. It has introduced cardboard. Kentucky Fried Chicken tells us that 80 per cent. of its range of packaging will soon be described as biodegradable. Both organisations, and others looking into it, deserve credit for that move.

Perhaps one of the most exciting products coming on to the market is Biopol, a plastic derived from a glucose feedstock, not from oil. As such, it is totally biodegradable. The feedstock is totally renewable and replenishable, often by the economies of the Third world, as well as by European agriculture. Production costs are still high, but it is anticipated that, as output increases, costs will reduce considerably.

Biopol can be used as a coating film for paper and card. There are other products now being developed which are totally biodegradable, either as a container themselves or as a film coating. It cannot be denied that costs are much higher than for styrofoam or polythene or the other plastics, but it is rapidly becoming recognised, both in this House and outside, that if we are to take care of our environment and of our finite oil resources we have to accept the costs. In any case, we pay what is often an exorbitant amount for a glorified hamburger. A penny or two more on the packaging is of little significance.

Much as I would wish it otherwise, this is not a trail-blazing Bill. The state legislature of Minneapolis has already started down the same road, and others are looking closely at it. I hope very much that the House will ensure that Britain is not far behind.

We cannot abdicate our responsibility in this area. Public opinion is quite rightly focused on litter, on the visual and physical environment and on the use of the earth's scarce resources. There is no single answer, but I believe that my Bill will not only do something about the litter problem in areas where collection is unrealistic but that it will also stimulate the use of renewable resources in today's throw-away world.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. James Paice, Mr. Nicholas Bennett, Mr. Simon Burns, Mr. John Bowis, Mr. James Cran, Mr. David Davis, Mr. Barry Field, Mr. Roger Knapman, Mr. Keith Mans, Mr. David Nicholson, Mr. David Porter and Mrs. Gillian Shephard.

TAKE AWAY FOOD (BIODEGRADABLE PACKAGING)

Mr. James Paice accordingly presented a Bill to require food sold as 'take away' to be packaged in materials which shall be biodegradable and for connected purposes, And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 7 July and to be printed. [Bill 146.]

Opposition Day

[11TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Inner Cities

3.39 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): I beg to move,

That this House condemns this Government's total neglect of the inner city areas of Britain which has led to a reduction in investment, a decline in the quality of housing and schools, a deterioration in adequate health care, an increase in poverty and a growth in crime; and therefore calls upon the Government to work in partnership with local authorities, to ensure the increases in both private investment and public enterprise which inner cities so desperately need.

Mr. Speaker: I must announce to the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Hattersley: I have written to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the Minister apologising for the fact that, before the debate is over, I must leave for the inner city of Birmingham which in part I represent. I offer a general apology to the House for my absence later, as well as offering it to you personally and to the Minister.

Two years ago, on the stairs inside Downing street, the prime Minister promised action on the inner cities—a sudden and uncharacteristic enthusiasm that came after eight years of wilful and deliberate neglect. For a moment, it seemed that the Prime Minister had at last accepted her duty to be Prime Minister of all the country, but our hopes were confounded. Life in the inner cities continues to deteriorate relative to life in the rest of the United Kingdom, and sometimes even in absolute terms. It deteriorates because the Government's approach to the inner cities reflects all the inadequacies of modern Conservatism.

Tory inner-city policy is based on bone-headed Conservative dogma. Public expenditure is cut when it should be increased; market forces are expected to provide results that they are incapable of producing; public enterprise is stifled when it should be encouraged. Tory inner-city policy is autocratic. Decisions that would best be taken locally are imposed by Whitehall, and initiatives that should be organised in partnership with those who live in and represent the inner cities are exclusively taken and managed by bureaucrats.

Tory inner-city policy shows contempt for genuine racial equality. Most of the black and Asian British live and work in inner cities. At best, the Government patronise those British citizens and at worst they discriminate against them. They think of them as a problem to be contained, not as men and women who should be given a fair share of national resources.

Eight years ago, we debated Lord Scarman's judgment on inner-city policy. In that debate the then Home Secretary, the noble Lord Whitelaw, described the need to allocate resources to disadvantaged groups but he refused to promise that the resources that he regarded as necessary would be provided. It was a wise precaution. Paragraph 6.32 of the Scarman Report was explicit:

"It is clear from the evidence of ethnic minority deprivation . . . that, if the balance of racial disadvantage is to be redressed, as it must be, positive action is required."

The Labour party gave unqualified support to that recommendation. On behalf of the Labour party I used these words: we do not ask for the black and Asian British

"to be given better employment prospects than their white contemporaries. I simply ask that they be given the same prospects and opportunities. To achieve that end special action is needed."—[*Official Report*, 10 December 1981; Vol. 14, c. 1012.]

To achieve that end, special action is needed. We believed that in 1981 and we believe it today.

Tory inner-city policy is above all else cynical. It is targeted not on the needs of inner cities themselves but on the requirements of Conservative party public relations, intended to soften the callous image with the illusion of compassion. Anyone who doubts that judgment need do no more than examine the wholly bogus announcement of the so-called "Action for Cities". That fraudulent prospectus, published over a year ago, was advertised as a programme that would invest £3 billion in the inner cities. Closer examination shows that the initiative provided £100 million of new investment, 5 per cent. of the total that the Government claimed. The rest was old money, dressed up to look like new. In fact, over the 10 years of Conservative Government, the inner cities have lost, rather than gained, public investment and public spending. Between 1981 and 1987, the seven urban programme partnership areas received £770 million in partnership money; at the same time, they lost £850 million in rate support grant.

I suspect that the Government will attempt to justify these reductions by claiming that the emphasis of their inner-city policy has shifted from social expenditure to economic regeneration. In a moment, I want to examine the outcome of that regeneration policy, on the terms and against the criteria which the Government choose. One thing is absolutely clear: the inner cities are in desperate need of increased public expenditure—on new houses and the repair of old ones, on new schools and additional teachers in them, and on hospitals and amenities. Until that money is spent, the quality of life in the inner cities will continue to deteriorate. What is more, industrial investment will not be made in areas of visible dereliction, yet the Government continue to reduce the quality of life and increase the obvious dereliction in the inner cities.

I adduce one example, from my experience in the inner city of Birmingham. For 10 years, Government policy on the renovation and improvement of houses has, at each state of its revision and development, made it more difficult for money to be spent on improving inner-city domestic property. There is no doubt, as I know to my cost from wrestling with the new proposals with the Birmingham corporation and the residents of my constituency, that the latest proposals for improvement grants will make it more difficult than ever before for inner-city dwellers to receive the money which makes their houses habitable.

I do not suggest for a minute that the problems of the inner cities are solely the products of Conservative policy. They are largely the product of history. The industries which once made the inner cities prosperous either no longer exist or have changed their form. Small companies have been replaced by large, and the largest companies have developed on sites which are at the margins of, or outside, the cities. The large houses which once were owned by prosperous inner-city families have been broken down into multiple occupation. A cumulative deterioration has set in which makes the inner cities a unique problem.

The inner cities are unique not because they suffer from disadvantages which are unknown outside them; they are unique because all the known disadvantages—unemployment, inadequate housing, increased crime, shortage of services and amenities—are to be found within them. Because all these disadvantages are concentrated within the same area, they breed off each other and multiply.

This concentration of disadvantage can be counteracted only by Government action, and that action has not been taken. In the time available to me in this short debate, I propose to deal with only four of the causes of inner-city crisis, beginning with the first essential requirement—putting the iner cities back to work. That was the promise of the Government's inner-city initiatives, and that promise has been broken.

If the promise had been kept, unemployment in the inner city would have fallen at a faster rate than national unemployment, but during the past seven years unemployment in the inner cities has fallen 6 per cent. more slowly than it has in the economy as a whole. The reason is clear: the Government believe that the market, timidly influenced by marginal financial incentives, can solve the inner cities' problems. It was the market that caused the inner cities' problems, and only direct intervention can solve them.

This is demonstrated by the results of the urban development grant—the city grant. The inner cities need jobs that provide employment for unemployed men and women who live there, yet of the permanent jobs assisted by urban development grants, only 25 per cent. were new to the national economy. The rest were old jobs, which had been relocated to the inner cities and had, in general, brought their old employees with them. Only 18 per cent. of the UDG jobs were taken by men and women who had been unemployed previously. If the UDG has done little or nothing to help inner-city unemployment, that is at least better than the results of the urban development corporations. They have driven traditional jobs, the jobs that employ local residents, out of the areas, just as they have driven out the traditional residents.

I take my example from London. The London Docklands development corporation has forced 84 firms to relocate out of the area—forced them by the use of the compulsory purchase order, which the LDDC is able to operate from an autocratic position with an authority that no local government institution would be allowed to employ. The new businesses that are replacing those companies forced out of London docklands have not provided employment for displaced local residents. The Tower Hamlets example is particularly revealing. Before the development of the corporation, firms in the borough employed 35 per cent. of their work force from residents of the borough. New firms that arrived after 1982 employ only 13 per cent. of local labour. It is not surprising that London docklands boroughs now account for an increasing proportion of London's unemployed. The net result of Government policy has been quite opposite to the results that they have prophesied and claimed.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): For eight years, I was a councillor with the London borough of Lewisham, one of the riparian boroughs that made up the Docklands

[Mr. Nicholas Bennett]

Joint Committee, between 1974 and 1981. In those seven years, how many new houses and jobs did that committee bring to the docklands area?

Mr. Hattersley: A great many more than have been brought to it since then. I bow to, and am deeply impressed by, the hon. Gentleman's wide experience of these matters. If he thinks I am wrong in what I have just asserted, he had better say so. If he thinks that the LDDC is not bringing in companies that do not employ local labour, he had better say so. If the figures produced by the development corporation, which show that most of the new jobs are bringing in men and women from outside, are wrong, he had better say so.

Mr. Bennett: My question, which the right hon. Gentleman clearly heard, was how many houses and how many jobs the Docklands Joint Committee brought into being between 1974 and 1981. The simple answer is that it sat and talked and did nothing.

Mr. Hattersley: Nobody accepts that for a second. More important than that, it did not drive out jobs. I repeat my contention that, on the evidence provided by the LDDC itself, it is effectively driving jobs out of the docklands boroughs.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Docklands Joint Committee produced a strategic plan, which in my constituency would have meant that some 15,000 to 20,000 people would have been housed in publicly owned housing on land that has now largely been sold off to private developers? Furthermore, of the additional 20,000 jobs in the LDDC area, about which the Government boast, 15,000 are brought in from outside, with a net loss of 6,000 jobs over the whole area. Does that not show that the LDDC is not serving the needs of local people?

Mr. Hattersley: It shows more than that. It shows one of the more unsavoury aspects of Conservative party tactics. When it was obsessed with private enterprise taking over these matters, and with giving private enterprise authoritarian powers by creating the LDDC, it thought it wise to abuse the institutions that were to be replaced. That is the normal technique of Conservative policy, which shows the shabby nature of its policies and attitudes, as well as their failure, which I continue to describe simply by relying on the figures.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: Not now, but I will give way in a moment.

The jobs that the urban development corporation is providing for inner-city residents are almost invariably the jobs that those residents least want. The London Docklands development corporation, after much pressure from the boroughs, has now agreed that 4 per cent. of the new jobs in its area should be geared to the needs and attract local residents. That total is disgracefully inadequate. The jobs themselves are likely to be still more inadequate. A report into Canary wharf concluded that most of the new jobs created by the corporation would be part-time low-paid and concerned with cleaning and catering. It is not surprising that the LDDC chose to suppress that report rather than allow it to be published.

The epitaph on the Government's record on creating jobs in inner cities is provided by the unemployment statistics in the 44 inner-city authorities for which comprehensive figures are available. In only 14 of the 44 authorities did employment improve as compared with the national average. In four, the numbers of unemployed were higher in absolute terms than when the Government came to power.

The second task that the Government set themselves was to improve housing conditions in the inner cities. Housing conditions have deteriorated. During the last six years for which figures are available, homelessness has increased in the programme authority by an average of 63 per cent., outstripping the national increase in homelessness by 14 per cent. The total stock of council housing has fallen by almost 2 per cent. That reduction is a direct product of Government policies—their refusal to allow councils to build the homes which were necessary to replace those which were sold. The private rented accommodation which has been built in the inner cities, particularly in London, is wildly beyond the means of the traditional inner-city family. For the typical low-income family to be decently housed, we need a programme of sustained municipal building. The Government will not provide it. They positively obstruct it because they are blinded by dogma to the real needs of the people.

The third need of the inner cities—both in terms of the lives of the men and women who live there and as an inducement to new industry to move into those areas—is a reduction in inner-city crime. Since the Government were elected, the whole country has been swamped by a crime wave of record proportion. The statistics of crime in the inner cities over the past 10 years is a savage indictment of Government policy, for much of the blame must lie with a Government who allow the acceleration of inner-city unemployment, cause the deterioration of inner-city housing, and, by their so-called social services review, deepen and extend inner-city poverty.

Anyone who doubts the relationship between deprivation and crime ought to read again Lord Scarman's report, which said:

"There can be no doubt"

that it is

"a factor in the complex conditions which lie at the root"

of inner-city crime. The Government are responsible for those conditions and they must take responsibility for the crime which they create—crime of which the inner-city families are overwhelmingly innocent victims.

Let me remind the Government of the record. In the west midlands police division, which includes my constituency in the inner city of Birmingham, burglaries have increased by 49 per cent. since 1980 and wounding with intent has gone up 63 per cent. Assault on the person has increased by 75 per cent. That pattern is reproduced throughout the inner cities of Great Britain. In the past 10 years, recorded crime has grown by 47 per cent. in central Manchester. The incidence of recorded violent crime in central Leeds was up a staggering 89 per cent. for the first three months of this year, compared with the first three months of 1979. In central London, the figures are equally bad.

The Government came to power promising to crack down on crime and saying that they would combat and

overcome crime in inner cities. In Hackney, crime has increased by 50 per cent., in Lambeth by 40 per cent. and in Southwark by 30 per cent. No one doubts that poverty and despair breed crime. That is not to condone the increases but to explain them, and to condemn the Government on whom the responsibility, indeed the blame, for increasing crime figures must fall.

Fourthly, a year ago, the Government promised improved inner-city education. I hope that the Minister will tell us what form that improvement in inner-city education is to take. Is it suggested that opting out of the state system will help the inner-city schools? It will do quite the opposite. Inner-city schools will become the poor and neglected relatives of their suburban neighbours. Is it suggested that city technology colleges will help the inner cities? The nearest CTC to the inner city I represent is located in Solihull. In that borough, it is unlikely to do much to combat the problems with which CTCs are said to deal.

Education in the inner cities is expensive. There is a great need for extra facilities, nursery places, English as a second language teaching and special needs classes. The Government's record of expenditure on education budgets can be summed up in a single sentence. They abolished the Inner London education authority for spending too much on inner-city education. That is the true reflection of Government policy. They have adopted that policy and they have failed to help the inner cities because they do not care about them or understand them and because they are ideologically incapable of advancing policies that meet their needs.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): My hon. Friend probably knows that the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts is dealing with teacher shortages. In the words of the general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, the shortages are "catastrophic". It is difficult to get Conservative Members even to admit that there are teacher shortages; they do not for a moment admit that there are teacher shortages on a grand scale in ILEA, which they are trying to abolish.

Mr. Hattersley: I say with the greatest affection for my hon. Friend, who represents the constituency in which I was born and brought up, that it seems a long time since he first made that point to me and I made a dangerous point in reply. I will make it again, notwithstanding his great experience of education and education trade unions. I believe, as he may believe too, that some special inducement must be made to bring teachers into the areas where teaching is most difficult. We are prepared to spend extra money in some schools on persuading teachers to spend time teaching Latin and Greek to small groups of boys and girls, so we should be prepared to spend extra money on persuading more teachers into the areas of greatest need to teach English as a second language to boys and girls and to deal with other special difficulties.

I sometimes get into trouble with my hon. Friend's union when I make that point, but I have made the point strongly and I will go on arguing for it, not to interfere with proper wage negotiations with teachers, but to defend what is necessary to help the people who teach, who want to help and who need help. They can be enabled to help only if we have a pay structure that reflects the particular problems of teaching in the central areas.

Mr. Favell: As a third native of Sheffield, perhaps I should join the party. We have heard at great length an attack on the Government's policies for dealing with the inner cities, but we have not heard one word about the Labour party's policies, apart from building more council housing and providing more social security. We have heard no other word of remedy from the Labour party.

Mr. Hattersley: The hon. Gentleman is about to hear more than one word on our policies in the next five or six minutes. He and his party's Front Bench must understand that they have been in power for 10 years and that the whole focus of political debate for the next two or two and a half years will be on the inadequacies and failures of the Government's policies over the past 10 years. The scare stories about what has happened, from the Zinoviev letter to the groundnut scheme, will not work any longer. The Government will be judged by their record, and I have no doubt what the judgment will be.

To return to my previous point, the Government are, by their very nature, incapable of meeting the needs of the inner cities. I believe that the Prime Minister herself believes that the problems of the inner cities are intractable and are a necessary part of the divided society, which she positively welcomes and which she has done much to create. The Secretary of State for Social Security no doubt regards inner-city residents as the undeserving poor—the families who buy television sets when they have no right to expect the entertainment enjoyed by their more prosperous contemporaries. He will say of the inner cities that they are not so much poor as unequal. Unequal they certainly are, but other countries have tried to reduce that inequality, and have succeeded.

All our partners in Europe are taking positive steps to provide the jobs, the houses and the services that the inner cities need, and so is America. Those initiatives, which even in America involve a key role for public initiative, have been described by the Prime Minister as "Marxist". I know that the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) has impertinently asked the Prime Minister whether she has ever read any Marx. That is a question of staggering naivety. The Prime Minister never shows any evidence of ever having read anything, so why should we think that she has picked out Marx while she has neglected everybody else? [HON. MEMBERS: "What about Neville Chamberlain?"] By comparison, Neville Chamberlain was a paragon of erudition, culture, literature and understanding.

The day will come when Government policy is based on something more respectable than prime ministerial ignorance and prime ministerial prejudice. That policy will be based not on dogma, but on an objective assessment of what can encourage the creation of jobs and the reduction in poverty. In consequence, it will be one of partnership. It will be a partnership between private investment and public enterprise; between national Government and local government; and between the people of the area and those agencies that are created to assist them. Partnership with local residents is essential.

If the national Government pursue policies—ranging from discrimatory immigration laws to the pauperisation of the young unemployed—which disadvantage the inner cities, the Government must expect the people who live there to feel suspicious about the initiatives that the Government take. If the Government fail utterly to meet the problems of the inner cities, they must not be surprised

[Mr. Hattersley]

if the inner cities feel despair and if that despair leads to the crime and vandalism that further accelerate inner-city decline.

Partnership has to be built around policies which are intended explicitly and specifically to help the people in the inner cities and the conditions that prevail there—not, for example, the inner-city landowners who are the only real beneficiaries of the enterprise zone scheme. We cannot afford silly little Government diktats that prevent local councils from insisting that inner-city firms provide employment for inner-city residents. We cannot afford stupid limitations on assistance to co-operatives and common ownership projects, when such new, local, small enterprises are exactly what the inner cities need. Above all, we cannot afford a doctrinal refusal to invest in inner-city services and inner-city infrastructure.

I vividly recall a meeting with the Birmingham chamber of commerce—a group of men and women who even in a good year would not want to see the return of a Labour Government. We were told by the Birmingham chamber of commerce that, if the Government did not show their faith in the inner cities by spending their money there, nothing would induce private enterprise to create the confidence that would enable them to provide the essential investment. The inner cities will not prosper while they are left to themselves and to the market—and that, I fear, means that they will not prosper until another Government are elected.

4.8 pm

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Trade and Industry (Mr. Anthony Newton): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'welcomes recent falls in unemployment in the inner cities and the increasing level of investment in their regeneration; notes with approval the growing commitment of the private sector and the improved partnership between the private sector, voluntary organisations and central and local government in tackling inner city problems; and looks forward to continued progress under Action for Cities and other programmes designed to ensure that all parts of the United Kingdom share fully in the increasing prosperity of the nation as a whole.'

This is the second debate in little more than a week which suggests that the Opposition have become the victims of their own propaganda. Last week we had a debate on the alleged "decline" in manufacturing industry. About the only fact that the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), whom I am sorry not to see in his place today, could produce in support of his claim was that, although manufacturing investment was rising strongly, as he was forced to acknowledge, it was still marginally lower than in 1979. In my response I acknowledged that he had a small, modest point, and advised him to use it while he could because I did not think that he could depend on it much longer. I am glad to be able to tell the House that this morning we published the final estimates for the value of capital investment in manufacturing in 1988, and they show that manufacturing industry is not just higher than it was in 1979 but higher than the previous record figure.

The Opposition's motion contains the even more flimsy charge of total neglect of inner cities. Not surprisingly, the speech of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) did not remotely substantiate or sustain that charge. Nor could it conceivably have done so, as no previous Government have ever brought together such a comprehensive range of programmes as those which make up "Action for Cities" and its component parts in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England. No previous Government have given the problem of urban regeneration so much emphasis by bringing together programmes in that way, or put so many resources behind measures to tackle the problem.

The right hon. Gentleman referred to the £36 million that was provided when the "Action for Cities" campaign was launched in March 1988 as the total expenditure on the programmes of which it consisted. One year later, when I launched the reporting document, "Progress on Cities", about two and a half months ago, I was able to say that the estimate for those same programmes had risen to about £3·5 billion. It had risen by £0·5 billion between 1988 and 1989—far more than would have been needed to maintain the value of those programmes in real terms. If that is to be described as neglect, I can think of quite a few others who would like a share of it.

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): What was the reduction in the rate support grant for major cities in the United Kingdom? Will the Minister contrast that with the small injection of capital to which he has referred?

Mr. Newton: We have directed the pattern of Government expenditure to local authorities and others, including urban development corporations, in a way that has markedly increased the impact of those programmes and their effect on the ground.

What is even clearer than the expenditure statistics that I have given in overall terms is the evidence of what is happening not only with physical regeneration and redevelopment—we heard little about that from the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook—but with the level of unemployment. In the 57 urban programme areas—I go a little wider than some of the right hon. Gentleman's statistics—unemployment has fallen by one third in the two years to March 1989, and by not far short of a quarter in the past year alone. In the past year, too, there has been a particularly encouraging drop in long-term unemployment—that is, those out of work for six months or more—which is one of the hallmarks of far too much inner-city unemployment.

In view of the right hon. Gentleman's remarks about variations in different parts of the country, I will give him the facts as stated in last week's announcement of a further fall in unemployment. They put into a slightly different perspective some of what he said about the pace at which unemployment is falling in different parts of the country. The facts are as follows:

"All regions in the United Kingdom have shared in the downward trend in unemployment with the west midlands and Wales experiencing the biggest reductions over the past year followed by Yorkshire and Humberside, the north-west and the north. Within this total long-term unemployment has been falling faster than unemployment generally and in January the number of long-term unemployed was the lowest for more than six years."

That is the perspective in which the right hon. Gentleman's remarks should be considered.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Will the right hon. Gentleman tell us exactly what is happening on Merseyside? He cannot put the whole of the north-west together. What is actually happening on Merseyside?

Mr. Newton: I visit Merseyside, the north-west, the north and the west midlands fairly frequently. Unemployment is falling in all parts of the country and the level of confidence and optimism is rising.

Mr. Hattersley: Will the Minister simply give us the figures which meet or do not meet my point? For the promises made two years ago to be met, unemployment in the inner cities should be falling more rapidly than elsewhere. The Minister has given figures for Scotland, the west midlands and the north of England, but the west midlands is not one big inner city. What is the unemployment figure in the inner cities? Is it not the figure that I gave? Is not the Minister trying to confound the issue with irrelevant alternatives?

Mr. Newton: I am trying to put into perspective some of the figures that the right hon. Gentleman sought to use about the pattern of unemployment. It has admittedly and undoubtedly taken a considerable amount of time to achieve the progress that we wish to see with this particularly intractable part of the unemployment problem.

Some of the more satisfactory trends in inner-city unemployment can be seen in areas where the Government have established specifically targeted task forces to help overcome problems in three or four wards of a city. A disturbing aspect of the Labour party's recent policy document, which was the exact obverse of one of the right hon. Gentleman's implications, was the apparent desire to get away from carefully targeted measures aimed at specific pockets of unemployment and difficulty which exist in places such as Birmingham or Bristol against the background of fairly widespread prosperity for the city as a whole. That is particularly true in Bristol.

The Government's targeted approach, which is beginning to be seen coming through in some of the figures —I make no grander claim than that—reflects the approach that we have tried to adopt to inner-city problems. The continuing fall in unemployment—as shown in the figures announced last week, which accompanied the press release from which I quoted a few moments ago—gives us all further encouragement.

What was most striking about the speech of the hon. Member for Sparkbrook was not its variance with what Ministers say at the Dispatch Box—that is something that we expect and could sensibly predict—but its variance with what is said around the country by those who have looked at what is happening in our cities and those involved in local government and in the industrial and commercial life of our cities.

I could have brought a very substantial sheaf of documents relating to these matters to the Chamber today. Instead, I have culled a few which I felt it might be sensible to refer to the House. The managing director of the *Newcastle Chronicle and Journal*, at the north-east business man of the year dinner earlier this year, which I attended, said:

"There is a renewed pride in what is being achieved. The fundamental change of attitude throughout the region over the past 2 or 3 years is miraculous. We have moved from being a depressed, depressing and defeatist area to one which wants to take on the world."

I refer also to a special report published in *The Times* last autumn about regional developments generally. Its sub-heading read:

"Improvements in the national economy have given Britain's poorer areas an opportunity they are determined to use . . . And . . . with government help, they are seeing results."

Just before Christmas *The Sunday Times* reported:

"Sheffield set to carve role for tomorrow."

I am glad to see hon. Members who represent Sheffield constituencies present in the Chamber today. After referring to what had been happening in Sheffield, the article continued

"Even more strikingly,"

this new feeling

"has trickled down to the level of the Sheffielder-in-the-street. It was hard to find anyone last week who was not anxious to stress the city's exciting future."

Mr. Flannery: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Newton: Yes, indeed. I was in Sheffield a week or two ago and everyone to whom I spoke voiced the same view as that expressed in *The Sunday Times* to which I have just referred.

Mr. Flannery: The right hon. Gentleman is not telling the full story. The reality is that the Government left the east end of Sheffield a desert—it was so still and quiet. There has been an upsurge at the prospect of the student games coming to Sheffield in a couple of years' time. We are pleading with the Government to give us more money for that. The Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier), could tell the right hon. Gentleman a lot more about Sheffield's lack of money and its urgent requests for more from the Government.

Mr. Newton: No doubt my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary has heard the hon. Gentleman.

Sheffield's pride in being able to stage the student games reflects its change in mood and confidence, which is also reflected in the work of the urban development corporation and plans that it has for the lower Don valley, in what the local authorities and the local business men, including those in the chamber of commerce, are achieving through partnership, and in the fact that there is a much stronger partnership now between the public and private sector in Sheffield than was ever the case two or three years ago.

The hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) asked about Merseyside. I will come closer to the immediate situation there by referring to a substantial supplement on Liverpool in *The Times* yesterday, which the hon. Gentleman no doubt saw, headed "Panorama of growing prosperity" and subheaded:

"As Liverpool toasts its Cup Final victory, it is also celebrating an economic turnaround which will enable the city to enter the 1990s with its confidence restored".

Another subheading reads:

"How Merseyside turned optimism to realism and won the confidence of industry and new investment".

Perhaps most telling of all is a quote from the Labour leader of Liverpool city council, Keva Coombes

"I am convinced that we have more reason to be optimistic now than for many years".

He is then reported as saying that:

"there was also now a more pragmatic approach to working together between the council and central government agencies."

Finally, with regard to the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, I have with me the foreword to a document recently published by Birmingham city council called,

[Mr. Newton]

"Birmingham economic strategy", signed by the Labour chairman of the economic development committee, Councillor Albert Bore, which says:

"There are many indications that Birmingham is regaining its competitive edge in many of the manufacturing sectors in which it was previously world famous. It is also going to become one of Europe's major visitor destinations for business, culture and leisure in the 1990s."

Another Birmingham city council publication, "The Birmingham Investment", published within the past month or so, says:

"Look around the city and you will see evidence of new investment and new development everywhere."

This is the city that the right hon. Gentleman was describing in such gloomy and depressing terms no more than 10 minutes ago. It goes on:

"From more than £500 million of new retail and leisure developments—including Britain's national indoor arena—to the new industrial and office property developments that are rising all over the city."

We are told:

"Listen to the city's new business community, and you will discover a new mood of confidence and optimism among thousands of local companies."

That is not a Minister talking, but Birmingham city council.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin) *rose*——

Mr. Newton: I can understand why the hon. Gentleman may wish to stop me, but I will continue for a moment.

The publication goes on:

"Over the last few years a series of investments has changed the whole landscape of business property in Birmingham . . . Birmingham Heartlands, for example, has brought the city together with 5 major developers in a unique inner city regeneration programme."

Mr. Grocott: The Minister is talking in glowing terms about new developments. Will he confirm the fundamental point that any recovery taking place in the west midlands in general or in Birmingham in particular is recovery from the devastation caused by the Conservatives as a deliberate instrument of economic policy in the early 1980s? Let us not overlook the question of the quality of jobs. In the west midlands, for instance, in engineering alone the number of apprenticeships, according to official Government figures, is 54 per cent. of what it was in 1979. Is that not a dreadful indictment of the Government?

Mr. Newton: I am not in a position to confirm the hon. Gentleman's observations of the causes and position from which industry in Birmingham and the west midlands is recovering, but let us consider the statistics relating to the motor car industry—historically a source of great importance to the midlands. The decline in that industry set in during the period of the Labour Government—aggravated, admittedly, in the early 1980s by a world recession. The industry is now recovering. Last year, the production of motor vehicles in Britain exceeded the 1978 level—*[Interruption.]* The decline started during the 1970s. It did not suddenly start in 1979. The level of motor car production has now exceeded the 1978 level because, for the first time in a decade, the industry is moving up and not down.

Mr. Hattersley: I remind the Minister that the debate is explicitly and specifically about inner cities. Whether his facts are right or wrong, to talk about the prosperity of a whole region is wholly irrelevant—*[Interruption.]* The Minister has hardly said a word about the inner cities since his opening remarks.

The idea that the tourist attraction that Birmingham is becoming, and I hope will increasingly become, will provide any jobs in the inner city of Birmingham is ridiculous. In the bit of the inner city that I represent, the improvement in the motor industry will have no effect whatever. The debate is designed to focus attention on specific problems. For the Minister to talk in such general terms shows that he does not even know what the inner cities are.

Mr. Newton: Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman would rather I did not give way, as I have been doing in line with the normal courtesies of the House. My last observations were in response to the intervention of his hon. Friend the member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott). Does the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook really believe that the vehicle industry has nothing to do with the inner cities? Only a fortnight ago I was at what is now Leyland-DAF Vehicles, what used to be Freight Rover, in inner city Birmingham, one of the areas in which we have a task force—*[Interruption.]* It is important in the area in which it is located. That firm is now embarking on a modernisation, expansion and training programme to ensure that the jobs that it is creating go to the people who live around the factory. That is the importance of some of these developments. If Opposition Members do not appreciate that, they should study some of the issues involved.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): Will the right hon. Gentleman reflect on the task force experience in Leicester? Three years ago, amid a great fanfare, the Leicester task force was set up in Highfields. This year, in a sneaky letter to me and to other Leicester Members, it was announced that the task force was to close because of its failure. Will the Minister explain why that task force closed in Leicester?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman is not merely paraphrasing the letter that was written at the time but is turning it on its head. The point made in it was that the economic and employment situation in Leicester, including Highfields, had improved to a significant extent during the life of the task force, that a number of development funds and other activities had been set in hand which, in our view, would have a continuing beneficial effect, and that we felt it right to use the resource represented by task forces in areas where the problems are greater than those of that part of Leicester. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that at the same time as I announced the winding down of task force programmes in Leicester, Wolverhampton and Preston between March and the end of the year, I announced new task forces, which are very much welcomed by the local authorities involved, in Granby and Toxteth in Liverpool, in Bradford and in Lewisham. Those areas all have significant problems which I believe that the task forces can help to overcome.

If the picture painted by the Opposition motion is unrecognisable in the real world, no right hon. or hon. Member would disguise the fact that there is still much more to do in pressing ahead with the programmes and initiatives to tackle inner-city problems. That is not surprising. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook was

very fair in acknowledging that the problems of inner cities did not suddenly come on to the scene in 1979 or in the early 1980s but that their causes are deep-seated and go back at least one generation—some would argue, longer than that—and just as their roots go back a long way, so it will take time to overcome them fully.

Today I seek to describe the progress being made in overcoming problems which have been encountered over decades and even for generations. The right hon. Gentleman acknowledged that the causes are complex. The most obvious among them is the failure to come to grips with the pattern of industrial change over a long period and instead to pretend that it was not happening by disguising it in various ways, with the result that the process of adjustment was even more difficult than it needed to be. I should have made that point in particular to the hon. Member for The Wrekin if he were still in his place.

Whatever view is taken of the causes of industrial change, old industries close, leaving derelict sites which detract from the environment and causing a loss of income to the community which is reflected in declining property standards and falling land values. Too often, it also means that younger, more economically active people leave the area to work elsewhere, which in turn breeds a loss of community pride. Together, those factors create a depressing physical environment which has other adverse social and economic effects.

Mr. Heffer: There is no question but that there has been industrial change and that it is continuing, but does not that create a need for the Government to intervene? If there is decline in one or two industries, or in a whole series of them, surely the Government must have policies, plans and concepts for dealing with workers who are left high and dry and unemployed. Have not the Government failed to do anything serious about developing alternatives to deal with industrial change?

Mr. Newton: No, I do not think that that is true. The hon. Gentleman may wish that it had proved possible in some cases to avoid some of the transitional difficulties which arise in moving from one pattern of industry to another, but I hope that he agrees that one of the most notable features of the regional economy currently—although the north-east is the most striking example, this can be seen in the north-west as well—is the increasing growth of new industries, not least with the assistance of inward investment from overseas in creating electronics industries, rebuilding some important parts of motor car manufacturing and the like. Very often that is assisted by the kind of Government policy for which the hon. Gentleman calls. In his own region, assistance was recently given to Vauxhall for further investment at Ellesmere port, which will both safeguard existing jobs and create new employment in that part of Merseyside. That is just one of many examples that I could cite.

As the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook seemed to recognise, it follows from the complexity and the deep-seated nature of the problems that there can be no simple or overnight solution to inner-city decline. It reqnires a range of measures tailored to deal with different aspects of the problem, and carried through with a sustained and determined approach over a number of years. That is precisely what we have sought to bring about through the "Action for Cities" programme.

I emphasise that the Government's approach starts from the recognition that the first essential is a prosperous national economy. The whole House knows—certainly the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook knows it well from his experience in the last Labour Government—that regional resurgence and inner-city regeneration cannot be created on the back of the national economic stagnation and relative economic decline that we saw in the 1970s. The foundation of what we seek to achieve in the inner cities is what we have already achieved for the country as a whole—sustained economic growth such as has not been seen since the war.

It is on that foundation that we have built and are pressing forward the range of programmes and initiatives to which I referred briefly earlier in my speech. They cover housing, with the Estate Action programme involving tenants in the management and improvement of their homes. They provide a substantial increase in the money available to housing associations through the Housing Corporation and through local authorities. They cover a large expansion in training programmes, both to encourage enterprise—through, for instance, support for small firms—and to help people back into work.

The programmes cover matters that the hon. Member for Walton has just raised, with support for inner city business—including regional selective assistance—and a variety of grants for small firms, as well as the work of the English Industrial Estates Corporation. They cover a substantial programme of derelict land reclamation, and—this comes closer to the points raised by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook and by other hon. Members in interventions—they cover the urban programme, including city grants, and the work of the urban development corporations, which together are receiving a substantial increase in the coming year.

The programmes also cover the task forces to which I referred—in some 16 locations up and down the country—and the co-ordinated work of the city action teams, bringing together the work of various Government Departments. They cover the safer cities campaign, which is directed strongly towards the crime problems to which the right hon. Gentleman referred. It is, perhaps, unfortunate that he did not tell us about the decrease in a number of important elements in the crime figures last year. No one disputes that substantial increases in crime have occurred—again, over a period going back well before 1979—but last year, according to the metropolitan and non-metropolitan force figures, there was a decrease in recorded notifiable offences of 11·3 per cent. in the west Midlands, 4·5 per cent. in West Yorkshire, just over 6·5 per cent. on Merseyside some 6·5 per cent. in Northumbria, more than 13 per cent. in South Yorkshire and nearly 8 per cent. in Greater Manchester.

No one is suggesting that further progress is not needed in tackling such problems. I merely ask the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook and his hon. Friends to recognise that in many important respects—and, I believe, to a significant extent as a result of the approach that the Government have adopted and the wide range of initiatives brought together in the "Action for Cities" programme—progress is now being made in dealing with some of the problems that have proved intractable for Governments of both parties over a long period.

All the initiatives that I have mentioned are being pressed forward continuously. In March, when "Progress on Cities" was published, we announced a number of new

[Mr. Newton]

task force projects. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment announced the building up of his compacts initiative to improve opportunities for inner-city youngsters to build links with and get jobs in local firms. That is going on in a consistent drive all the time.

Today, for example, we are announcing an important agreement between English Estates and London Industrial to co-operate in a joint venture for a substantial programme to provide managed work space in inner-city areas of London. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment my hon. Friend the Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier), whom I am delighted to see here, has today announced two new city grants totalling more than half a million pounds towards the construction of industrial units on the Ketley business park in the Wrekin and—this will interest the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer), I hope—towards the cost of the refurbishment and conversion of a 160,000 sq ft factory into industrial units in Huyton in the borough of Knowsley.

Those are just further examples of practical steps being taken under the initiatives to which I have referred to tackle the sort of problems that we all acknowledge need to be tackled if we are successfully to overcome the long inner-city decline.

As a number of right hon. and hon. Members wish to speak in the debate, I will therefore emphasise only briefly three points that I believe to be of particular importance in considering what the Government have been seeking to do.

Mr. Vaz: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Newton: I think not. I have already taken up a good deal of the time of the House. I think that it would be sensible now to allow the hon. Gentleman to make his own contribution to the debate.

The first point that I want to make about the way in which the Government programmes are organised and the results that they have achieved concerns the significantly greater involvement of the private sector in the regeneration of inner cities and in working together with local authorities to that end. Sheffield, to which I referred earlier, is a very good example—as is Birmingham, with the Heartlands scheme—but those examples are now being matched and modelled in many parts of the country with the development of business leadership teams, often involving a direct partnership between local authorities and the business community, such as the Wearside Opportunity, the Newcastle initiative, Teesside Tomorrow, and a number of others.

That greater involvement of business, which is crucial to the real regeneration of the inner cities, is being assisted and supported by the way in which—this is what I had in mind in answering an intervention a few moments ago—the remodelling of some of the initiatives to which I referred in summarising the elements in the "Action for Cities" programme is very much directed to ensuring that Government money brings in substantial amounts of private sector investment alongside.

The urban development corporation is a very good example. I will not use only the London Docklands development corporation because the gearing there is particularly high—between £8 and £10 of private money coming in for every £1 of Government expenditure on the urban development corporation. That is well above the average, but even the average is about £4 of private sector money coming in behind every £1 of Government money and much the same ratio is true for city grant as well.

It is important to understand the extent to which the Government's initiatives are bringing in other resources on a very large scale and that therefore the figures that we use—whether £3 billion for last year or £3·5 billion for this year—for the total Government spending on the inner-city programmes are a significant underestimate of the resources now coming into the cities to assist with their regeneration.

The second point, on which the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook touched, is the improvement, which I very much welcome, in the degree of co-operation and—the right hon. Gentleman also used the word—the partnership which is taking place between central and local Government. Many local authorities, for example, are becoming much more actively involved in the work of urban development corporations and of the Government's task forces and in co-operating not just with other agencies in Government but with the private sector and voluntary organisations. That is a very important part of the improvement in the scene that has occurred in the past few years and one that I very much welcome.

The third point that I wish to emphasise is very much related to the points that have been made about the need to ensure that the benefits of all these programmes, including the work of the urban development corporations and the physical redevelopment that is taking place, accrue to the people who live in the inner-city areas. I do not accept the simple assessment that has been made in some quarters that the mere fact that docklands is being regenerated—to take an example that is frequently used—attracts people into the area and therefore can be seen as benefiting them as well is contrary to the aims of Government policy.

Part of the problem of the inner cities, a point to which I referred earlier, has been the extent to which many of the young, dynamic, economically active people have left the inner cities over a long period, leaving behind only the deprived and the disadvantaged. It follows that part of the real long-term answer to inner city problems must be to recreate more balanced communities in the inner cities and therefore to attract back to them——

Mr. Vaz: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Newton: No, I do not intend to give way now.

We must attract back to the inner cities some of the groups who, historically, have left or been driven out. I make no apology for that.

Mr. Vaz: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Newton: No.

Mr. Vaz *rose*——

Mr. Newton: What is important—I very much welcome it—is what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment is doing through his training programmes, what the urban development corporations and others are doing through their programmes—not least those associated with Canary wharf—and not least what those Government's inner-city task forces are doing by developing what are called customised training projects,

involving the matching of local unemployed people with the training required to get them the jobs that are known already to exist and the employment that is required with local employers. That is an increasingly significant part of the inner-city policy.

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Newton: No, I will not give way, for the reasons that I have already explained.

That is, I repeat, an increasingly significant part of our inner city policy, and one to which we are determined to give greater emphasis.

I have taken up a good deal of time, not least because I have sought to respond substantially to the interventions that have been made.

Mr. Vaz: The Minister has not done so.

Mr. Newton: Whether it is judged in terms of expenditure, the range and purpose of the programmes and the increasing results of the programmes—measured not just by what I say, but by what people are saying throughout the country, whether business leaders, or local government leaders and others—there is no way in which what is happening can credibly be presented, as the Opposition's motion seeks to present it, as a story of total neglect.

Mr. Vaz: It is.

Mr. Newton: It is a story of increasing success in spreading to all parts of the country the increasing prosperity that we have created for the nation as a whole. I invite the House to reject the motion and to pass the amendment.

4.47 pm

Mr. Robert Litherland (Manchester, Central): When we discuss the regeneration of the inner cities, we have to differentiate between myth and reality. The myth was perpetrated by the Prime Minister at the last general election when she said that the Government must get into the inner cities. That myth has been prolonged by Government propaganda. Glossy brochures have been distributed, illustrating proposed developments in the inner-city areas. There has been media coverage of visiting Ministers donning protective helmets and cutting tapes, trowel in hand, ready for action. They have posed and postulated in order to convince the electorate that all is well, that the inner cities are safe in their hands.

That is the myth. The only people to benefit will be the developers and financiers and those with the yuppie mentality, enjoying their new "with it" accommodation in converted warehouses or posing in their new theme pubs. What, however, is the reality? In Manchester inner city, the commercial centre is surrounded on the periphery by real people with real problems. They have experienced the loss of some 25,000 jobs, mainly in manufacturing industry, since the early 1980s, creating an army of unemployed. There is still over 33 per cent. male unemployment in the inner cities. That is intensified in pockets where there is a concentration of ethnic minorities who, like the disabled, find it hard to get employment, unless in the low-paid service sector, doing menial tasks.

In the inner city of Manchester, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said, there is a lower standard of living than in greater Manchester or north Cheshire. Before the changes in benefit in April 1988, 83,000 people were dependent on supplementary benefit. Those are the very people who have suffered an adverse effect in their meagre standard of living since then. A total of 18,000 have lost all housing benefit, and 45,000 now receive no help with their water rate bills. Then there are the children: 7,000 have been deprived of school meals. Because of social security changes, and especially because of the abolition of Department of Social Security grants and their replacement by the social fund, 50,000 people are worse off. Also, they have the spectre of the poll tax just over the horizon.

Poverty is a stark reality in the inner city. It manifests itself in low birth weights, premature deaths and increased crime. A recent report by the city council on the impact of poverty shows what poverty really means:

"Not being able to afford food. Over a third of households in poverty said they ran short of money to buy food. Falling into Debt. Over a half of households in poverty said that they had fallen seriously behind with payments during the previous year. A Cold Home. One third of households say there are times when they go without essential heating, and around half of them are in debt with fuel bills."

That is the inner city in Manchester. In a so-called booming economy, the gap between the poor and the rich is widening. The few jobs created outside the bogus training schemes are mainly low-paid and part-time, with no job security. As the better-off receive tax handouts and the benefits of the poll tax, the poor in the inner cities are losing. They are the people who are left on the sidelines.

Ethnic minority households suffer even worse. Their rate of unemployment is estimated at more than one and a half times that of white people. They have greater difficulty in obtaining work.

There are only two growth industries. The first is the demolition contractor, smashing down the old, empty factories, like wolverines at a dead carcase. Those factories once provided jobs and dignity for the people of pride in their craft. The other growth industry is the loan shark, preying like a vulture on the misery of people. Again, what can we expect? That is private enterprise and will be welcomed by the Government, who cynically deceive the inner-city people that all is well but at the same time deprive them of meagre means so that they can line the pockets of their affluent friends and supporters.

It is no use building luxury flats, marinas and theme pubs, and in Manchester fantasising about the G Mex Centre, mainly financed by public money, and the vast improvements to the Holiday inn, once the Midland hotel owned by British Rail, when very few of the people that I represent can afford the prices that would give them access to such places.

Next time Ministers come to Manchester, they should visit the real people and see their standard of living, their poor housing conditions and the effect on a great city and its people of the Government draining it of financial resources. If Ministers have any conscience, they will not sleep easily afterwards. The Prime Minister's words have rebounded in her face. She has no conception of life in the inner cities. She does not care, and she has betrayed the finest people in the country.

4.54 pm

Mr. David Gilroy Bevan (Birmingham, Yardley): It gives me great pleasure to support my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy. The Government have achieved miracles in the resuscitation of the inner cities. Much of what I heard earlier from the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) represents a Birmingham that I do not recognise. I have lived there for 60 years; I was born, bred and educated in Birmingham. I served on the city council and the West Midlands council for 20 years. My father was a slum clergyman in a city centre mission, where I worked from my teens. I know my Birmingham, and I know the city centre.

Birmingham's decline happened from the time of Sir Stafford Cripps, under the national Government. Giving assisted area status to every other part of the country was against the interests of the heartland of Britain. Industry was not allowed to build brick upon brick there until the Conservative Government got in and reversed that policy in 1979. The dictum of strengthening the weak weakened the strong in the west midlands, until the area had to be totally refurbished.

Thanks to the actions of the Government, the picture is totally different. By January 1989, in England alone, inner-city unemployment had fallen by 26 per cent. and in Birmingham it had fallen by 23 per cent. No wonder the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook moved the motion in such a quiet tone and was so inhibited. The real massage from the inner cities is that they are alive and thriving under a combination of public and private enterprise and that they are economically successful. Many of the things that the right hon. Gentleman said were inaccurate. I saw the chamber of commerce not some time in the past, as he did, but last Friday, and it did not express any dissatisfaction. It was waiting to hear what the Secretary of State for Transport would say on inter-urban roads. He introduced a programme that will raise public investment in roads from £5 million to £12 billion. That will help the economic success of Birmingham and the west midlands.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook spoke about city training centres but he got the address wrong. The address is Kingshurst, Birmingham. It is a mere 100 yd or so outside the city boundary.

We have a picture of increasing success. I am pleased that earlier today the House approved without argument the Third Reading of the Midland Metro Bill, which will lead to the investment of £1,000 million in the light electric railway system to link the towns lying between Wolverhampton and Birmingham on the line of the Wolverhampton low-level rail route. This will work wonders and green up an area which has been neglected in the past; it will environmentally help the city centres of all the so-called black country towns which lie along the route —and that is only part of the scheme.

Following the advent of the national exhibition centre, we have approved and are building a conference—convention centre which will open in two or three years time. We are spending £147 million, which is coming partly from Europe, partly from the Government and partly from private enterprise. We are spending £240 million on a canalside leisure project. So, in Birmingham and the inner city, £1·6 billion-worth of building and investment is under way.

Everywhere, shopping schemes, factory schemes and units of commerce are being created in Birmingham, with a consequential shattering reduction in unemployment. Unemployment has almost ceased to be the major problem that it was in the past.

We have spent about £90 million on Birmingham international airport, and another £80 million is to be spent on it, bringing business people from all over the world to our factories, convention centres and exhibition centres.

Heartlands Birmingham, a city centre initiative chaired by a former illustrious colleague of ours, Sir Reginald Eyre —the former Member for Birmingham, Hall Green—is redeveloping more than 2,000 acres. That partnership was requested by the Labour-controlled city council of Birmingham; it is a partnership between the private and public sectors, involving a large amount of private enterprise money. This urban development authority was not in line with Government thinking on urban development corporations, one of which has been so successful in and around the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Hicks). Nevertheless, the initiative was allowed and is now in being.

It is introducing phenomenal infrastructure. A new water link scheme on the canal was initiated this very week. When, in future, we discuss inner-city redevelopment we must bear in mind not only isolated spots of canal redevelopment but redevelopment throughout the country on canals that run through so many of our city centres in the midlands and the north. In Brum we have more canals than Venice, and I commend to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy this complete urban renewal along canal frontages by means of environmental and commercial schemes.

The one thing that Heartlands Birmingham would appreciate now, on top of the vast sums of money announced in the inter-urban road scheme, is finance for the Spline road, which will be needed to bring more factories and redevelopment into Heartlands. I should declare an interest as an adviser to PPG Industries——

Mr. Litherland: Ah!

Mr. Bevan: —a firm which has brought to the centre of Birmingham a project involving huge refurbishment of most of the land. It did the same in Pittsburgh, and it has invested £60 million in Wigan, not far from the area of Manchester represented by the hon. Member for Manchester, Central (Mr. Litherland) who has been making sedentary remarks. This firm has specialised, and has introduced private sector schemes of excellence everywhere. I hope that this redevelopment will continue.

In addition to passing on to my right hon. Friend unstinted congratulations on the regeneration of our city, I recommend to him the adoption of a scheme of tax-free municipal bonds, which can produce more and more money for the redevelopment of inner cities. This scheme has been wholly successful in America. Tax-free bonds have been taken out by corporations and individuals on worthless land in the Baltimore inner-port scheme, and in Boston, Massachusetts, Washington and New York. Redevelopment has increased the worth of those bonds substantially. Thus, they have rejuvenated city centres in many parts of America. I hope that we too will be able to begin such a system to improve still further the excellent

development that is already in place. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister will, with his right hon. Friends in the Treasury, determine whether such a scheme could perpetuate the excellent action that has already been taken in Birmingham and other areas.

5.6 pm

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): It is a measure of the Government's failure adequately to deal with the problems faced by our inner cities that, after ten years, we still have to raise these issues and press for more effective solutions. The Government have tried, as the Minister has described this afternoon, in their own way, but despite the numerous gimmicks—tons of glossy brochures, loads of slick advertising, breakfast time press launches and myriad excuses—the basic problems remain: inadequate housing, poor facilities and poverty in the areas that we describe as inner cities.

Despite the attempts by the Secretary of State for Social Services to deny the obvious, large-scale poverty has grown in the past ten years in these areas. Where there is poverty, bad housing, poor facilities and services, there is unfortunately also crime to add to the miserable conditions in which people must live.

The Opposition motion calls for more emphasis on partnership between Government and local authorities. Inner-area partnerships already exist. My constituency is entirely encompassed by the Newcastle-Gateshead inner area partnership. The system was set up by the last Labour Government but, although it has been continued by this Government, its effectiveness has slowly been eroded by inflation, which has not been properly compensated for and which has led to a reduction in real terms of Government investment. Government restrictions on the type and duration of schemes have led to an emphasis on economic development, and because of its limited resources and a reduction in support for socially desirable schemes, the partnership can have little impact—yet it could have had a major effect.

The influence of local authorities has been gradually limited even though almost all the innovations and partnership proposals come from them. Those which do not, come from the voluntary sector. The Department of the Environment merely holds the purse strings, and Ministers continually block schemes which councils know will benefit their areas because they do not fit the Government's political philosophy. The money that central Government contribute, apart from being eroded and strictly applied, has to be balanced against the money that was taken away from the councils by reductions in rate support grant and other grants over that period. In the case of Newcastle and Gateshead, the reduction in rate support grant alone came to more than twice what was received through partnership over the past 10 years. The Government give with one hand and take back with a forklift truck.

One of the most worrying aspects of the Government's 10 years has been the horrific increase in crime. As I said earlier, our inner cities have also borne the brunt of this. What has the party of law and order done about it? The answer is percious little, and nothing that has had any noticeable effect. Northumbria police authority has continually pressed for more resources to deal with the problems that it faces, particularly in the Tyne and Wear conurbation. The Government's response has been not only inadequate but inequitable.

If the criterion for the distribution of resources was crime, then 200 police officers should be distributed to the Northumbria force from other areas. In the Tyne and Wear area, an officer handles an average of 50 crimes a year—the highest in the country. In Manchester, the figure is 46 and in the Metropolitan police force it is only 27, the lowest in the country. That is possibly because, per capita, Northumbria has the lowest number of officers and the Metropolitan police force has the highest. There are 2·4 officers per 1,000 of population in Northumbria, and 3·9 in London. However, when the Northumbria police authority asked the Home Office for 80 extra officers for 1989-90, it got just 30.

As a further example of the unequal nature of the distribution of resources, when the Government were approached with a request for 59 officers for the specific purpose of policing the Tyne and Wear metro system, they turned the request down. However, London Regional Transport has been loaned 82 officers from the Metropolitan and City of London forces, pending the completion of training of 50 extra British Transport police. I understand that a meeting is to be held on 27 June, in another attempt to convince Ministers of the merits of the Tyne and Wear case. I hope that Ministers will take account of the disparities that I have mentioned and grant this necessary, but in the circumstances modest, request.

A number of important problems need to be tackled urgently if the people of the inner-city areas on Tyneside are to be relieved of their problems, and its economy regenerated. In housing, massive renewal and refurbishment is needed at a time when Government policy has halted council house provision and slashed the housing capital programmes of the local authorities. Last July, Newcastle city council made a realistic bid for approval to borrow £48·3 million for 1989-90, but received permission to borrow only £6 million. Apart from being grossly inadequate to meet the needs of the city, that was even 25 per cent. less that it had been in 1988-89, before inflation is taken into account. That is a measure of the Government's understanding or caring about the housing needs of the inner-city areas, the plight of the homeless and the needs of those with special housing problems.

The same thing has happened in education. In Gateshead, the council's secondary education system is in an unholy mess, largely because of the parochialism that the Government encourage. The Government's answer is to encourage privatisation and to bring in business men to run our schools. Thus, we have the proposal for a city technology college in Gateshead, just to add further confusion and complication to the problems that already exist. That proposal sacrifices our children's future to the short-term needs of business men. This was amply demonstrated by the main sponsor of the new college, Mr. Peter Vardy, a local second-hand car salesman, who said that the purpose of the college would be

"to education children for the needs of business"—

that is, when they are not being indoctrinated into Mr. Vardy's preference in religion. I am sure that all parents who care about their children's education and future will avoid the college like the plague, despite its deliberately alluring title of "King's college", which masks its sinister purpose.

[Mr. David Clelland]

Our inner cities, particularly in the north-east, need adequate infrastructure and good communications—not least, the provision of a high standard roads network, both within the region and linking us to the rest of the motorway system. Again, the Government, despite the opportunity, failed to come up with the goods when their future proposals, outlined in last week's White Paper, fell short of providing the vision or the urgency required. I hope that the representations that will be made to Ministers from both sides of the House on behalf of the region will be taken fully into account.

The Tyne and Wear metro transport system is one of the most modern and efficient in Europe and has brought great benefits to the conurbation. Earlier today, the House agreed to a Bill that will allow for the extension of the system to Newcastle airport—an important and significant extension for the local economy. Again, the system will be relying on the Government for financial support, and I hope that they will look sympathetically on that request.

Unemployment remains a massive problem in the northern inner cities, with some wards in my constituency running male unemployment rates in excess of 50 per cent. That provides further evidence of the nonsense spoken by the Secretary of State for Social Services. The Government claim that this problem is reducing, but while some reduction is evident, a major factor in that reduction is the manipulation of the method of calculating unemployment rather than any significant increase in job opportunities. In my inner-city constituency, what decrease there has been, has been at a lower rate than that for the region as a whole.

Those jobs that have been created are generally low-paid, part-time and in the catering and service industries. The days when people could rely on stable, well-paid work in valuable manufacturing industry have gone, as the Government's disastrous neglect of manufacturing led to a slump of previously unknown depths. Only now, as the Chancellor has told us, has it begun to make progress against the level that it was 10 years ago. In the process, we have lost the skills and the expertise of our craftsmen, which at one time were passed on to future generations, but have now been lost for ever in many cases.

The recovery of which the Chancellor spoke is not a recovery in manufacturing industry. As has been said, the recovery is from a particularly low base. I worked in an engineering factory on Tyneside for 20 years and in 1979, that factory employed about 6,000 people. Now, it employs about 1,600. It has picked up in recent months and is beginning to improve, but it has a long way to go to get back to 6,000.

The north-east of England is a marvellous place in which to live, to work and to bring up a family; I would never wish to work anywhere else. However, our inner-city areas not only share the problems faced by similar areas but also have the disadvantages which I have outlined, which a Government could resolve, with a little will and by letting us help ourselves. No doubt hon. Members will know that many good things are going on in the north-east. They include co-operation between local government and the private sector, which has always been a feature of the area and has brought a great deal of benefit. It would continue to do so were it not hampered by the Government's obsession with giving dominance to the private sector, often when it does not want it.

The Chancellor of the Duchy quoted the managing director of *The Newcastle Journal* saying at a recent dinner held in my constituency that the region was ready to take on the world. Some people will say anything for a free dinner, particularly when those attending the dinner are the people who dish out the rewards. However, he neglected to say that much of what is happening in the north-east is the result of the innovation of local people, the assistance and encouragement that people are given by the local authorities, and the contribution of the local authorities themselves. It has little to do with Government policy, which has hampered rather than encouraged that progress.

I look forward to the day, not too far away now, when we shall have a Government who recognise the legitimate role of all sectors of the community, stop interfering and let us get on with the job.

5.18 pm

Mrs. Maureen Hicks (Wolverhampton, North-East): For too long, those who live in our inner cities have felt relatively abandoned—second-class citizens making do with second best, for whom no one appears genuinely to care, and invariably finding themselves living within the confines of local Labour authorities whose interest seems to be to keep them imprisoned in an environment of fear and despair. The Opposition's motion is distinctly hypocritical.

It took my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to take the bull by the horns in June 1987—thank God she did—and to recognise that for too long successive Governments had ignored the underlying problems in the inner cities which had to be tackled. Why should those who live in the inner cities be denied the quality of life that the rest of us all too easily take for granted? It was a matter of taking up the basic strands of inner city life, injecting leadership—one of the most important criteria of any initiative—finance, enthusiasm and determination to overcome the problems which have contributed to an inferior way of life.

Instead of talking, we should act. I could talk for hours about the Government's successive initiatives. I find it quite incredible that Opposition Members can say that nothing has happened under this Government. The Government have provided new jobs, training, new homes, more homes for rent, better education for all, a rejuvenation of derelict areas in which no one wished to invest, and an improvement in law and order. Within that structure, they have recognised the need for local authorities of whatever political persuasion to endeavour to put politics behind them and to work with the Government and the private sector for the good of local people.

Unlike one or two Opposition Members, I can report at first hand that Wolverhampton is a thriving town. In the debate on manufacturing last week, we discussed the huge turnaround in the past seven years. People are flocking to invest in Wolverhampton and to set up new companies. But we have to remember the people who live there, and how much their quality of life depends on jobs and on the environment that is provided for them.

One of the most important and disturbing problems in Wolverhampton has involved homes and housing. People want housing where they can feel safe and which they can respect. One of the most serious problems in my constituency is the inability of the local Labour council to impose strict housing management, with the result that no matter how much money it spends—whether from ratepayers or taxpayers—the area is left to decline and heads are buried in the sand when it comes to ensuring that tenants abide by the rules of their tenancy, with the result that, all too often, such tenants reduce the quality of life of the people around them. In Low Hill in my constituency, thousands of pounds have been spent doing up council properties, with fantastic results, but the local housing department then allowed gipsy families to conglomerate in those houses and mow down the front garden walls, which had recently been erected, to put their caravans in front of the houses. Sometimes they even tethered animals inside their homes. Yet normal, conscientious people, many of them pensioners, are expected to live alongside such activities. Regrettably, the local council has shown no determination whatever to sort that situation out. The local council talks a lot but does little.

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): The hon. Lady said that the council neglected to carry out repairs to council houses. Before accusing the council of neglect, will she tell the House what the budget is for the Wolverhampton housing committee to spend on council house repairs and whether it has declined in the past three years in real terms?

Mrs. Hicks: The hon. Lady must have misheard me. I was not discussing repairs. I was discussing improvements that the council has made. In some cases it has done a marvellous job, but I decry the fact that, having invested money in council houses, it has then abandoned those properties so that no one wants to live in them. I ask the hon. Lady why Wolverhampton council has not collected the £4 million outstanding in rent arrears, which could be further invested for the good of other tenants.

Ms. Primarolo: Because the Government have made the tenants so poor that they cannot afford to pay their rent.

Mrs. Hicks: Now that the hon. Lady has opened up the debate, why does not the council get on with the job of filling the 2,000 empty homes so that we can solve the housing problem?

Another area in my constituency is called Heathtown, where, after 16 years of a Labour local authority, people felt like prisoners living in high-rise flats where the lack of housing management resulted in squalid conditions fit only for animals. I have seen it many times. The flats were not fit for people to live in and they were a breeding ground for criminal activity. The local council could not give the flats away to people on the waiting list and had to advertise them outside its own area although it has a long housing waiting list. The Government stepped in, recognising that Labour councillors could not control the housing and offered a much-needed estate management initiative, 'Estate Action', and an initial injection of £600,000. The local Labour authority now thinks it marvellous that the flats have security doors, video cameras and concierges. The local people assume that it is local authority money and, as with so many initiatives, do not realise that it was Government money and Government-inspired.

When the Opposition with their hearts on their sleeves talk about the homeless, they do not mention the delaying tactics that Labour councils apply to prevent people from owning their own council homes. On Fridays and Saturdays my surgery is filled not with social security problems but with people who put in to buy their council homes two, three or four years ago but find the local council using delaying tactics to thwart the right to buy. That is a disgrace.

Nationally, there are 103,000 empty local authority dwellings, many in inner-city areas. Nearly 22,000 of those are available for immediate letting. In theory, every homeless family could be taken out of bed-and-breakfast accommodation if Labour authorities would let those properties.

Jobs and training figure very largely in the west midlands, where there has been an enormous reduction in unemployment. Wolverhampton has had the benefit of a Government task force which has done a marvellous job getting people into work. One of the problems that we recognise is that people need to be retrained in new skills and others need basic remedial education to help them apply for training places. When I hear Opposition Members talk about the creation of jobs and about training and skill shortages, I find it incredible that in Wolverhampton, where there is high unemployment, the local Labour council has turned down £700,000 for 400 places. That is the sort of initiative that the Labour council takes on employment training.

When I visited a day-care centre for the elderly last week. I met many elderly people who said, "Mrs. Hicks, I hear that your Government is closing down our day centre." When I asked them why that should be so, they said, "We have no more employment training places—what are we to do?" I had to explain to them that their local caring Labour authority was handing back the money for those places and then asking my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, "Why has the European Commission turned us down for money for training, and why won't our local Member of Parliament, Mrs. Hicks, fight for more money for training?" *[Interruption.]* I draw from experience in my appraisal of the local Labour council only because of the Opposition motion today. It is far better to talk from experience than simply to waffle.

I want to talk further about the creation of urban development corporations. I was fortunate the other day to go around the London docklands for the first time. I must admit that I had left it too long. It was fantastic. I came back to the House and decided that the whole House should take a day trip to the London docklands because the enthusiasm that I saw there sent me back full of heart. There were so many achievements there such as rebuilding and new factories——

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): They were there before.

Mrs. Hicks: I can see what was there before, where the area has not been improved. The area had been so run down that people believed that nothing would ever happen. If we can achieve such rejuvenation through the Black Country urban development corporation, which is

[Mrs. Hicks]

in its early days, it would be extremely encouraging. In the Black Country UDC we have £160 million, which will provide 20,000 jobs, but the Labour party locally says, "If we get back in, we shall do away with all urban development corporations."

I recognise that one of the most disturbing elements of inner-city life concerns law and order. If people do not feel safe in their flats, whether they rent or buy them, that is a disgrace. In Wolverhampton, we have a superb town centre where local people were frightened to shop. They said, "We have a lovely town centre, but we shall avoid it like the plague because it is not safe by day or by night."

Mr. Heffer: Ten years ago your Government were going to solve all that.

Mrs. Hicks: We said, "Let us have video cameras in the town centre," and Wolverhampton was one of the first towns to do so. Local Labour councillors said, "We do not want nasty video cameras because they are an invasion of privacy and a restriction on individuals". [HON. MEMBERS: "Yes, they are."] We have seen the biggest reduction in crime in Wolverhampton and we now have virtually no criminal activity in the town centre. All the other local authorities now say, "Let us follow Wolverhampton's initiative," and who is taking the credit for that? It is the local council.

Mr. Bernie Grant: Give us the figures.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: There is the real spokesman on law and order.

Mrs. Hicks: I happen to have the figures with me. We have had an 18 per cent. downturn compared with the same period last year. Robberies are down by 52 per cent. in Wolverhampton, house burglaries are down by 24 per cent., criminal damage is down by 16 per cent. and wounding is down by 3 per cent. The only figure to show an increase is for the theft of bicycles, which have increased by 38 per cent. The figures speak for themselves, as they do throughout the west midlands. I was delighted when the Government chose Wolverhampton as one of the first towns to take part in the 'safer cities' scheme and we worked hard to be chosen. The scheme involves many threads, not just the Government or the police, but junior crime prevention, probation officers and the local community. If inner-city life is to improve, everyone must be involved. We cannot just leave it to the local council or the Government.

Unless we provide sound education to equip young people with skills for the future in a manufacturing area such as mine, we shall have problems as a result of the decreasing work force. We welcome all initiatives to bring industry and schools closer, and I am glad that we have now taken the initiative with the chamber of commerce to establish a compact in some of the schools in my constituency. I also welcome the city technology colleges. One of the first towns that would have had the offer of a CTC was Wolverhampton, but what happened?

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): The council did not want one.

Mrs. Hicks: That is right—the hon. Gentleman knows his party so well. There is a skills shortage in the area, and as a manufacturing area we should be encouraging our young people in technology, but the council did not want a CTC because it believed that it would be elitist. That is one of the saddest decisions that the council has made.

The Conservative party has shown commitment and vision. Our initiatives speak louder than the hollow words of the Opposition. The Opposition motion is a cheek coming from a party that has not come forward with one policy, but merely destructive opposition to all that we have achieved.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I remind hon. Members that this is a short debate. Contributions ought to be brief.

5.35 pm

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): I will be brief, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I will not be tempted to follow the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Hicks) down the highways and byways of Wolverhampton although, having spoken just after her in last week's debate on manufacturing, I must say that she makes it sound an interesting place—all the more interesting for her presence there.

Immediately after the last election, the Prime Minister suddenly declared that there was a problem with Britain's inner cities. She has, of course, long since slunk off from the photo call which followed that pronouncement, while the deeply felt problems of the inner cities persist. Wolverhampton may be a shining exception, but what we are seeing develop in Britain—this is not surprising, given the Government's conscious efforts to Americanise this country in so many ways—is an urban under-class, which has become a common and tragic feature of many north American cities.

That new class grows from a combination of many factors, many of which have been referred to this afternoon, such as poor housing, sub-standard education, soaring crime—much of it drug-related—racial tensions and the exodus of the better-off to the suburbs, with a good portion of the job market going with them. There is high youth unemployment, dependency on state benefits and the break-up of family structures. All those factors combine in different ways to contribute to the problem, and each factor tends to reinforce the others.

There is economic decline and that is true of a city such as Glasgow. We have had one by-election recently in Glasgow and another will soon be under way. Glasgow shows the tale of two cities that we see elsewhere. In some areas of Glasgow, there is a high proportion of people who have worked in the traditional industries that have declined and all but gone. Such a massive economic collapse—especially in the traditional sector—has hastened many of the problems of the inner cities.

I will concentrate on one or two issues and suggest one or two of the policy areas that the Government should be addressing which would help the inner cities. They could help London, which has a pitifully high proportion of exiled young Scots who are homeless, or Glasgow, which has made marvellous strides forward in recent years and is a shining example, I readily concede, of a Labour local authority that has worked fully with the grain of the private sector to the benefit of the local environment. However, problems persist in both places and I want to bring some of them to the Minister's attention.

When one considers council accommodation in the Greater London area, one sees that nearly 40 per cent. of families live in council accommodation, much of it in poor condition and much of it suffering, as the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) said, from the massive clawbacks inflicted by the Government on local authority capacity to spend money on repairs and improvements. If one looks across the river, one sees an area with a high elderly population and a history of poor health, much of it due to poverty and to bad social conditions, which were most notable in housing, and a dual problem emerges within welfare provision.

Bad housing, the lack of capital spend and the sort of problems referred to by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East about poor management at the local authority end, combine to create a bad social basis which, in itself, is bad for people's health. However, further than that, there is a reluctance on the part of general practitioners to move their practices into inner-city areas because such practices are likely to be small and to draw on a dwindling and elderly population. As that means that the capitation fee is likely to be low, a GP's income will be depressed while the work load will be heavy. I cannot see how the Government's policies on the NHS and on hospitals opting out will in any way assist in any inner-city area that is suffering from such problems.

Surely that policy will result in a concentration of what might be called the more glamorous high-tech operations and a consequent dimunition in the emphasis that is given to basic health care and especially to preventive health care and to recall facilities, not least in women's health, in which, throughout the country but especially in the inner cities, much greater progress must be made.

I turn now to crime, which, as I have said, is often drug-related. The crime rate is high and in too many of our inner cities it is rising. The number of serious crimes reported per 1,000 residents in inner London is more than 50 per cent. above the average for metropolitan areas. It has no less than doubled since 1971. On average there is now a violent crime every hour in Britain's capital city. Non-violent crimes, such as theft and burglary, are now so common that, as all hon. Members will know from their own experience and from their friends and contacts in this city, many people do not even bother to report them either because of the lack of time that is given to following them up or clearing them up or because of the probable low success rate that individuals think will be achieved in redress.

Finally, I underscore one point about education made by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East, although I do not follow the philosophy of her analysis. It is absolutely essential that teacher morale is improved and that better pay and conditions are achieved for teachers. We should move towards a right to numeracy. That means no non-qualified maths teachers in our schools. Schools should be integrated more closely with their local communities, including the business community. In that context, the compact programme of the much-maligned ILEA must be welcomed.

There is much to be done about inner cities in this country. It must be something of a frustration for the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster that, although this subject became the overriding priority of the Prime Minister after the last election, one suspects that now it does not figure very prominently on her scale of values. Under this Government, that is likely to lead to inner cities being relegated once again to the position that they occupied during the first eight years of this Conservative Administration.

5.43 pm

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): I hope that the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) will not take it amiss if I do not follow him down the avenue that he took, although I shall mention some of the points that he raised.

When the former Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Ruschcliffe (Mr. Clarke), made his statement on inner-city policy last year, in the questions that followed I pointed out that inner-city deprivation does not occur only in the inner cities, because one can find similar deprivation in small towns and rural areas throughout the country. That is certainly true of my constituency, in parts of which unemployment is running at over 20 per cent. In the constituency as a whole unemployment is twice the national rate, even though it has fallen from 7,000 to 4,000 in the past two and a half years. The largest group of questions with which I deal in my constituency surgeries relates to welfare benefits, which makes me similar to many hon. Members representing inner-city areas.

My experience of this subject goes back to the days when I was a pupil in a 2,000-pupil comprehensive school in south London. Then I saw at first hand some of the major problems that afflict us to this day in inner cities. That was reinforced by my experience when I began teaching in Bermondsey in south-east London, in what was popularly known as a "sink" secondary modern school, and by my eight years as a councillor in an inner London borough.

That experience is borne out every day when I travel to the House, because when I am in London I live in Forest, Hill and travel through the London boroughs of Lewisham, Southwark and Lambeth. As I drive through the Aylesbury estate, which is not a mile and a half from this House, I see boarded-up council properties covered with graffiti; walls that are falling down; street furniture, such as traffic lights, that is out of order or that has been knocked on the side because of accidents that happened perhaps six or nine months ago. I see streets that are littered with paper and which have not been swept for months and where the pavements and the road surfaces are broken. Young saplings that have been planted by the local authority have been broken and snapped off. Yet those are the areas with high spending councils that produce high rates bills for their citizens.

The issue of "the condition of the people", which is how Disraeli described it 100 years ago, will be a major issue at the next election. The key to the problems in our inner cities lies in the fact that those areas have one thing in common: they are run by Labour local authorities. The problems are not the shame of 10 years of Conservative Government but of 40 or 50 years of municipal Socialism. It is those Labour authorities that have done so much to ruin the environment of their citizens and to ensure that they have very little freedom of manoeuvre or of personal choice and responsibility. The "local state"—to quote a Marxist term—which has been in power in Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham for years, with the exception of three years in the late 1960s, has been responsible for

[Mr. Nicholas Bennett]

taking away people's choice and freedom. It has been responsible for building the large impersonal council estates that have been so badly vandalised.

As I stand at a bus stop that is not two miles from the House, I hear people saying, "Why don't they do something about it?" Those people believe that the local council is responsible for everything. They believe that the amorphous "they" have the duty to ensure that the environment is cleaned up. To a large extent those people are right: "they"—that is, the local authority—have made sure that the local citizens have very little personal power because they live in council houses and must use the local authority schools. They have no choice about the sort of environment in which they live. Such people also have a feeling of desperation because they feel that they cannot do anything to improve their situation themselves. Again, that is to come back to the fact that in those societies people have very little choice or responsibility.

I was most surprised and, indeed, gratified to get support for this thesis from Linda Bellos, the former leader of Lambeth council, who admitted that people in areas such as Lambeth have been

"failed by the education system, failed by the anachronistic rating system and, yes, failed by municipal housing".

That was said in a speech at Brunel university on 22 October 1987. At least there is a glimmer of understanding among some members of the Labour party about the reality of the issue.

The London borough of Tower Hamlets reached the stage where 90 per cent. of the housing in the borough was owned by the local authority. People had no opportunity to buy a property or to rent a property from a private landlord if they wished to do so because the local authority had effectively municipalised private housing out of the borough. If one did not come within the criteria for getting a council house, one could not live in the area. It was therefore no surprise that doctors, nurses and teachers were driven away from such boroughs and had to drive into the area from outer London to carry out their work. Many of them gave up the battle and there is now a chronic problem in Tower Hamlets where, according to some surveys, 30 per cent. of the children have to be sent home daily from school because of the lack of teachers.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I am pleased that my hon. Friend quoted from the speech by Miss Bellos. I am sorry that the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) was not present to hear it. It is indicative of Opposition Members' interest in the matter that only half a dozen of them are present. Only one Opposition Member——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This is a short debate. Hon. Members have been sitting here patiently waiting to speak.

Mr. Bennett: My hon. Friend makes a good point. Only three Labour Back-Bench Members are present for a debate that they selected.

When I was a councillor on the housing committee of the London borough of Lewisham, it was interesting to visit estates in the Surrey docks which we were taking over from the GLC and note the dereliction of the slums that had occurred in about 10 years. I also saw a friend who lived in the Barbican estate, which was built at exactly the same time and was of exactly the same model, but it was a model estate. That suggests something about council housing and about the way in which tenants are given little control over their own lives. They are not given a say in management, there are no housing co-operatives and there is no chance to buy properties in some London boroughs. That has an effect.

I listened with interest to an Opposition Member shout about yuppies. It seems extremely odd that a group of young people who have the initiative and enterprise to do something about getting jobs and about improving the houses that they buy should be vilified by Opposition Members as people who should not be emulated. That does not mean that we must praise some people's nasty city barrow boy mentality, but it ill becomes eminent personages to go to Tower Hamlets and tell the Bangladeshis there, "Your problems are caused by yuppie gentrification," when, for the first time, the gentrification of inner-city areas caused by people using their own money to improve those areas has started to bring private capital into areas which for so long have been under municipal control.

The same applies to employment. It is no use Labour Members arguing that London has high unemployment when, at the same time, we know that job opportunities in London are good. The black economy in London is thriving. Given the large number of vacancies, there is no reason why anyone in our capital city who wishes to have a job should be out of work.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Bennett: I will not give way. I have only a couple of minutes left.

Another interesting point is Labour Members' attitude to docklands. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East, I have been to docklands and seen the incredible changes that have taken place since 1981, when the urban development corporation was established by my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine). I was a member of the local authority. I remember the seven wasted years of the Docklands Joint Committee, when the five riparian boroughs and the GLC talked but did nothing at all. It is no use the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) saying that they were planning. The people of docklands wanted jobs for the area and new houses built.

Education is the key to trying to improve many inner-city areas. Opposition Members have unjustifiably made much of the Inner London education authority. On examination results, ILEA came 87th in the league. Wigan, which has similar social problems, came ninth. It is interesting to note that Wigan was able to educate its children at half the cost of ILEA. We must make sure that teachers are paid well according to the regions in which they work, the subject that they teach—if there is a shortage of teachers of certain subjects—and performance. I do not want blanket increases for teachers if poor teachers are equally rewarded.

It is no use just talking about crime in inner cities. There is serious crime in inner cities. Much of it involves mindless attacks on strangers by yobboes on buses and trains and in the street. We must examine what is causing it. It has nothing to do with society or Doctor Hienz Kiosks in the Opposition who tell us that we are all guilty. It is to do with

the personal morality of the people who do the attacking. It comes down to the education and social systems in our schools. We do not give moral education and guidance to our children and tell them when things are right or wrong. Our education services and the Secretary of State for Education and Science should make sure that, in future, the curriculum contains a large element of moral education to try to get those who see no danger or harm in mindless violence to be educated in the values of right and wrong.

5.54 pm

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): I must put the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) right. He talked about Labour authorities. I lived in docklands in the east end for most of my life, and I remember that the Labour council carried out the biggest slum clearance scheme in Europe at a time when Tories were saying, "It is no good giving the workers baths; they will only put coal in them." The Labour council took people out of hovels. Getting a council flat meant a new life, and that was everybody's ambition. Many of those council flats are still desirable and beautiful today, especially those that were built by the GLC. Many of them are run down, but our rate support grant has been stolen by the Government. We have been rate-capped, and Labour councils, and Tower Hamlets council, are now handicapped by insufficient funds to repair and restore properties. Hon. Members should not deride that slum clearance, at it gave new life to thousands of people.

I represent a docklands constituency. It is high on the list of indices that measure poverty and deprivation. I have the plans of the Docklands Joint Committee, which knew what the area wanted and needed, and it was very different from what the Government have imposed upon it. The Docklands Joint Committee was made up of representatives from the GLC, the Department of the Environment and local boroughs—a good mix of local and national bodies. Its overall objective was to use the opportunity provided by the availability of parts of docklands for development to redress housing, social, environmental, employment, economic and communications difficulties. The boroughs provided freedom for similar improvements throughout east and inner London.

We have something very different with the London Docklands development corporation, a neo-colonial quango answerable to nobody but the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for the Environment. That body was imposed upon us. The LDDC's aims were different. It was to regenerate the land, not the community, as the Secretary of State for the Environment has said. Its actions have been detrimental to the community. The availability of that large area of vacant land was an historical opportunity to solve the London housing crisis once and for all. That opportunity has been thrown away.

Let us examine council house building figures since the Government have been in office. The number of council new build completions in east London in 1979 was 4,250. The latest figures available for 1986-87 is 430—a tenth of what it was before. New build completions are grinding to a halt. In 1979, there were 3,613 new build starts. There were 490 in 1986-87.

Conservative Members say that there are too many council houses and that people need to buy their own houses. That is not what local people think. They think that they need more council housing, not less. There are over 10,000 people on the waiting list. They, those on the transfer list and the homeless think that we in the east end need more council housing, but the Government do not listen to what we say, because it does not suit them and their speculator friends to do so. The number of right-to-buy sales in the five years from 1980-81 to 1985-86 were 16,200. In the last year of that period, the number reduced to 2,716, and it is falling.

Many elderly people and pensioners have told me that they do not want to buy their houses at their time of life. They cannot afford it with the little bit of money that they have left. They would rather enjoy themselves and have some security with a little money in the bank. However, they are afraid that the Government's policy means that their council estates will be sold to private housing organisations. They are afraid that they will lose tenure and eventually be forced out. They have been forced into buying.

Many people have told me that they wished that they could return to being council tenants because they had encountered problems with their properties. For example, people have found asbestos flaking off beneath wallpaper when they have decorated. The local authority claims that it cannot help because it has no money. The Government will not give the local authority money to help, claiming the council must find the money from its own pool. A hell of a lot of people in east London are in a dreadful mess.

People are also finding that the service and other charges are higher than they had thought they would be. They cannot afford those charges as inflation rises. We must remember that 10 per cent. of those who are registered as homeless are mortgage defaulters and that figure should not be taken lightly. Buying a house is not the answer to everyone's dream, although for those who can afford it, it may be desirable.

In 1978 there were 3,601 homeless people in the area. In 1986-87 that figure had risen to 9,037. We should bear in mind that childless couples and single people are not included in that figure. Similarly, it does not include people sleeping in cardboard boxes or on other people's floors. In 1983 in the east London boroughs, there were 438 people in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. In 1988, there were 1,550. Those figures are an indictment of the Government's policies.

The LDDC has brought in speculators who have built many houses. However, the local population cannot afford them. Very few properties built in my constituency were ever in the affordable bracket. Only the houses built by Barratts at Glengall place and by Comben on the Mudshute were relatively affordable. Local residents were supposed to be given priority for lower-priced houses, but there was a great deal of fiddling by unwelcome speculators.

Thames Television inquired into the fiddling and found that one group of business men had bought 15 properties. In other cases, properties were bought and resold without being occupied. People bought rent books to show a local address. There were 10 dubious sales at the Caledonian wharf, which were actually stopped. Some of the Cascades flats were bought and offered for resale while the scheme was still just a hole in the ground.

We need consider only how the price of those apartments and houses has risen to see that this was not housing for local people, but simply an opportunity for the speculators to get rich. In 1985, a two-bedroom flat in

[Ms. Mildred Gordon]

London Yard on the Isle of Dogs cost £58,191—much more than local people could afford. In 1988, it cost £160,000. In 1984 a one-bedroom flat on Clippers quay, also on the Isle of Dogs, cost £40,000. In 1986, it cost £109,000. A two-bedroomed flat which cost £39,495 rose in three years to £199,995. A three-bedroomed house, which is what most families want, rose from £60,000 to £175,000. In large part, that housing was bought by speculators and resold, or bought by people from outside the area who had large incomes and large pockets.

Many young people with high salaries took on heavy mortgages. Some of them are now unhappy with what is happening. They find that life under the dictatorship of the LDDC is not so great. Some of the houses are jerry built. I have been told of an estate where the land is subsiding and water has come flooding in. I have heard of cases where a property was purchased for a great deal of money in a quiet court, but one flat was turned into a wine bar and residents had to suffer the noise of car doors banging late at night. Similarly, people complain of noise from across the river from the Victoria deep water metal crushing depot. I have also heard that some roads are covered in mud when it rains. Bus drivers have told me that some of the roads on the Isle of Dogs are becoming dangerous because of some of the developers' sloppy work.

As the market drops, I believe that Canary wharf could become a great ghost edifice like some of those in New York. It is meant to be the biggest office development in Europe. It will create huge wind funnels. My area does not need that development.

Housing action trusts were another of the Government's policies for inner cities. We are all aware of the east enders' reactions to HATs. All the apartment houses down the Mile End road had huge banners hanging from them attacking and denouncing HATs. The tenants did not want them and they made that quite clear to the Minister when he met them at mass meetings. The Government had to retreat on HATs. The tenants were ready to blockade themselves in their own homes to stop anyone entering.

The tenants knew that, under HATs, after several years their estates would be sold to speculators, their rents would no longer be affordable and they would lose tenure. I went into places which had water streaming down the walls, yet even those tenants preferred to stick with the local authority rather than have a HAT. They did not trust the Government.

The pick-a-landlord scheme is also causing terror in areas like the east end. People feel secure with the local authority. They can vote for it and they can vote it out. They can bring pressure to bear. They can speak their minds to local councillors. However, the Government's schemes will remove their democratic right and control over housing. Tory Members who talk about Government proposals giving tenants' control are talking through their HATs. That is all nonsense.

The east enders have seen two bodies which they respected and supported destroyed by the Government —the Greater London Council and the Inner London education authority. An opinion poll showed that 90 per cent. of Londoners did not want ILEA abolished, but the Government disregarded them. How can the Government claim that they are a democratic Government?

County hall, our city hall, which belongs to the community, will be sold off, probably to become hotels and expensive apartment houses so that rich people can enjoy the river. Londoners will lose all rights to that building. That is typical of the Government's approach to the inner cities. They take away all the best places.

I warn people from other towns who have been told that they are going to have an urban development corporation that the LDDC, which is supposed to be the jewel in the Government's crown and the model UDC, has pinched pieces of land along the river, canals and bridlepaths. It has pinched the most pleasant places which go to rich people and local people do not get a look in. The children of local people are forced to move far away. That is bad for the community, especially for an aging community.

Housing has been for a very long time the most urgent problem in the inner cities and in east London in particular. Jobs are also very important. Before I made my maiden speech in the House two years ago, I carried out investigations and discovered that, despite all the public money which has been poured into the LDDC—money which was never available for the plans of the Joint Docklands Committee and the local authorities—there has been a net loss of jobs. A month ago I asked another series of questions and found, rather to my surprise, that there was a slightly bigger net loss of jobs, despite everything that has happened in the past two years.

Health care is important in an area with a rising population. Unlike the rest of the country, in Tower Hamlets there has been an explosion in the birth rate, bringing housing and health problems in its train. Two weeks ago, I held a meeting with general practitioners from Tower Hamlets in this building and they were unanimously against the Government's proposals for the Health Service. They have been denounced as greedy, as liars, but in fact they are devoted people. One has to be devoted to choose to work in east London.

At that meeting I took 12 pages of notes on why they knew—not felt—that the Government's proposals would damage the doctor-patient relationship, damage the interests of doctors, particularly in the smaller rundown practices that they are trying to build up, and damage the interests of their patients. They feel that people will have to make long journeys for operations and that there will be no continuity of provision, because, whereas a district health authority may make a contract with Wolverhampton for hip replacement operations one year, the next year somewhere else may be cheaper. For the first time, there will be a money limitation on drug provision. That is already frightening people who require a lot of drugs.

Everyone is worried about the London hospital. That has always been a community hospital, deeply integrated with the local community, but it is now expressing an interest in opting out. Neither the doctors nor the community health council were consulted. The London hospital has expressed an interest in opting out without consultation.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Opting out of what?

Ms. Gordon: Opting out of the Health Service in the long term. [HON. MEMBERS: "Rubbish."] I have met

officials who are already talking about providing operations more cheaply than private hospitals. In the long term, that means opting out of the Health Service.

Mr. Hind: Disinformation.

Ms. Gordon: It is not disinformation. We are destined to have a two-tier Health Service. Hospitals such as the London hospital will start by changing their policies, providing heart transplants and glamorous medicine rather than serving the local community and will eventually opt out of the Health Service.

Mr. Hind: They will not be allowed.

Ms. Gordon: Whether they are allowed to or not, in the meantime local people will have to travel far to obtain the services that they need. If the Government's proposals are put into effect, the London hospital will no longer be a community hospital.

The Inner London education authority has been building new schools and extra classrooms, but east end schools cannot attract teachers. When there was council house building, there was also a key worker scheme, but that no longer exists. Doctors and teachers cannot come to the east end because they cannot afford to buy the houses that are being built there by the speculators whom the LDDC has allowed in.

The hon. Member for Pembroke spoke of teachers being paid by results. Payment by result was abandoned as an uncivilised method of education in the last century. It is rather surprising to hear the last century's ideas being trotted out again as new ones.

The hon. Member suggested that there should be regional agreements on wages. If regional agreements on wages replace national arbitration, teachers will go from areas with poor councils, many problems and deprivation, to the richer areas. Instead of the stability that children need, teachers will be on the move even more than they are now and there will be fewer teachers in Tower Hamlets rather than more. Such policies will damage education in the east end of London.

Again, those policies are designed to create a two-tier system. Just as we shall have a two-tier Health Service with hospitals opting out, so we shall have a two-tier education service, with working-class children given minimum education, as happened before the Education Act 1944. Only a few working-class kids who are more academically able and quicker off the mark will be educated alongside middle-class and rich children. They will have a different kind of education and curriculum. Time will prove me right. That is what the Government's policies are designed to create, when and as they can introduce them. However, they will not be able to do so, because this Government will not last beyond the next election.

In the east end of London, transport is developer-led,which again is not what the east end needs. The docklands light railway was welcome, but it is not safe transport. The doors are not safe, there is nobody at the stations and at the moment it does not even operate at night or during the weekend. I have been told by LDDC officials that the computer system does not work well. The trains still stop at the ghost station of Canary wharf, and no one knows how to prevent them from doing so. Anyone who travels down the A13 will see that transport in the east end is a complete mess. There is a constant snarl-up on that road. There are traffic jams at 9 pm and during the weekends.

Just as the inner cities need an integrated health policy with primary, secondary and local community care implementing the Griffiths report's recommendations, which the Government are so carefully ignoring, so they need an integrated transport policy. The GLC's "Fares Fair" policy was right. That was designed to take people out of their cars and on to public transport. Just as we need more affordable housing, so we need more affordable public transport.

I cannot finish without talking about the environment, about which the Prime Minister talks so much. It is proposed to run a road through Victoria park, the only large park in the east end. Mile End park will be encroached upon. The Tower Hamlets environmental trust has identified 36 small pieces of land, designated as public open space, which are under threat. Such pieces of land are important to those living in flats. They are needed for taking a walk and for walking the dog, and the lives of children centre around them. They are under threat because everything is becoming market-led and the developers have their greedy eyes upon them.

We wanted local jobs and workshops so that people could use their skills to work at local trades. We could have had a riverside walk. This is an historic area. There are places of interest that could have been developed. Instead, there are expensive flats along the riverside, and the are built right up to the river's edge so there can be no riverside walks. No tourist will be able to walk along there from the tower; nor will the local people. Even part of Island gardens on the river front is under threat, as is the King Edward memorial park. The interests of the local people and the environment come second to the market.

More money has been poured into the police. There are many new inspectors and other high officials in the police force, but there are not so many extra men in the lower ranks on the streets to prevent crime. Their number has hardly increased at all.

Local people are the experts. They know what they need and want. They express their wishes, desires and demands through the locally-elected authorities, some of which have been abolished and others of which are being rate-capped so that they have no money to improve their areas.

Local people need affordable rents, affordable transport and local democracy. They do not want the form of dictatorship that is being imposed on them because it is not acting in their interest but in the interest of the profit makers. It has brought no benefits to the local community and it is driving many of them out of the inner cities.

6.20 pm

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): The hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms. Gordon) spoke for over 20 minutes in this comparatively short debate and throughout her speech she presented no new ideas and displayed no vision for the future. Her speech showed that there is no leadership in the Labour party in London or in the inner cities.

I apologise in advance to the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) who I know is keen to make his electioneering speech for the Vauxhall by-election. In view of the amount of time that his hon. Friend the Member for

[Mr. Tony Baldry]

Bow and Poplar occupied, it will not be possible for me to permit him to do that and at the same time make a reasonable speech myself.

In his opening remarks, the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley)—I do not think the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar could have been listening to him—said that one way to improve education in the inner cities would be to introduce regional pay variations and give financial incentives to people to teach in the inner cities. Perhaps it is another failing of Labour Members that they do not listen to the comments of their colleagues.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook painted a picture which had little relationship to reality, so I shall cover some of the background that we should have in mind in this important debate. Unemployment is now at its lowest for 18 years, with a fall of 1 million in the unemployment register since the 1987 election campaign. There has also been a record fall—of 500,000 in the last two years—in the number of long-term unemployed. Indeed, long-term unemployment has fallen faster than total unemployment, and that has been reflected in inner-city areas, where unemployment generally fell by 22 per cent. in the year to March 1989, and in the same year, long-term unemployment in inner-city areas fell by 22 per cent.

During the week, I live in the inner-city area of Lambeth—in the parliamentary constituency of Vauxhall—and I suspect that my hon. Friends and I have done more to represent the people there than has the erstwhile hon. Member for Vauxhall who is set to go elsewhere.

In the inner-city areas we have seen a new enterprise culture, with self-employment on the increase. On average, 500 small firms have set up each week since 1979, many of them in inner-city areas. Unlike the depressing future projected by the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar, the prosperity of the inner cities will turn on competitive businesses earning commercial returns. The entrepreneurs and members of the business community whom she decries because they are coming into inner-city areas are the very people who will generate the prosperity which will provide the jobs for her constituents and those of other hon. Members.

We must continue to encourage private sector development and work to enable inner-city residents to benefit fully from the regeneration of their own neighbourhoods. Since the beginning of March this year, the Government have announced 10 new schools-industry compacts, five new safer cities programmes, three new inner-city task forces and four new initiatives to help inner-city residents to take part in employment training. Compare that with the lack of new ideas in the speeches of Opposition Members.

At last in our inner cities we are beginning to get a grip on ensuring good education in our schools, with a national curriculum, testing assessments and a new academic rigour which is raising standards and encouraging parental input. My young son goes to an inner-city school in Lambeth. It is an indictment of ILEA that vast numbers of black children attending that and other schools in inner-city areas go to supplementary schools on Saturdays. Up till now, it has been felt that the standard of education they received in inner-London schools has been insufficient to meet their needs.

Only now is the Labour party beginning to recognise that black and other parents in inner-city areas want their children to achieve proper standards of literacy and numeracy so that they can compete in the world outside. We are providing the resources to enable them to do that. Spending per pupil increased by 30 per cent. in real terms between 1979-80 and now, the pupil-teacher ratio has improved from 18·9 in 1979 to 17 today, and average class sizes have been falling. That is all good news.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook gave a litany of figures about inner-city crime, but his figures did not reflect the facts. There were falls in recorded crime in practically every metropolitan area last year, and in London, recorded crime was down by 5 per cent. in the 12 months to September 1988. The strength of the metropolitan police force has been increased by 5,550 officers in recent years and a further 300 posts have been approved for 1988-89.

Whatever yardstick one wishes to use—be it developing enterprise culture, improving education and facilities or increasing resources for the police and tackling crime—in all spheres the Conservatives have introduced and are introducing positive, realistic and worthwhile initiatives.

From Opposition Members we hear only a counsel of despair, often unrelated to the facts. For example, in the last week Labour Members have tried to suggest that many of our inner cities are gripped by deep poverty. In fact, the Government are spending almost £50 billion this year, about one third of all Government spending on social security. Real take-home pay for a family on average earnings with two children has gone up by 27 per cent. under Conservative rule. It barely rose under Labour. Tax thresholds have come down, taking large numbers of people out of tax, and people at all levels are better off than they were in 1979.

Those are all facts that the electors of Vauxhall and other inner city constituencies will have good cause to remember. Indeed, I suspect that it will be hard for Labour campaigners to find people in Vauxhall who can say with honesty that they are worse off now in real terms than they were in 1979.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): The hon. Gentleman has been quoting general figures. Lambeth borough council commissioned independent consultants to produce a survey of incomes to show what has happened to earnings in Lambeth over the last 10 years or so. That survey made it clear that the bottom 25 per cent. of the population have suffered a continuing reduction in their real standard of living. Those are incontrovertible figures, produced, as I say, not by the council but by independent consultants. In other words, the poor have got poorer and the rich have got richer, and that is the real truth of the inner cities.

Mr. Baldry: I categorically and emphatically deny that the people of Lambeth or anywhere else in Britain have got poorer in real terms in the last 10 years. The safety net below which nobody can fall has improved dramatically during those years, and that is why the poor of Lambeth as of any other area, are better off.

The hon. Gentleman confuses the position by comparing the standard of living of one section of people with that of another section. We must see that poor people

have a level below which they cannot fall. On that basis, Conservative policies have ensured that everyone in the community—single-parent families, pensioners, the long-term disabled—are all better off in real terms than they were in 1979.

Inner-city recovery is on the way. The cycle of decline has been broken. Eight years of continued economic growth have created a climate in which enterprise can flourish. This year, nearly £3·5 billion of Government measures will help to carry that enterprise and prosperity into inner cities. Those Opposition Members whose response to every problem is the phrase "more money" should take on board that figure of £3·5 billion. Investment is strong. Unemployment is falling. New education and training policies are in place. Recorded crime is down. Our cities are developing a new and positive image. The simple and straightforward truth is that the inner cities are safe in the hands of a Conservative Government.

6.30 pm

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): I agree with members on the Government Front Bench on only two points. First, I agree with the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster that inner-city problems did not begin with a Conservative Government. However, my argument is that those problems became worse under the Conservatives. Secondly, I agree that unemployment has fallen—but it is equally true to say that, in the first five or six years of Conservative Government, unemployment was at a much higher level than under Labour.

In shoving so-called facts across the Chamber at each other, we often risk missing the whole point, which is that we live in a society in which unemployment is liable to increase and decrease at certain times; in which there will be relative poverty and real poverty, and in which people will be much better off at other times. We have not addressed the real problems of the inner cities and the people who live there.

Not all inner-city housing is bad. It is nonsense to say that every inner-city area is full of poor housing. But it does exist, and in some cases there is no housing provision at all. That is true also of city outskirts. Some people living in the inner cities suffer real poverty and from other problems that developed over the years. One of them is high unemployment, which affects not only the ethnic minorities. Problems are also faced by young people of 15 or 16 years of age who have never known a wage packet at the end of the week. They have no idea of the dignity of being employed. It is vital that people have jobs.

The difficulty of solving those problems is that there are two distinct approaches to doing so. The Government believe that they can all be solved by private enterprise, and that if one can only secure private investment and encourage the involvement of business men, that will be sufficient to deal with the situation.

Mrs. Maureen Hicks *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Heffer: The hon. Lady disagrees, but I remember what happened in Liverpool after the riots that took place not only in Toxteth but other cities. The Heseltine proposals involved a combination of private and public enterprise and private and public investment. We all know what happened to that scheme. The majority of the Cabinet turned it down because it did not want public involvement or problems solved partly by public effort.

I am not denying that some good things have been done in Liverpool. I would be damn silly to deny something worth while which offers employment to a few of my constituents. Even minimal employment is better than no employment at all. The garden festival was very nice while it lasted, but the number of real jobs it created was very small. I refer also to the new dock developments. There is a new shopping complex, and the new Liverpool Tate gallery—of which I am much in favour, but some Liverpool people who have seen the exhibits there did not think they were much, and I agree. There is also a new yuppie housing estate. What is really needed are all those developments plus new jobs.

Creating jobs means establishing new industry. How is that to be done? There used to be a system of regional assistance. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Mr. Bevan) claimed that Birmingham had suffered because of Labour incentive schemes that encouraged new business ventures in areas of high unemployment, but that type of incentive is still needed. I go further: there is a need for public ownership and developments so that we can stipulate the location of new industry.

The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mr. Hicks) referred to bed-and-breakfast accommodation. Liverpool has practically solved the problem of bed-and-breakfast families, and was slaughtered for it. Liverpool's Labour councillors were called all the names one could think of for building houses—nice, lovely, semi-detached houses for ordinary people. I am sure that some Conservative Members think that those houses are too good for the working class. The money to build them came not from the Government, because they made massive cuts in local authority grants. Instead, Liverpool council borrowed money from private enterprise at higher rates. Nevertheless, it had an obligation to provide decent accommodation. That policy is being continued under the new Labour administration.

Liverpool has also new sports centres and parks, to provide the city with new lungs. However, much more needs to be done. The hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) claims that we have no new ideas. I can tell him of one new idea that I hope will be adopted when a Labour Government are elected. The first thing that a Labour Government should do is bring together all the local authorities and trade unions in the area—and I do not mind if the employers' organisations and Government Departments are represented as well. They should sit down and decide immediately what is required and how much the Government can provide to help to overcome the problem.

I should have liked to say much more, but I shall conclude by making one more point to the Government. Some of my hon. Friends do not seem to understand why all those wonderful houses were being built in parts of London. Well, I understand it; I understand why they have been built along the line of the docks in Liverpool as well. The Government want to create a yuppie area where they hope that people will vote Tory and get rid of Labour Members of Parliament: their objective is as simple and as silly as that. What they should be doing is acting to meet the real needs of the people in such areas, and my party, if it were in government, would have the policies to do that.

6.40 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): It is a well-known fact that the inner cities were discovered by the Conservative party during the last election campaign. That has been thoroughly chronicled. In next to no time the Prime Minister, with sensible shoes and handbag, was standing on a piece of waste ground in—if I remember correctly—Stockton, announcing its imminent colonisation. I am afraid that I must tell the Government what they are likely to know already—that those who live in those areas are unmoved and probably sceptical.

We learned very little from the Chancellor of the Duchy's speech, except that he has a deep admiration for the politics of Mr. Keva Coombes—which shows a certain breadth of vision—and that he reads the trade supplements thoroughly, albeit with a rather naive enthusiasm.

I want to say a few words about the problems in Scotland, where the scene is perhaps a little different but will nevertheless, I suspect, be familiar to many of my colleagues from south of the border. When the Secretary of State for Scotland makes his speech, I expect that we shall hear a good deal about GEAR—the Glasgow eastern area renewal scheme—and, no doubt, about the merchant city. Those things are, of course, worthy of comment. The GEAR scheme involved public investment of £300 million over nearly a decade. As the Secretary of State knows, the Government have been criticised a good deal for cutting short before its time a scheme started by the Labour Government, but I welcome what was achieved, and what has happened in the merchant city. The partnership between the public and private sectors reflects credit on all who were involved, including the city council.

I hope that we shall not encounter something that has become very familiar in Scottish politics—the somewhat cynical opportunism with which Scottish Office Ministers have dealt with such matters. Double standards are well to the fore. In Scotland, if one brick is laid upon another or if a sod is turned in any part of the country, particularly in an inner city, a junior Minister from the Scottish Office will be there, appropriately enough, to take the plaudits and the credit.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): And the photographs.

Mr. Dewar: Indeed.

Ministers tend to boast about the services provided in inner-city areas, such as education and housing. We are led to believe that all the phenomenal progress is due to the good heartedness and deep belief in high public spending of such unlikely figures as the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth).

Mr. Hind *rose*——

Mr. Dewar: No, I will not give way as I have only a short time in which to speak.

Within days, the same figures are usually being paraded in a slightly different context to illustrate the profligacy and irresponsibility of the same councils. I am glad to see the Minister nodding in cheerful agreement—clearly he has enjoyed some recent examples. The merchant city is certainly an example of inner-city development in Glasgow, but one has only to walk a few hundred yards to find oneself in a very different environment. For reasons that my Scottish colleagues will understand, I have been spending quite a bit of time there recently.

As every hon. Member knows, unemployment in Scotland is far higher than it is in Great Britain as a whole. Seasonally adjusted figures published only a few days ago showed a Scottish unemployment rate of 9·7 per cent. However, much as we may argue about the basis on which those figures are compiled, one fact remains clear—that the Scottish unemployment rate is about 50 per cent. above the national average. In whole wards, not just collections of streets, in the inner cities of Glasgow, and also in Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Dundee, unemployment is as high as 25 or 30 per cent.

I make no apology for mentioning Glasgow, Central, which is very much in the minds of everyone in Scottish politics at present. It is relevant, as it has the fifth highest unemployment rate of all the parliamentary constituencies of Great Britain and the worst in Scotland. It is a classic deprived inner-city area, where such problems are very real, and it has taken its share of the collapse of employment in Scotland. Regional employment changes mean that the number of employed and self-employed people has fallen by 118,000 in the past decade, and many instances have been in the inner cities.

There are more homeless people and more social problems—for instance, the problem of simply maintaining housing stock—and no Government can be complacent about the facts. In 1979, 450,000 claimants and their dependants were in receipt of supplementary benefit. About 830,000 now receive income support. That represents the growth of poverty, and anyone with any knowledge of the demography and social shape of Scotland will know that much of that poverty is concentrated in inner cities, as are the problems of peripheral housing schemes.

If the Minister wishes to see the impact on the health and social life of the population, he should look at "Glasgow: Healthy Cities Project", a position statement published recently by a weighty committee chaired by Dr. Thomson of the Greater Glasgow health board and including—to their credit—a number of the Minister's political friends. There is no doubt that the problem exists and can be seen.

What is disappointing is the Scottish response. We have had "New Life for Urban Scotland", a typical new-style Scottish Office glossy. I can reassure my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) by telling him that it has the merit of containing only one picture of the Secretary of State for Scotland. It dealt largely with the peripheral schemes in Wester Hailes, Castlemilk, Whitfield and Ferguslie park. I make no complaint about that—they have real problems—but there was no mention of the inner cities.

It would be hard to say where the cash is for the inner-cities programme in Scotland—the equivalent of what the Government are claiming to be providing south of the border. Scottish Enterprise is to retain its existing budget—the Housing Corporation budget combined with the Scottish Development Agency budget. There is little evidence that even the substantial £350 million budget of Scottish Homes has not been largely carved out of money that would otherwise have been available for housing in any event.

I cannot go into detail, but I should say that I have looked long and hard for this new money. I have consulted

people who are not in politics, the technicians and practical men who administer such matters, and they have to concede that they cannot point to where it is—not, I believe, because they are blind or lack expertise, but because the new money is simply not there. The damage to the inner cities is being done by the Government's general policies—for instance, the housing policy that has allowed the figure that can be taken into the housing revenue account to fall from £125 million to £3 million, has allowed the contribution for every local authority house in Scotland to be cut from £238 to around £60 and has taken a cumulative total of billions from the rate support grant settlement.

The inner-city areas will be particularly hit by the poll tax, because they are exactly the kind of poverty-stricken areas that will be left to pay a significantly higher percentage of local revenue raised than they did under the previous system. I challenge the Secretary of State to deny that. We have seen the murder of regional policy and regional incentives.

I cannot resist a small competition to which hon. Members might like, in 15 seconds, to produce the answer. I ask the House what Julius Caesar would say if he landed on our shores today. I have the answer, because the Prime Minister told a doubtless astonished Conservative party conference at Perth that he would have no hesitation in saying, "I came, I saw, I invested." I must confess that my only regret is that the Secretary of State did not manage it in Latin.

I recognise that there has been a remarkable change in the Government's approach to Scottish matters over the past few years. It used to be fashionable to abuse the Scots, to tell them that their story was a cautionary tale of the dependency culture and that all their faults were their own fault, but there has been an about-turn. We have invented the economic miracle. We are told that Scotland is the birthplace of Adam Smith, a perfect enterprise economy of which we can all be proud.

It is unfair perhaps to dwell on conference speeches and I have some sympathy with the Secretary of State because it cannot be easy to know what to say to Scottish Tories gathered in Perth. I did not greatly admire his suggestion that my constituents were building frigates like fury or the hopeful suggestion that together we shall climb mountains. That is not in my immediate plans.

What I welcome—I make a serious point here—is the rather tentative suggestion that the Secretary of State is interested in putting peace on the agenda in Scottish politics and building bridges between the Government and the people of Scotland. I do not want to overstate what he said. He described a case for a modest period of consolidation, but against the general background of argument, even that is of some significance. The tragedy was that the next day the Prime Minister arrived and stamped on the Secretary of State, making it clear that any bridges that he might build would quickly be torn down.

Looking at the situation in the inner cities and in the Scottish economy generally, I hope that the Secretary of State did not make that speech simply to deceive. I hope that he meant what he said because it is important to Scotland and to the inner cities and areas of deprivation that we have a change of direction and that there are signs of a change of heart on the part of the Government. The right hon. and learned Gentleman would be doing us a signal service if he showed a certain independence today and indicated that that change of heart will come and that some of the Government's damaging policies will be abandoned.

6.52 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), when he explained to the House why he could not remain throughout the debate, might have undertaken to read the speeches that we have heard this evening because he would have heard not only from my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster but also from four of my hon. Friends a devastating response which must have made the Opposition wonder why they had chosen this subject for debate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Mr. Bevan), who knows Birmingham better even that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, pointed to the massive improvements in the inner city of Birmingham. My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Hicks), in an effective fighting speech, pointed to the priorities for urban policy and the inadequacies of the Opposition. My hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) pointed out that those localities which have had Labour-controlled local authorities for years, which are the highest spending local authorities, are those which seem still to have the most difficult problems, perhaps because of the control that has been exercised on them during those years. My hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) correctly emphasised that only by encouraging the business community to help create prosperity in those localities can one achieve the desired results.

The most interesting and extraordinary remark by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook was his reference to enterprise zones. He suggested that it was only inner-city landlords who had benefited from enterprise zones. I suspect that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) would not agree with that, as his right hon. Friend has clearly not visited Clydebank, which was made an enterprise zone in 1981. Had he done so, he would know that in the first six years after its designation it was not inner-city landlords who benefited—400 new businesses with more than 4,000 new jobs were created in that enterprise zone.

Mr. Dewar: We welcome the progress made in the Clydebank enterprise zone, one third of which falls within my constituency, but does the Secretary of State agree that the main basis for that success has been the work of the Scottish Development Agency and the heavy public investment that has gone into the area?

Mr. Rifkind: It was the work of the Scottish Development Agency with the funds provided by the Government. I am happy to acknowledge that.

I was interested to note that the hon. Member for Garscadden had attached his name to the Opposition motion. At this point, I wish to do something unusual, Madam Deputy Speaker, and refer to the terms of the Opposition motion as judged against the speech by the hon. Gentleman and what has been achieved. The hon. Gentleman may care to read the motion—he has probably not done so up to now, so it would be useful for him to be reminded of it.

[Mr. Rifkind]

The motion refers to

"total neglect of the inner city areas."

Presumably that includes the city of Glasgow. The hon. Gentleman referred to the GEAR project in the east end of Glasgow. The motion that he has signed says that it has led to a "reduction in investment" over the past nine years. The hon. Gentleman confirms that. Does he regard £300 million of Government investment and £200 million of private sector investment in the GEAR area as a reduction in investment?

The Opposition motion refers to

"a decline in the quality of housing."

Does that apply to the GEAR area where 6,000 houses have been either built or improved as a result of the Government's inner urban policy? The motion to which the hon. Gentleman has put his name also refers to the decline in schools. We know that the most controversial issue in Strathclyde at the moment is the attempt of the Labour-controlled authority to close schools, not to keep them open.

When the motion that the hon. Gentleman has signed refers to what is described as

"a deterioration in adequate health care",

does he have in mind Glasgow—the best-funded health authority in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Dewar: The right hon. and learned Gentleman used to have a reputation for being laid back and rather composed. Now tantrums at the Dispatch Box are the order of the day. His intemperate remarks about the closure of schools show that he has not read his own Department's circulars about how he expects education authorities to bring school accommodation into line with the fall in school rolls.

I welcome the right hon. and learned Gentleman's praise for the GEAR project, which was planned and started by the Labour Government. Does he not accept that the impact of the community charge or poll tax, on housing benefit and other benefit changes mean a growth in poverty? Does he not accept that industrial investment in Scotland is now running at a lower rate than in 1979?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman carefully avoided the terms of the motion to which his name is attached. We are not talking about industrial investment in Scotland but about investment in the inner city areas. The hon. Gentleman knows that in GEAR, which is the biggest example of inner-urban investment in the United Kingdom, not only has investment been dramatic, not only has housing been restored and renovated, not only has health care been the most generous in any part of the United Kingdom but, as his own Labour-controlled district council has said, the urban regeneration there is the best example in the United Kingdom of what inner-city regeneration can do.

Let us consider the attitude of the Opposition with regard to inner-urban policy. The hon. Gentleman concentrated his remarks on the city of Glasgow. We all know that there is a great deal of very proper pride in what has been achieved in Glasgow over the past 10 years. I paid a tribute to all those who have been involved, including Glasgow district council, Strathclyde regional council, local residents and the Scottish Office. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would also like to acknowledge that.

If we wish to see who has given the lead in achieving these objectives, the hon. Gentleman might care to mention the fact that the present Conservative Government and the Scottish Office provided the funding for Glasgow's conference and exhibition centres, 50 per cent. of the funding for the Burrell gallery, and all the funding for the Glasgow garden festival as well as designating Glasgow a city of culture for 1990. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to give credit where credit is due, he should bear that in mind.

My hon. Friends have demolished the argument advanced by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, and the hon. Member for Garscadden does not need me to demolish his argument—he has only to read the Opposition motion to realise how inadequate his speech was. On that basis, I invite the House to vote for the Government amendment and to reject the Opposition motion.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:

The House divided: Ayes 194, Noes 288.

Division No. 208] **[7 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*	Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Allen, Graham	Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Anderson, Donald	Dewar, Donald
Armstrong, Hilary	Dixon, Don
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack	Dobson, Frank
Ashton, Joe	Douglas, Dick
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Duffy, A. E. P.
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*	Eadie, Alexander
Barron, Kevin	Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Battle, John	Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Beckett, Margaret	Fatchett, Derek
Beith, A. J.	Faulds, Andrew
Bell, Stuart	Fearn, Ronald
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*	Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Bermingham, Gerald	Fisher, Mark
Bidwell, Sydney	Flannery, Martin
Boateng, Paul	Flynn, Paul
Boyes, Roland	Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Bradley, Keith	Foster, Derek
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Foulkes, George
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*	Fraser, John
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*	Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*	George, Bruce
Buckley, George J.	Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Caborn, Richard	Golding, Mrs Llin
Callaghan, Jim	Gordon, Mildred
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*	Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.	Grocott, Bruce
Canavan, Dennis	Hardy, Peter
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*	Harman, Ms Harriet
Cartwright, John	Haynes, Frank
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*	Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*	Heffer, Eric S.
Clay, Bob	Henderson, Doug
Clelland, David	Hinchliffe, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann	Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Cohen, Harry	Home Robertson, John
Coleman, Donald	Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*	Howells, Geraint
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*	Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Corbyn, Jeremy	Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Cousins, Jim	Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Crowther, Stan	Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Cummings, John	Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Cunliffe, Lawrence	Illsley, Eric
Dalyell, Tam	Ingram, Adam
Darling, Alistair	Janner, Greville
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*	Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*

Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ken Eastham and
Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'th's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*

Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Maclean and
Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments)*:

The House divided: Ayes 281, Noes 195.

Division Number 210] **[7.15 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'l's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh

Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle and
Mr. Mr. David Maclean.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ken Eastham and
Mr. Allen McKay.

Question accordingly agreed to.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House welcomes recent falls in unemployment in the inner cities and the increasing level of investment in their regeneration; notes with approval the growing commitment of the private sector and the improved partnership between the private sector, voluntary organisations and central and local government in tackling inner city problems; and looks forward to continued progress under Action for Cities and other programmes designed to ensure that all parts of the United Kingdom share fully in the increasing prosperity of the nation as a whole.

Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill

[Queen's consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified.]
Order for Third Reading read.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. You may recall that this Bill is due to have its Third Reading tonight, but in Committee it was not discussed on its own. It went in with another Bill that had been given a Second Reading—the North Killingholme Cargo Terminal Bill. That Bill is missing from tonight's debate.

Is it in procedural order for this to happen, because it means that we cannot have a full debate on the Committee's proceedings?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I think that I can help the hon. Gentleman and the House on this matter. He is quite correct to say that the two Bills were committed to the same Private Bill Committee and that only one of them is now before the House; but I cannot speculate on why the North Killingholme Cargo Terminal Bill has not yet been reported by the Committee. There is no procedural impediment to the House proceeding with the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill.

If the hon. Gentleman has arguments to deploy about why this Bill should not be read a Third time today, I am sure that he will advance them during the debate.

7.29 pm

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

The Committee has considered the Bill and——

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. On a previous occasion when the Bill was being debated, I asked on a point of order whether it was hybrid, and Mr. Deputy Speaker made a ruling, with the aid of the Clerk, who had gone through the Bill and was convinced that it fell within the private Bill procedure. Both Mr. Deputy Speaker and the Chairman of Ways and Means accepted that it was in order because the Clerk was acting for and on behalf of the Speaker's Office. One man made that decision, a man who was not a Member of Parliament, and as far as I am aware, they crucified the only man who never made a mistake.

Even at this late stage I ask you to rule, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the Bill is a hybrid for the following reason. The Committee's report said:

> "In effect, we have been invited to make a strategic decision affecting UK energy policy, and one which affects also Britain's general policy on trade . . . The Committee does not consider that this is an appropriate decision to be taken by a small Committee".

That point was agreed by both the promoters of the Bill and the people who were opposing it, Mr. Feickert, Mr. Morrison and Sir Frank Layfield. It concluded:

> "The decisions on energy and trade policy we have been invited to take are, in our opinion, national decisions which are the ultimate responsibility of the national Government."

I draw your attention, Madam Deputy Speaker, to the fact that, if a Bill affects a national interest, it must be hybrid and a Bill that the Government should be introducing. Therefore, I ask you to rule at this late stage, in view of the conclusions made by the Committee, that the Bill is hybrid and therefore should not be debated.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I can confirm that the Bill is not hybrid. Its provisions fall within our private Bill procedure. I have read carefully the report of the Committee and I am prepared to allow a wide debate on Third Reading so that hon. Members may refer to the report.

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Will you explain why the amendments that have been tabled have not been selected? The House is entitled to such an explanation, because many of these amendments are important. I am aware that the Bill was not amended in Committee, but that should not preclude hon. Members from moving amendments on Third Reading. I would welcome an explanation.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I think I can clear this matter up. Had there been no points of order and had I been allowed to make a statement, I would have done so on behalf of Mr. Speaker, who has examined with great care the verbal amendments tabled to the Bill. He is satisfied that all of them either alter the effect of the Bill and are therefore out of order, or are not necessary for the correction of the Bill, which is the purpose of verbal amendments. Therefore, he has not selected them. Furthermore, in accordance with practice, Mr. Speaker has not selected the six-months amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) and others.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. You will recall that, about three Fridays ago, there was an amendment to a Third Reading. It came about because the Government had passed on to a Back-Bench Tory Member a Bill that is called, in parliamentary terms, an "off-the-shelf" Bill. The hon. Gentleman did not know what was in it, and apologised for that. He was given the Bill, it was nodded through its Second Reading and not amended in Committee and then we came to Third Reading three Fridays ago. The Bill, the Control of Smoke Pollution Bill, was aimed at extending the areas where smoke control could be applied by local authorities and central Government, but it had the wrong long title, which was aimed at repealing all the Clean Air Acts.

The Government were very embarrased, as was the hon. Member who introduced the Bill. If only he had known what was in the Bill. As a result, at this embarrassing moment, the Clerks and Mr. Speaker together were able to find a way around the matter. Because it was not the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill, which will put tremendous pressure on the balance of trade, the Government went along——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Skinner: Just a minute. There is no need to start shuffling yet.

The Government went along and changed the title of the Bill on Third Reading, and they thought they could do this on the nod. However, one or two of us found out about it. This process had not been used for 19 years. The amendment did not result because somebody was earnestly trying, like my hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse), to amend a

Bill. It was because the Government and the Back-Bench Member had presented the Bill without its proper title. The Government managed to find a way around that.

I find it odd in this place, where we are supposed to be looking after the interests of everybody, that when on Third Reading, we table 20-odd amendments that are sensible and will change the nature of the Bill, they are swept aside by some ruling or another. However, if the Government make a cock-up of it, they are able to get away with an amendment on Third Reading.

As it happens, the Bill will have to go to another place, which may amend it. However, I say that this Bill should go back. As to all the more than 20 amendments to the Bill that have been tabled, Mr. Speaker should be called upon to enact the ruling that he gave three Fridays ago.

While I am about it, I want to know whether all those 70 Tory Members of Parliament who have connections with firms that trade in South Africa, will declare their interest. I want to know whether they will stand up and tell us how many free trips to South Africa they have had, how many are members of the goose-stepping tendency, how many are representing Johannesburg. We should know, because the Bill will allow South African coal to come into this country, cause a massive burden on the balance of payments and line the pockets of Tory Members.

Madam Deputy Speaker: On the second point, I am sure that all hon. Members who have an interest will declare it. On the first point, I am certain that the hon. Member will understand that I have no authority to alter or vary Mr. Speaker's decision, which I am sure the House will uphold and respect.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. As the occupier of the Chair, you have to ensure that justice is done. As I understand it, on a public Bill, if there is a tied vote in Committee and the Chair of the Committee has to give a casting vote, that more or less guarantees that the matter is considered again when it returns to the Floor of the House, because it would be wrong for the person occupying the Chair to decide the details of a Bill.

Throughout the Committee proceedings on this Bill, the votes were tied to two each way with one of those two people acting as Chair and giving a casting vote. As I understand it, in those circumstances it is reasonable for the issues then to be further considered by the House. None of the amendments has been selected, so the second casting vote of the Chair has deprived the House of the opportunity to debate all the issues that were decided in Committee by that vote.

I understand that the promoters of the Bill went so far as to plead with the Committee that there should be no amendments so as to avoid a Report stage, when the House would have the opportunity properly to scrutinise the issues on which he Committee decided. That is a misuse of parliamentary proceedings. One individual should not be able, by casting his vote in the Committee, to ensure that the House does not have an opportunity to debate amendments that would be in order had one amendment been accepted in Committee.

Therefore, I ask you, Madam Deputy Speaker, to rule on the way in which the casting vote was used in Committee, not only to avoid the issues being defeated in Committee, but to deprive the House of the opportunity of considering the Bill on Report, and therefore the opportunity to question the way in which that hon. Member cast his vote. That seems a very odd procedure. I realise that a special Committee is examining procedures on private Bills, but it seems unique for an hon. Member to use a second casting vote to deprive the entire House of the opportunity to debate any of the amendments. That raises serious issues about the sovereignty of this country and Parliament over whether the import of coal should be decided in that way. I ask you, Madam Deputy Speaker, to rule that an hon. Member cannot use a casting vote to deny the House the opportunity to debate certain issues.

Madam Deputy Speaker: We have to deal with the procedures of the House as they exist, and if we need to amend them, so be it. However, I cannot deal with hypothetical situations. Extremely valuable debating time is being used up. I know that many hon. Members, most of whom are in the Chamber now, wish to speak in the Third Reading debate. I hope that Members who raise points of order will bear that in mind.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. We all recognise your difficulty, in that, Mr. Speaker having ruled, you cannot set aside that ruling, whatever new points have been raised by my hon. Friends the Members for Belper and for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett). It is quite possible that, in reaching his conclusion not to select any of the amendments, Mr. Speaker did not have in mind the argument mounted by my hon. Friend the Member for Belper—[HON. MEMBERS: "Bolsover."] I seldom apologise at the Dispatch Box, but in this case I really should go down on my knees and apologise to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner)—and my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish, because we all understand that the overriding requirement on anyone exercising a casting vote from the Chair is that he casts that vote in a way which enables the debate to continue and does not curtail it.

Since you are in no position to overrule Mr. Speaker's rulings, it might be helpful if you were to suspend the sitting and ask Mr. Speaker to consider the matters that have been raised and rule on whether the debate should go ahead.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Nothing has been said to make that necessary. The Bill is in very good order and the House would do well to begin the debate.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I shall take a point of order from Dr. Clark, which I hope is a point of order and not a point that has developed in Committee.

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): It most certainly is a point of order. I take great offence at the comments made by the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett), who implied that I used a casting vote improperly in Committee. I would not have raised this point of order had you defended my use of the casting vote, Madam Deputy Speaker, but since you have not done so, it is essential that I defend myself. The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish, probably by mistake, said that I used two casting votes on the same issue——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope all hon. Members will understand that the debate has nothing whatsoever to do with what occurred in Committee. We

[Madam Deputy Speaker]

have a Third Reading debate before us this evening, and according to our Standing Orders that is the only thing that we can debate.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. We would be wise if we now proceeded with that Third Reading debate. Mr. Hardy.

Dr. Michael Clark *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I shall do my best to take all points of order in turn. I have called Mr. Hardy.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I have three points of order, but as one is of substantial length it might be better accommodated in my speech. As you have said, the House is eager to start this wretched debate.

My first point of order is that I went to the Vote Office a few moments ago to obtain the *Hansard* for 23 June last year. As you will recall, the Second Reading debate on the Bill took place on 11 May and 23 June last year. I needed to look up something in regard to the report of the second day of the Second Reading on 23 June, only to find that that *Hansard* is out of print. It is hardly reasonable for the House to debate the Third Reading of the Bill when the *Hansard* for the Second Reading is not available.

My second point of order concerns amendments on Third Reading. When I looked into the matter, I discovered that oral amendments had to be presented some days in advance and had to appear on the Order Paper. I do not challenge that ancient and historic practice. However, I understand that sometimes in certain circumstances, verbal and oral amendments can be tabled. Outside the House, there may seem to be little difference between verbal and oral amendments, but there is a difference, and as none of our oral amendments has been accepted, can any verbal amendments be presented, considered or accepted on Third Reading? I hope that you can advise the House on both my points of order.

Madam Deputy Speaker: No manuscript amendments can be accepted and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman understands my point about Mr. Speaker looking very carefully at the verbal amendments which were tabled and ruling them out. On his first point of order, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman or any other hon. Members might have found the *Hansard* in the Library, but I am sure his point will be noted.

Dr. Michael Clark: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. My point of order is very brief. When chairing that Committee, I acted within the powers that existed for the Committee to use. I took my responsibilities seriously. I greatly resent the comments made by Opposition Members and I would greatly appreciate it if you, Madam Deputy Speaker, will confirm that the casting vote was properly used.

Madam Deputy Speaker: There is no doubt whatsoever that the Chairman of that Committee acted properly and used his casting vote in a very proper manner.

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. You have ruled that we should not discuss anything that took place in Committee but you are required to give us guidance before the debate proceeds, as a very unusual procedure took place. Although we have the Committee report, in its wisdom the Committee has presented a special report to Parliament. I believe that the House should know the standing of that special report to Parliament in our debate, as that report is unique. If I catch your eye later, I might make some comments on why it is unique.

Since the ruling was given that no amendments were to be considered—the House respects the fact that Mr. Speaker has given his guidance—a new light has been cast on the debate, which will proceed as a consequence of the special report. I want your guidance, Madam Deputy Speaker. What standing does the special report have? Without going into the merits of the special report—although we may do later on—to some extent it says to the House that we should not have been dealing with the matter in any case. That is a good reason why the amendments should have been allowed to be considered, why the debate should be suspended and why we should proceed no further.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman's point is a matter for debate. He may have missed hearing me say earlier that the special report produced for us by the Committee can form part of this debate.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Last year, when the Housing Bill was on Report, Mr. Speaker gave a ruling. When over 170 Government amendments were tabled, including new clauses and substantial amendments to change the Bill in relation to ballots on housing action trusts, Mr. Speaker gave a ruling, after considerable debate, points of order and interventions from both Front Benches, that he would accept such substantive amendments on Report, and the debate subsequently took place. That seems to run contrary to his decision on our amendments tonight, which has curtailed the ability of Back Benchers to consider primary legislation. That is an affront to the House and especially to hon. Members with constituencies that will be substantially affected by the Bill. Mr. Speaker should come back to the House and reconsider his previous ruling.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has referred to a wholly different situation. Only in the rarest of circumstances are amendments taken on Third Reading, with which we are now dealing. I hope that the House will now proceed with Third Reading.

Mr. Michael Brown: I therefore commend the Bill to the House.

7.51 pm

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): We have just heard a substantial discussion on the role of the Committee and the way in which decisions were taken in that Committee on the casting vote of the chairman. There is no doubt that that was a blatant political decision by the Conservative Members who served on the Committee. If the Government wanted the Bill, they should have introduced it themselves and should not have abused the private Bill procedure. When the Bill went into Committee, it was as clear as daylight what the result would be. The two key votes on the Bill were decided by the casting vote of the

Chairman. I do not know what the Chairman's position is on a private Bill. Should he intervene in this debate? I would welcome your guidance, Madam Deputy Speaker, in that regard.

I speak in opposition to the Bill not as an hon. Member representing a mining constituency, but as representing taxpayers and an inner-city area, which will be affected directly by the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) referred a few moments ago to the balance of payments deficit afflicting us at present. It is worth reminding the House that the deficit is running at about £14·4 billion. The Bill will add to the deficit. We shall have imports of coal from areas to which the Labour party is politically opposed, such as South Africa and parts of south America. Polish coal will be imported and we are opposed to that as a basis for breaking the British mining industry and contributing to the balance of payments deficit.

The Bill will also directly affect the electricity supply industry. We have been told clearly that with privatisation, the electricity industry's previous commitment to take virtually the whole of its coal from British coalfields will be dropped. We know that at present, the electricity supply industry takes between 75 per cent. and 80 per cent. of all coal produced in the United Kingdom. If that commitment is no longer there, what will be the effect on the British coal industry? What will be the effect on the areas that are supposed to be rich in coal and which have pits with a long life? I am thinking of vast areas of Nottinghamshire.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Even though we have excellent pits in my constituency in Nottinghamshire, we have almost 17 per cent. unemployment in the Worksop travel-to-work area. If the Bill is passed, that figure will double or treble. The Government have withheld permission for the West Burton power station until the Bill is passed. If the Government are to have power stations, they intend that they be run on the cheap coal about which my right hon. Friend is talking.

Mr. Orme: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention because he represents an area such as I have described. There are Conservative Members who represent parts of Nottinghamshire who happen to be here at present. They were elected—for whatever wrong reasons—to represent their constituents. It cannot be denied that they represent constituents who will be directly affected by the Bill.

We are debating tonight not a narrow issue of people trying to protect jobs—valid as that is within their own community—but an issue that has a direct bearing on the economy of the United Kingdom. We are debating not a small development, but an aspect of the United Kingdom economy which will have lasting effects. I know from reports that the proposals strike at the heart of Britain's coal industry and coal-fired generating capacity. Seven major power stations lie within 50 miles of the mouth of the Humber. Those stations took almost 37 million tonnes of coal from British Coal in 1987-88. Half the entire Central Electricity Generating Board coalburn is within 100 miles of the proposed development. The Nottingham power stations of Cotham and West Burton are the most vulnerable to imports through the Humber, but at import levels of 4 million to 5 million tonnes per annum, Eggborough, Ferrybridge, High Marnham and Thorpe Marsh will also be receiving foreign coal.

What did we hear from the Government about the mining industry during the miners' strike? They said that they wanted an efficient industry and that, although the future would be painful and many pits would have to shut, the pits that were to remain open were promised that Eldorado was round the corner and that they would have a rosy future. However, now—only a short time after the Government made those pronouncements—we are seeing the very pits and the miners who were praised by the Government being thrown on the scrap heap by their policies. What sense is there in such a policy? What sense in a country that is self-sufficient in coal? What is the sense in turning our backs on an industry that we shall need in the latter part of this century and in the next?

My hon. Friends who come from the coal industry do not need me to tell them the answers because they are fully aware that once an area has had its coal production removed, and once pits have been closed, it is impossible to reopen them and that fresh proposals and fresh developments would be needed.

Mr. Redmond: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for making that important point. Because of the problems of gas and water, the Coal Board still has to leave a significant safety margin before it can exploit any coal from exhausted pits in which all the seams have been worked, or rather from pits that deemed to have passed their useful life or which the Coal Board deem are not making sufficient profit. It is not just a question of reopening pits or of sinking new shafts in close proximity. The danger is that not only has the pit been stopped, but the coal around it has, in effect, been sterilised.

Mr. Orme: I thank my hon. Friend, with his background and expertise, for making clear exactly what would happen in such an area.

The proposals in the Bill would most directly threaten collieries in the east midlands, Yorkshire and County Durham. They go as wide as that, as I am sure that my hon. Friends who represent those areas will acknowledge. Those areas have already paid a heavy price for British Coal's rationalisation and restructuring programme. However, such communities now face the loss of their more efficient and more productive pits, many of which have received substantial investment in recent years.

Mr. Barron: From the examples that we have seen in the past, will my right hon. Friend confirm the multiplying effect? In the constituency of the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart), who is in his place, Blidworth colliery has recently closed although it still has 40 million tonnes of coal reserves. A £30 million investment programme has just been completed there under the "Plan for Coal", yet its shafts were filled in five weeks ago because British Coal said that it did not want it any more. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the multiplying effect will affect many other areas if these proposed ports go ahead?

Mr. Orme: I was just about to come to a point about the collieries and the effect that the Bill will have on them. Over 25 collieries in the central and north-eastern coalfields have been identified as at risk from the Humber ports. Up to 10 pits will be displaced by 4 million to 5 million tonners, and at least 15 pits will be closed by the 10-million tonners. Even allowing for the wave of redundancies that was announced recently by British Coal,

[Mr. Orme]

24,000 miners' jobs are at risk. I advise those who are sponsoring the Bill that they are throwing skilled people on the scrap heap—*[Interruption.]* Yes, some people may laugh about it, but Opposition Members are not laughing. We are talking about communities, and I shall deal later with one community that will be affected by the changes that will flow from the proposals.

The coalfield economies are highly dependent on the coal industry and it is realistic to use a multiplier of two to assess the knock-on effects. Every colliery job that is lost will lead to one more loss in other sectors. If 15 collieries close, the total impact will be more than 30,000 job losses. That is what I am saying to those from the east and west midlands, from Lancashire and from the north-east. Indeed, that effect will stretch as far as the Welsh and Scottish coalfields. The coal industry will be weakened.

Like many of my hon. Friends, I lived through the miners' strike. I was an energy spokesman and heard the Government's arguments, which were, "We have a prosperous industry and if we concentrate on the prosperous and long-life pits and if investment is given to those areas, we will see not only a prosperous industry, but jobs, good production and good wages." However, at the heart of the current argument is the fact that people are being threatened with pit closures because of cheap coal being brought into the United Kingdom.

That importation of cheap coal will have a special impact on the coal-producing regions of Yorkshire. If new coal import facilities are provided on the Humber, their natural catchment areas will be the power stations in the Aire valley and in the lower Trent valley, which are now served largely by collieries in the Nottingham and Yorkshire coalfields.

If my hon. Friends from the Doncaster area will allow me to trespass on their constituencies, I shall deal specifically with the Bill's impact on that area. As I am sure my hon. Friends will confirm, the six collieries operating in the Doncaster metropolitan borough area all produce coal for use by local power stations. Coal from Rossington colliery is used at the Drax power station; coal from Brodsworth, Markham Main and Hatfield is used at Thorpe Marsh power station; and coal from the Askern Main and Bentley collieries is used at Eggborough power station. All the pits in the Doncaster borough area could be at risk from the importation of cheap coal. As my hon. Friends can confirm, we are talking about prosperous pits.

Reference to the Doncaster economy shows that the area already has severe economic problems which are the legacy of an association with the coal mining industry in the past century. Those problems include an unemployment rate which is nearly double the average for Great Britain as a whole.

Mr. Redmond: My hon. Friend has made a valid point because the Rossington pit has produced 1 million tonnes of coal so far this year and is turning in a hell of a profit. I wonder whether those who are sponsoring the Bill understand the poverty and despair of a pit village once the centre of its life has disappeared. Is their concept of poverty the same as that of the Secretary of State for Social Security? I cannot tell the House what constituency he represents. I do not think that he lives in a constituency in this country, as he has not yet met poverty. The sponsors of the Bill cannot have met poverty, or they would not have sponsored it.

Mr. Orme: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention. I am referring to an area with which he is familiar to show the effects upon one area. We can talk globally, but sometimes it is difficult to grasp the full effect. The closure of any of the remaining collieries in the Doncaster borough will have a dramatic effect on the local community and will exacerbate an already serious problem.

The Askern community is an example of an area that is dependent on one traditional industry and the problems that will arise if a colliery is closed down. Other mining communities are in a similar position. Askern is within the Doncaster area. The Doncaster metropolitan borough council wishes to make known the likely severe economic and social consequences that will arise if the Bill is passed, and it has petitioned hon. Members to that effect.

The Doncaster metropolitan borough forms part of South Yorkshire. It has a population of 290,000 and an area of 225 square miles. The coal mining industry in that area includes the Bentley, Askern, Thorne, Armthorpe, Rossington and Mexborough collieries. Most of the area's economic problems stem from its narrow economic base. Its economic base is narrow because it was built on coal, and it still needs coal and depends on it. One cannot say that the collieries are not producing efficiently or have no life. In other parts of the world they would be regarded as prosperous. They are being sacrificed so that cheap coal can be imported into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Skinner: Cheap for how long?

Mr. Orme: My hon. Friend asks a good question.

Mr. Skinner: A good analogy is the 1960s, when we were told that there was a lot of cheap oil. People said, "We will replace the dear coal in Britain. We want to get miners out of the pits. We will shut the pits, as we have all that cheap oil in the middle east." After about 10 or 15 years, there was a change in the middle east, the price of oil quadrupled and miners were suddenly wanted again. All the talk about cheap imports should be regarded against that background. As soon as other countries get a grip on the energy industry in this country, they will do what was done with the oil industry.

Mr. Orme: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. When such people break the power of British industry, they will be in a position to extract from Britain what they want at the time, especially if we are dependent on coal imports. Would any other major industrialised nation, with the oil, gas and coal resources that we have, turn its back on its wealth and say, "We will leave it in the ground"?

I have been endeavouring to illustrate the economic problems that face small areas such as Askern. It is worth noting that, in many areas, the mining industry employs a high proportion of the local work force. Although efforts have been made to broaden their industrial bases, the economic prosperity of such areas is still substantially tied to developments in the coal mining industry. In 1984, the latest year for which figures are available, the industry employed 16 per cent. of the work force in the Doncaster metropolitan borough area, compared with 1·1 per cent. throughout Great Britain.

Mr. Michael Welsh (Doncaster, North): Askern is a special case. It will be bumped if the Bill is passed. It is a special case for me also because I lived at Askern, and my father was killed in a pit there in 1935. Askern means a lot to me. Also, 73 per cent. of its male population works at Askern pit. There just ain't any more work. In the summer of 1987, 190-odd kiddies left school, and only 44 got jobs. Those people live in a beautiful area and they should be looked after. Any hon. Member who would introduce a Bill to close that quarry has no compassion. If hon. Members have no compassion, they should not sit in this Chamber and talk about politics.

Mr. Orme: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention and for the knowledge that he brings to the House. I regret the tragedies that he has seen in that area. I referred to Askern as an example of what happens to a community when a major industry closes down.

I live in and represent the Salford constituency in the Greater Manchester area in the north-west of England. We in that area have seen coal, steel and engineering virtually disappear. As I said only the other night in a debate on the manufacturing industry, our community was a major engineering area. It was almost within throwing distance of the start of the industrial revolution. Having seen those industries disappear, we have seen rising unemployment, despite the alleged improvement in unemployment figures. There is still large-scale male unemployment—never mind female unemployment—in inner-city wards in my constituency. If we proceed with the Bill tonight and it reaches the statute book, the effects which have been felt in Doncaster will be felt in Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire.

Mr. McCartney: My right hon. Friend has referred to colliery closures in Lancashire. The last colliery in my constituency since the miners' strike is now to be closed.

In addition, the support industries and mining technology industries, including the long-wall mining technology industry in my constituency—which includes Gullick Dobson—have suffered hundreds of redundancies because the deep-mining industry in Britain has been run down. We risk losing that industry completely. At the moment there is an expansion in the world coal industry of which we cannot take advantage because this Government's policies have disrupted the home market.

Mr. Orme: My hon. Friend is aware that imported cheap coal will have the same effect in Lancashire as it will have in Nottinghamshire and elsewhere.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): My hon. Friend is talking about areas being run down. He should consider the Barnsley coalfield which used to be one of the most prosperous in the country. I had 13 collieries in my constituency; I now have none. We must also consider the fact that we brought men down from Scotland and Durham to work in our collieries. The collieries which are now in danger, including Darfield, Houghton, Grimethorpe and Denby Grange are the only collieries left in the Barnsley coalfield in which hundreds of immigrant miners from other areas made their lives and married the girls. We have an obligation to them. Will my right hon. Friend consider the miners who might be made redundant?

Mr. Orme: I acknowledge the wealth of experience which my hon. Friend brings to this debate. He is absolutely correct: what he describes will happen if cheap coal is imported.

I am advised that many of my colleagues want to take part in the debate, and I will therefore be brief.

Mr. Ashton: My right hon. Friend is chairman of the parliamentary Labour party. The Labour party is undergoing a review of its policies on which we will fight the next general election. I hope that the people listening and the sponsors of the Bill will understand the consequences. I hope that we will send a message loud and clear that when the Labour party wins the next general election, these ports will not see the light of day. They are wasting their time laying down the foundations and spending money even if the Bill receives its Third Reading.

Mr. Orme: There is no doubt about where the Labour party stands on this issue. We are completely opposed to the Bill. We will not see these proposals implemented.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Will the right hon. Gentleman clarify this point for me? If the ports have been constructed and are operating when the next general election is held, will a future incoming Labour Government shut them down?

Mr. Orme: We would not allow the cheap importation of coal through those ports. That is a categorical pledge to the House.

I could have quoted more instances of local areas which would be affected by the Bill. Hon. Members are aware that the Bill will not help British industry. It will be against the interests of the coal mining industry and of the economy as a whole. We should not proceed with the Bill, and I hope that the House will take that decision this evening.

8.24 pm

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): I want to begin by referring to a comment made by the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) who asked whether it was usual for Committee Members to speak in a Third Reading debate. I inquired into that and was advised that as a general rule Committee Members did not speak in Third Reading debates. I discovered that it was a general convention, not a rule, that all Committee Members decided jointly that they would abstain from speaking in debates following Committee meetings. We agreed in Committee that we would not speak during the carry-over motion for this Bill, but when we discussed what should happen on Third Reading Labour members of the Committee decided that they wanted to speak because they were, rightly, the most informed people in the House with regard to the Bill.

I am sure that the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall) and his colleagues will confirm that they wanted to speak. As the convention was not a strict convention, but could be modified according to the wishes of the Committee, we agreed that we would, if called, put our points of view on Third Reading. At the request of Labour members of the Committee, we agreed that each of us would speak if called.

Mr. Redmond: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for being so kind and considerate to the Labour members of

[Mr. Redmond]

the Committee, but why was he so tolerant on that occasion? Why did he not use his casting vote to rule that they could not speak?

Dr. Clark: I want to consider another point made by the right hon. Member for Salford, East with regard to influence that might have been brought to bear on to Members on the Committee, particularly Conservative Members.

Mr. Eadie: Since the hon. Gentleman has decided to take part in the debate, he must take part in what I would call the rough and tumble of debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) asked him a fair question. The hon. Gentleman said that the Labour members of the Committee were the best informed about the Bill. If he concedes that they are the best informed, why did he vote against them in Committee?

Dr. Clark: I said that the Labour Members said that Committee members were the most informed Members of the House in respect of this Bill. It would be wrong to deny the most informed Members of the House the opportunity to speak and to present their views.

I will present my views very briefly and I imagine that the hon. Member for Bradford, North will try to present his views. It would be wrong for the hon. Member for Bradford, North to keep quiet when he has heard 26 days of evidence on the Bill. He must wish to present some of his views and findings to the House. I conceded that he had a good point and we agreed jointly that we would speak. I believe that I have answered the point.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): I am grateful that my hon. Friend has decided to speak tonight. The House will be aware that on an earlier occasion and again tonight, often from sedentary positions, my hon. Friend's honour has been called into question. There have been comments that he has an interest. I know that the vast majority of hon. Members know my hon. Friend to be honourable. In his best interests, perhaps he should try to show in his speech before he considers the Bill just what is this rather strange and tenuous interest of which he has been accused.

Dr. Clark: I will gladly answer my hon. Friend's point. I did not declare my interest at the beginning of my speech because I did not believe that I had one, but I will elaborate on the point.

Mr. Barron: The hon. Gentleman is the only Member who took a Government Bill through a Committee but did not get a ministerial salary.

Dr. Clark: If the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) listens, he will discover that I do not have much of an interest to declare. The Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill and the North Killingholme Cargo Terminal Bill were taken at the same time. An hon. Member said that I had an interest which I should declare because one of the two joint sponsors of the North Killingholme Cargo Terminal Bill was a subsidiary of a company called Simon Engineering. Another subsidiary of Simon Engineering was a member of a trade association to which I am parliamentary adviser. It so happens that we are not today discussing the North Killingholme Cargo Terminal Bill but the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill. I have no connection, however tenuous or contrived, with any interests in that Bill. It might also interest hon. Members to know that I voted against the North Killingholme Cargo Terminal Bill going through unamended, so I do not know how they can accuse me of having a biased interest. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for asking about my interest in this matter.

I declare two other interests. I declare an interest in that I was born, brought up and went to school in Nottinghamshire, and I went to school with many coal miners' sons. Some of my own family worked in the pits in Manton and Bevercotes, so I declare an interest in the coal mining industry and in making sure that it thrives in my home county. I also declare an interest in Lincolnshire, where other members of my family live. My grandfather came from there and all my cousins live there. I therefore declare an interest in wanting Lincolnshire to be prosperous, and the Bill will help to achieve that.

Mr. Hardy: I agree with the hon. Gentleman in one respect at least. As Chairman of the Committee, it may be unusual for him to speak, but it may be appropriate in this debate, as he will recall that his Committee struck a serious note about the consequences for the British mining industry of the imports that we are debating in the special report provided by the Committee. I expected the hon. Member for Briggs and Cleethorpes, (Mr. Brown) to comment in his speech on the serious note that that Committee struck, but all we had was sniggering, brief, arrogant introduction, without a word of justification and without a word of observation on that serious report. I am pleased that the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) has this chance to comment on that report in view of the negligence or hypocrisy of the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes, who failed to do so.

Dr. Clark: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. My speech, which I hope will be short, revolves around that precise point—the importance of the special report.

The right hon. Member for Salford, East said that this was a political Bill, probably sponsored or influenced by the Government or the Conservative party. I wish to state categorically that before sitting on the Committee I had no contact with my party Whips. No approach was made to me during that Committee, which sat from October to February, and there has been no contact since. *[Interruption.]* I say in all seriousness and on my honour that there was no approach by my party Whips before, during or after the sittings of the Committee. Lest there be any confusion, I also state that there was no approach by Ministers or any office of the Conservative party or the Government before, during or after the Committee sittings.

It is generally accepted on both sides of the House that when a promoter, in this case my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown), is anxious to get his Bill through the House, it is usual for him to circulate his hon. Friends to see whether they will support the Bill on Third Reading. Whether or not my hon. Friend has done that—I suspect that he has—I have had no request from him to vote for the Bill today and I suspect that he has not sent any such request to other members of the Committee.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): The hon. Gentleman tells us about his family background and talks about his honour, but there is a general view among

Opposition Members that the hon. Gentleman protests too much. The hon. Gentleman's party is determined to get the Bill through and its promoter makes a habit of going to South Africa and, disgracefully, does not speak properly.

The hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark), despite all his piousness, tells us that he had something to do with the North Killingholme Cargo Terminal Bill, which my hon. Friends—many of whom have long experience—feel should have led him to say that he would not chair the Committee due to his deep interest in the Bill. I am at a loss to understand how an hon. Member so deeply embedded in a cause could have chaired the Committee. Two Bills have been divided and there is something sick and wrong going on here tonight. Many of us believe that it should be looked into before the Bill proceeds any further.

Dr. Clark: I thought that it would be a mistake to give way to the hon. Gentleman. I did not say that I had an interest in the North Killingholme Cargo Terminal Bill. I explained the accusations that were made against me. I did not declare an interest.

Mr. Skinner: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Clark: I shall give way if the hon. Gentleman is brief.

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Gentleman should really come clean and explain to the House that he is a paid parliamentary adviser to the British Chemical Engineering Contractors Association, a subsidiary of which in Hull is one of the promoters of the Bill. If the hon. Gentleman had any decency he would not be taking any part in the proceedings on the Bill.

On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in view of what the hon. Gentleman has had to say and what he has left out, I believe that proceedings should be brought to a halt.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I hope that the House will not impugn the motives of members of the Committee who sat for many hours and produced a special report which is before the House. The House would be well advised to discuss the merits of the Bill and the special report which came from the Committee.

Dr. Clark: I must respond to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). Once again he is totally wrong.

Mr. Skinner: No, I am not.

Dr. Clark: The hon. Gentleman has got it completely wrong.

Mr. Skinner: It is in the Register of Members' Interests, but that does not say how much money the hon. Gentleman gets.

Dr. Clark: The Bill is promoted by Associated British Ports which, so far as I know, has nothing whatever to do with Simon Engineering.

Mr. Skinner: Simon Carves.

Dr. Clark: It has nothing whatever to do with Simon Engineering or Simon Carves. As usual, the hon. Gentleman is getting it all backwards and has not the integrity to try to speak the truth when accusing other hon. Members of impropriety.

It was generally agreed in Committee that, had it not been for the coal issue, the Bill, promoted by Associated British Ports, would probably have gone through Committee and the House largely unopposed. Associated British Ports wanted facilities to import iron ore, other chemicals and raw materials necessary for industry in Lincolnshire and the north of England, and to export steel, cereals and finished products.

It was also clearly stated that Associated British Ports needed a larger facility on the Humber if it was to compete with Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Antwerp. If it did not have larger facilities it was feared that our port industry would decline even further than it has done so far. The Committee was sympathetic to extending Britain's ports to make sure that we were not dependent on continental ports and break cargoes from the continent to Britain. It is therefore fair to say that had it not been for the coal issue there would have been little opposition in Committee and perhaps in the House.

British Coal was one of the petitioners against the Bill. There were many others—local authorities, the National Union of Mineworkers and the National Union of Railwaymen, but all of those wanted to reject the Bill in total. British Coal wished to make an amendment to the effect that no coal should be brought in through the port until 1996, by which time British Coal would have managed to increase its productivity still further, reduced its production costs and generally got its cost of coal down closer to the price of cheap coal on the world market. British Coal said, in effect, "Give us six or seven years, through an amendment to the Bill, and at the end of that time we shall no longer need to be protected because we shall have made fantastic strides in bringing down the price of British coal." British Coal therefore said, "Protect us for those years and we will be content—we shall require no protection after 1996."

The question then arose of how much coal was likely to come in through the dock if it were constructed, and the promoter said 2·5 million tonnes. The Committee in general—Labour Members in particular but Conservative Members, too—thought that that perhaps was a modest amount—*[Interruption.]* The NUM said that it would be 7 million tonnes, but some said that even that was on the low side and that it could be more. In Committee we did a quick calculation which showed that with a change of cranes and dockside procedures, it was possible that as much as 10 million or even 12 million tonnes could come in. That gave us cause for concern.

Mr. Terry Patchett (Barnsley, East): Is it not a fact that the figure quoted by the NUM was in respect of total capacity, with the port at full production?

Dr. Clark: Yes, the NUM's figure of 7 million tonnes was in respect of full production, but some of us felt that the NUM had understated the position. We thought that, in fairness, it could be more than the NUM figure. We feared that it could be as much as 10 million tonnes. We on the Committee tried to do our job diligently, considering what the figure could be and examining the consequences.

Many Opposition Members are from coal mining constituencies. In Committee, we totally sympathised with the effects that could come from the massive importation of coal through the facilities of the port, first if it were to be built and secondly if it were to be used for importing

[Dr. Clark]

coal in massive quantities. As the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) said, as many as 15 pits could be shut if the dock facility were used exclusively for bringing in cheap Colombian, Polish, South African and Australian coal. Those 15 pits, with an average of 1,000 miners per pit, would mean the loss of 15,000 jobs, with a knock-on effect for the local coalfield communities. We appreciate, too —as the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) said, who is no longer in his place—that that energy would be sterilised for ever and would not be available at a future time when coal prices on the world market might be more expensive and we would wish to use indigenous coal.

Mr. George J. Buckley (Hemsworth): The hon. Gentleman has made much of the Committee's concern about the import of large quantities of coal. He said that all the figures given to the Committee were under-estimates of the tonnages that the Committee considered might be brought in through the port. In view of that, and in view of the consequences of the closure of 15 pits, why did he not support the amendment that British Coal wished to make to the Bill?

Dr. Clark: The hon. Gentleman asks a legitimate question. We thought that the special report and the conditions that we placed on ABP covered the point better than the British Coal amendment.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): The hon. Gentleman and his colleagues on the Committee asked in the recommendations for certain assurances from the Government. So far as I know, no such assurances have been given. In view of that, does the hon. Gentleman believe that the Bill should proceed any further?

Dr. Clark: If the hon. Gentleman will permit me to proceed with my speech a little further, I shall deal with that point. I promise not to ignore his question.

Before the voting, the Committee discussed what would be the consequences of building the dock facility if it were used entirely for coal, and we did not like the consequences that were revealed. But we also had to consider what would be the consequences for trade in general in the north Midlands, Lincolnshire, Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire if there were not more port facilities to allow general cargo trade on the Humber. We came to the conclusion—although it was contested in the vote, and that was when I used my casting vote—that we wanted to ensure that facilities were built so that they could be used for general trade. We also wanted to be sure that there was not a flood of cheap imported foreign coal, with all the horrendous consequences about which we had heard from the petitioners.

It seemed to us far more appropriate to build something so that it could be used for general trade, but to bring to the attention of the Government—here I answer the intervention of the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse)—the danger of the port facility being used exclusively, largely or damagingly for coal, and asking the Government to be aware of the danger. So that the Government would know the size of the danger, we put a condition on ABP—which it later granted us—to report quarterly the amount of coal brought in so that the figures could be in the Library for hon. Members, and be available to the Department of Energy. By that means, hon. Members interested in coal, as well as the Department, would be aware of what was happening on the Humber.

Mr. Lofthouse: I am listening with interest to the hon. Gentleman's argument. The report says at paragraph 24:

"The conditions imposed by the Committee are as follows. They were agreed to unanimously."

In bold print at the bottom of the page we read:

"In our view it is the Government's duty to take whatever steps are necessary, in the overall national interest, to protect the indigenous coal-mining industry."

Has the hon. Gentleman received an assurance from the Government that the conditions imposed by his Committee will be fulfilled by the Government? If not, does he believe that the Bill should proceed any further?

Dr. Clark: I have not received any assurances from the Government on that point. *[Interruption.]* I have tried to play this straight. I have not spoken to Ministers on the matter, and I do not intend to do so until after the Third Reading.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Dr. Clark: I cannot give way to everyone at once.

As for conditions, the two referred to in paragraph 24 are conditions of the special report and of ABP reporting on coal imports. They are not conditions on Government, but the hon. Gentleman is right to point out that we have included in heavy type the sentence that he quoted.

Mr. Allen McKay: The argument seems to centre on the Committee's findings and the details for which it asked. The hon. Gentleman is aware that there could be a loss of 30,000 or 40,000 jobs and that great damage could be done to Britain's economy. The Minister will shortly reply to the debate. If the Minister does not give the assurances about which we have heard—remembering that we are on Third Reading and that this is our last chance to debate the matter—will the hon. Gentleman join us voting against the Bill and advise his hon. Friends to do the same?

Dr. Clark: I hope that when my hon. Friend the Minister winds up he will refer to our special report and will consider the reason behind it, which is to support the domestic coal mining industry. I shall be disappointed if my hon. Friend does not say that the Government will take note of the special report's contents. At this stage, I shall not go so far as to reveal my voting intentions, but I shall share the hon. Gentleman's disappointment if my hon. Friend the Minister does not refer to the report.

Mr. McCartney: I listened to the hon. Gentleman's explanation as to why he acted as he did, in his capacity as Chairman of the Committee, on the issue of guarantees. Does he agree that the guarantee given by Hitler to Neville Chamberlain had more substance than the guarantee that the hon. Gentleman has been given about miners' jobs?

Dr. Clark: The difference is that at the moment umbrellas are being used to keep the sun away, not the rain. In this case, we seek understandings with our own Government about our own people. We are not debating a guarantee by a foreign Government to protect our nation, so the hon. Gentleman's analogy is not worth pursuing.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): I have just stumbled on this debate, but clearly I should have been here earlier. Those of my constituents who produce oil, mutton and

wool ought to have been represented on my hon. Friend's Committee to secure a guarantee that those products would not be imported. It seems amazing that we should be seeking to limit coal imports by restricting their passage through a particular port.

Dr. Clark: My hon. Friend makes an important point. If we try to restrict imports by failing to provide dock facilities, we shall destroy all free trade in and out of this country just to protect one commodity. Even though my hon. Friend has been in the Chamber only briefly, he hits the nail on the head. We must provide adequate facilities for imports and exports, but if a part of our economy comes under serious attack or is in danger as a consequence of excessive imports, the Government of the day—whatever their political complexion—must take whatever action is necessary to protect the home industry from dumping. But to fail to construct port facilities in the first place is no way to control imports.

Mr. Barron: Will the hon. Gentleman answer a question that was asked earlier? Why did he not support the amendment that would restrict only imports of steam coal? He could then have got on with promoting general trade, which we also want to do.

Dr. Clark: I did not support that amendment because I felt that the special report was a better way of achieving the desired effect. I have described that report in some detail and I have given way to several interventions. The debate——

Mr. Redmond: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman appears to be having great difficulty in answering a direct question. Will you use your good offices to get the Minister off his backside to answer the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron)?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I think that it would be better if the House got on with the debate.

Dr. Clark: The House must not assume that if and when the port is built it will be used exclusively, or even mainly, for coal imports. It will provide jobs and business opportunities in the Humber area, and will have its own knock-on effects in Humberside, north Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire. We should not forget that the Bill covers also King's Lynn and Port Talbot, but that aspect is not contentious.

The special report, which was the Committee's idea, and the quarterly reports sought from ABP are intended to alert the Government to the dangers of importing massive amounts of cheap foreign coal and to give them an opportunity to take whatever action is necessary to protect both national and local interests. I am surprised that the special report has been criticised to the extent that it has because it was prepared only to protect and assist the domestic coal industry. Some Opposition Members could be a little more sympathetic to a report that is intended precisely and specifically to draw to the Government's attention the dangers that might arise in many of the constituencies served by Opposition Members. I suggest that the House should think carefully about the Bill. As to the port facility, I hope that right hon. and hon. Members will not throw out the baby with the bath water.

8.55 pm

Mr. Terry Patchett (Barnsley, East): It is becoming apparent that there is more to the Bill than meets the eye. At first glance it seems harmless, having the purpose only of providing competition with European ports and creating direct access to the United Kingdom rather than through Rotterdam or Amsterdam. The Bill would also provide jobs on the east coast that are badly needed. All that seems reasonable, until one starts delving further. From the debate so far, it is obvious that there is a sinister move afoot and that the Bill goes much deeper than merely creating a port facility that may handle a small volume of coal imports.

Why have some Conservative Members who support the Bill been to South Africa? Who paid their expenses, and why did they visit South African coal mines?

Mr. Hardy: I take this opportunity to withdraw an implication that I made in a recent debate when I suggested that Associated British Ports was responsible for sending Conservative Members to South Africa. I informed ABP that I unreservedly withdraw any imputation of that kind. However, having done so, I may say that the House is entitled to ask Conservative Members who went to South Africa, who paid their expenses, because none of my right hon. and hon. Friends believe that they provide that money from their own resources.

Mr. Patchett: My hon. Friend takes an honourable course of action in withdrawing his earlier comment, and I hope that his request for information will be honoured by Conservative Members. I am happy to give way if any Conservative Member wishes to respond, but I see no movement on the Government Benches.

I would like to know also why the Government have so much enthusiasm for the Bill. Why have there been unofficial whippings? If one is unaware of the answers, one has only to read the special report to find them. It states in paragraph 21:

> "The petitioners' arguments put the Committee in a position of great difficulty. In effect we were invited to make a strategic decision affecting United Kingdom energy policy, and one which affects also Britain's general policy on trade, because it relates to whether protectionist measures are justifiable to safeguard the interests of an important sector of British industry. We do not consider that this is an appropriate decision to be taken by a small committee consisting of four backbench MPs, three of whom are serving in their first Parliament. It is a great burden of responsibility to place upon a private Bill committee. There has been no technical breach of private Bill procedure, but we do consider that that procedure has been stretched to its limits by the various arguments advanced before the Committee. The decisions on energy and trade policy we have been invited to take are, in our opinion, national decisions which are the ultimate responsibility of the national government."

I pay tribute to the Committee for its honest assessment of the position. That is what has been said time and again in the House about the same old gambit. The Government are presenting part of their energy policy in the guise of a private Bill: we need only observe the payroll vote and, indeed, the Prime Minister herself, going through the Lobby to support it to see that that is so.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: "Payroll vote" is a term that I love to hate, because parliamentary private secretaries are not

[Mr. Brandon-Bravo]

paid, but does the hon. Gentleman concede that four PPSs voted against the Bill on Second Reading? If so, I trust that he will withdraw what he has said.

Mr. Patchett: I find the hon. Gentleman's intervention rather confusing, as I did not think that I had used an unusual term. I hope, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you will correct me if I have stepped out of line, but I thought that it was a term used quite commonly in the House.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: It is.

Mr. Patchett: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will agree that the vast majority of the payroll vote have been through the Lobby to support the Bill. I do not understand why the hon. Gentleman has picked on that point. If this is education so be it, but it seems to me that those who are supposed to live by the rule of free market forces are encouraging the import of cheap foreign coal because it will spur on people interested in buying our electricity industry.

The Bill's supporters show a callous indifference to both the evil of apartheid and the future of our own coal industry. I have said that jobs will be created at the ports; I believe, however, that for every hundred created a thousand will be lost in the rest of the country—in constituencies such as mine, where unemployment is running at 20 per cent. and is even higher among the young.

The Coal Board is in a dilemma, and I understand the confusion caused by the Government's lack of a coherent energy policy. Despite our high unemployment, according to the Coal Board review a colliery in my area is likely to lose nearly 800 jobs. So dishonest is the board, and so lacking in confidence in its own arguments, that it has used deceitful tactics and threatened workers with the loss of some of their redundancy money—a rather dubious threat, we suspect.

That Barnburgh colliery was supposed to have obtained 2·5 million tonnes of coal from another colliery that had closed—for the benefit of my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron), I am referring to Cadeby. The confusion resulted from the fact that the Coal Board does not know where it is going.

Those who voted for the Bill—the greedy ones, the "I'm all right Jacks"—are doing long-term harm to the country. While they profit, the Government pay out more and more unemployment benefit, lose income through not receiving tax and face the ever-growing problem of its balance of payments. When they have decimated our own coal industry we will run the risk of a rise in world coal prices when cheap foreign coal has served its purpose.

Already a section of our electricity generating industry panics if a tanker goes aground or an oil well goes out of commission, and world oil prices start to rocket. That is the stupidity of the Government's energy policy. The debate is about energy. This is much more serious than what will happen to one or two ports. The Government have been responsible for a disgraceful misuse of Private Bill procedure. The payroll vote, along with the proximity of the ports to coal-fired power stations which the Government intend to privatise, proves that the Bill is an expression of Government policy and should have been dealt with in Government time.

I ask all hon. Members who respect the House to vote to keep the Bill out, on that basis alone, and to let the Government put the subject forward for more open and honest debate, with all hon. Members understanding their true purpose. If we allow the Bill to be passed, we shall damage parliamentary procedures and make a laughing stock of Mr. Speaker's office. Even if some hon. Members are in favour of the Bill, I ask them not to favour deceit.

9.5 pm

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): The infamous Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill, if enacted, would strike at the very heart of Britain's coal industry. When it received its Second Reading 11 months ago with a majority of 47—110 were for and 63 against—there were serious recriminations. Who was responsible for allowing this to happen? Was it the fair weather synthetic supporters of the coal industry who had skived off home early at 7.20 pm, or the many uninformed hon. Members who happened to be still around at 8.20 pm when the Division was called, and who drifted into the wrong Lobby? I cannot speak for the former category; they will have to live with their consciences.

Mr. Redmond: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Stewart: Not now.

Let me direct my efforts tonight towards persuading my hon. Friends who, when the coal industry was equally threatened in 1984-85, packed the Conservative Benches in support of the Nottinghamshire miners and their families, to do the same tonight.

The Nottinghamshire coalfield is particularly threatened by proposals to build coal handling cargo facilities on the Humber estuary which will be capable of handling 10 million tonnes of imported coal. An increase in the amount of artificially cheap coal imported to the British market will imperil a significant amount of investment already made by British Coal, leading to further colliery closures. Up to 80 per cent. of Nottinghamshire's deep-mined coal is burned in power stations in the Trent valley. The loss of that market, even in the short term, will lead to the closures of several pits in the county.

Mr. Lofthouse: The hon. Gentleman has mentioned the threat to jobs in his constituency and others. Will he make it clear to the Nottinghamshire miners that it is his own party that is to bring about those job losses by voting for the Bill?

Mr. Stewart: I am not the conscience of my brothers.

It is estimated that up to 11 collieries in Nottinghamshire could be at risk, directly or indirectly, as a result of large-scale coal imports. Today the coal industry makes a major contribution to Nottinghamshire's economy. As well as being the largest industrial employer, paying wages in excess of £300 million in 1988, the industry and its employees generate further employment as consumers of services and manufactured goods. Putting it another way, for every job in the mining industry it supports up to two jobs in other sectors.

Although regarded as one of the most prosperous in the country, the Nottinghamshire coalfield has lost more than 13,000 jobs since 1984 in a drive towards greater productivity and competitiveness. Having completed this painful exercise in human terms and the latest financial

figures showing an operating profit of £65 million, it would be unthinkable to put at risk a further 11,000 jobs, as would happen if this ports Bill were approved.

Approaching half of British Coal sales to power stations are within about 60 miles of the Humber ports and the central coal fields send over 80 per cent. of their output to power stations with the lowest transport costs from the Humber—West Burton, Cottam, Thorpe Marsh and High Marnham. Last year these stations took over 60 million tonnes of British coal and over 11 million tonnes from Nottinghamshire. This represents 45 per cent. of the total supplied to those stations. Moreover, 40 per cent. of the total sales of the Nottinghamshire area went to those four stations, which clearly shows that the dependence of Nottinghamshire on this market can hardly be exaggerated.

The Union of Democratic Mineworkers, in its submission to the Committee, emphasised that its opposition to the proposed facilities in the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill does not arise from a wish to prevent legitimate competition; it arises from a desire to allow the industry's present policy of restructuring to be brought to a successful conclusion without short-term disruption of the markets by imports sold at prices unlikely to be sustainable in the medium and long term. Failure by my hon. Friends to recognise this would prejudice economic fuel supplies to the privatised electricity industry in the longer term.

By comparison the United Kingdom enjoys lower domestic and industrial tariffs for its electricity supply than our major competitors. In fact, at 3·8p per kilowatt they are 50 per cent. lower than those of Japan, Germany and the United States. Our price is in keeping with the prices of the major coal-exporting countries, such as Australia and Poland. How can the international coal producers capture a market share in the United Kingdom other than by loss leader prices, which raises a fundamental question—do we really want electricity supplies to be in the hands of foreigners?

Mr. Barron: Can the hon. Gentleman explain to us, since we are a bit puzzled about his defence of the coal mining industry, why he did not join us in the Lobby against the Electricity Bill which privatises the electricity industry and will kill the Nottinghamshire coalfield along with others?

Mr. Stewart: We are talking tonight about the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill; we are not talking about the privatisation of the electricity industry.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): Before my hon. Friend addresses himself to that point, will he address himself to why, when this Bill was being read a Second time, the Opposition attendance was so dismal? Far from complaining today, if they had attended on that occasion instead of sloping off home, the Bill would never have proceeded to a Third Reading. He should accept no strictures from the Opposition when his position on this matter has always been consistent.

Mr. Stewart: Mr. Deputy Speaker—*[Interruption.]* I am not giving way. There are many people wishing to speak.

I accept what my hon. Friend has said and agree with him entirely.

Mr. Redmond: Give way.

Mr. Stewart: I am not giving way any more.

Do we really want electricity supplies to be in the hands of foreigners or do we support British coal and our miners, who have served the electricity industry and the customer well? Over the past four years they have reduced their prices to the CEGB in real terms by £650 million a year. In the current year there has been no price increase at all despite the high rate of inflation. Should all this be squandered for the illusory benefits of foreign coal?

Compared with a year ago, when the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill was introduced, there are clear signs that overseas coal producers are determined to increase their prices to ensure the future viability of their operations. Low heavy fuel oil prices, which had a significant bearing on the coal price freeze agreed with the CEGB last November, have sinced moved upwards by over 50 per cent. Also, sterling has shown a downward trend against the dollar, in which international coal is traded, despite heavy Government intervention which amounts to a further £7 a tonne on imported coal. This shows beyond any doubt why the new power generating companies cannot rely on spot or short-term international coal contracts.

The ESI must give both domestic and industrial users some price guarantee indication and can do so only if raw materials are predictable at cost. Only British coal can offer this. Its unique selling point, which cannot be paralleled by any importer, is that it can offer long-term contracts, up to 10 years if need be, with prices based on the retail price index for secured, established coal supplies. It now has a proven record of quality of supply and performance, backed by the example set by the Union of Democratic Mineworkers offering real stability of supply.

In their evidence to the Committee the port developers have gone to great lengths to demonstrate that they are not basing their project on handling any significant tonnage of coal. Frankly, I do not believe them. However, that is what they have said. If that is the case and this Bill receives a Third Reading, they cannot claim that the project will be imperilled if a new clause is moved in another place excluding them from handling coal for the first three years or so after the port has been completed in 1992. This will eliminate the severe risk that many deep mines which could compete with imported coal in 1995 will be closed by 1990 if the Government encourage an early free-for-all on imports.

My hon. Friends should remember that British Coal already——

Mr. Lofthouse: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Could you give us some guidance? Do you think it right that the hon. Member who gave the casting vote to put this Bill through to the Third Reading should be discussing with the——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am not privy to what goes on outside this Chamber.

Mr. Redmond: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will the hon. Gentleman, having made several statements, now tell the House that he is willing to discuss the Third Reading with the people who are seeking to promote this Bill. Is that correct?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is a matter for debate. As I say, what happens outside the Chamber is not a matter for me. I have a big enough job controlling what happens in the Chamber.

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friends should remember that British Coal already sells the equivalent of 25 million tonnes of coal to the CEGB at prices—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Ashton: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) is supposed to be the impartial Chairman of the Committee. Is it right for him to be consistently holding discussions with the sponsors of the Bill?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is quite customary for Ministers and others to seek advice outside the Chamber, but I am sure that all hon. Members will respond at all times to the mood of the House.

Mr. Stewart *rose—[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I get the impression that this matter is resolving itself.

Mr. McCartney: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Before the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) became Chairman of the Committee, the House was given a categorical assurance by him that he had no connection whatsoever with the sponsors. We accepted that assurance from him as an hon. Gentleman. Only minutes later, however, we found that that was not the case. There should be a ruling about his conduct. He has broken the categorical assurance that he gave to us.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I remind the House that many hon. Members wish to take part in the debate. I hope that we can get on with it.

Mr. Stewart: British Coal already sells 25 million tonnes of coal to the CEGB at world prices, so no further price advantage would accrue until the 26 million tonnes of imported coal arrive. While seeking that advantage, the cost in pit closures, job losses and destroyed coalfield communities would be tenfold. For me, the risks to my constituents, 30 per cent. of whom work directly for the coal industry, are too great. Therefore I beg my hon. Friends to listen to the argument and to stand full square behind Nottingham miners and vote against the Third Reading of the Bill.

9.21 pm

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): I ought to register, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on behalf of the House, the fact that we do not have even the Chairman of the Committee——

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. Yet again we are debating the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill. It has been debated on many previous occasions. About 25 minutes of the debate have been taken up by hon. Members who represent coalfield community areas. That is all the time that they have had to participate in the debate. The Chairman of the Committee that considered the Bill spent a considerable amount of time trying to explain how much effort he had put into considering the Bill over many weeks. Hon. Members with constituencies in the north-west have spoken in the debate. There are no coal mines in their area. An hon. Member with a Humberside constituency is promoting the Bill. Now the Opposition Front Bench spokesman is called. Is this debate to be concluded at 10 o'clock? If that is so, hon. Members from coal mining areas will not have had an opportunity to participate in the debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I well understand that the hon. Gentleman, and many other hon. Members on both sides of the House, are seeking to catch my eye. However, I remind the House that, when spokesmen from the Front Benches rise, it is customary for them to be called. That is why I called the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott).

Mr. Prescott: As the Chairman of the Committee has sought advice or instructions from the sponsors of the Bill, I think that at least he should have listened to what hon. Members have had to say in the debate, particularly as he has played such an important role in having the casting vote. We have heard that his casting vote was used to decide all the matters that were in front of the Committee. However, you have ruled, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that that is not in breach of the procedures of the House.

One appreciates that the sponsor of the Bill—in this case the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown)—would naturally seek advice from the sponsors, but it is a bit much for that role to be taken on by the Chairman of the Committee, whose own independence has been constantly questioned by the Opposition. I can only hope that he will return to the Chamber after discussing with the promoters of the Bill the information that he wants to impart to the House. We should welcome the Chairman back to the Chamber.

The real issue, however, is not what the Chairman of the Committee may have to tell us. The real issue is the Government's view of the matter. That is what we have asked for in every debate on the Bill at each stage. Now we are at Third Reading. Certain recommendations have been made by the Committee. The hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) has made it absolutely clear that there is no argument between the NUM and the UDM, or between him and Opposition Members, as will be shown in the Division Lobby. I do not know what has motivated him to embark upon such a course. However, the point that concerns me is why the Government do not note that all those hon. Members who represent mining constituencies are expressing the same grave fears and doubts about the consequences of the Bill.

If anyone doubts that, one can point to the fact that the Committee published a special report because it was extremely concerned about the consequences of the Bill. Cheap coal and the consequences for the coal industry of privatisation are significant matters that lie at the heart of the debate. They are matters of national interest and concern. Those who ought to speak for the national interest are the Government.

I have read the reports of the debates that have taken place at the various stages of the Bill, including the Government's position at each stage. I draw that to the attention of the House, bearing in mind that the Committee's report calls on the Government to take whatever steps are necessary in the overall national interest to protect our indigenous coal mining industry. Perhaps the industry and the Government are doing that, but they have not yet convinced me.

I should be glad if the Minister for Roads and Traffic would say whether he intends to give the Government's point of view. I look with interest at the man who is never afraid to get up to lecture us about all sorts of things. Is it the Minister's intention to speak on behalf of the Government in this debate, in view of the Committee's special report? I will gladly give way to him—The Minister obviously does not intend to get up. He has obviously got his seat belt on for this ride.

I remind the Minister what other Ministers have said at various stages. I presume that he has read the report of the debates. Obviously he is the fall guy; he has been sent here to say nothing in this debate.

The Minister of State at that time told the House:

"It is conventional on a private Bill for the Government to take a neutral stance, but in doing so to advise the House that the Bill should be allowed a Second Reading. This does not imply that the Government support the Bill. It is for the promoters to persuade Parliament that the powers they are seeking are necessary and justified."—[*Official Report*, 22 June 1988; Vol. 135, c. 122.]

That is the view of various Governments on all private Bills.

The Government were also asked to state their position when the House was considering whether the Bill could be transferred from one Session to another—a procedure that is now all too common. The Minister of State said:

"The hon. Gentleman is right to ask about the Government's views on the carry-over motion. The Government believe that the motion should be supported. That will provide the opportunity for this important Bill to continue to be discussed."—[*Official Report*, 8 November 1988; Vol. 140, c. 257.]

That was the extent of the Minister's contribution.

The Bill has been in Committee and we have before us certain recommendations, on which we are entitled to ask for the Government's view. If one is led to believe that the Government were indifferent and did not want to be identified with the Bill, a quick look at the voting record will soon make it clear that not only did ordinary Government Back Benchers vote, but Cabinet Ministers were involved, with 26 members of the Cabinet voting. The hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), who is known to operate in the Government's interest, is hardly the sort of fellow who is likely to vote against the Government's interest. He spends all his time defending it.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: The hon. Gentleman is making great play about which Members on the Government side voted for or against the Second Reading of these Bills. I have only the *Hansard* of Thursday 23 June. Among the Members voting against the Bill were 11 or 12 Conservatives, but I do not see the hon. Gentleman's name in either Division list on that day. In view of the synthetic indignation that he is generating now, I wonder if he voted against the Second Reading of any of the Bills.

Mr. Prescott: The hon. Gentleman said that he had not read the whole record. If he looks at the record, he will find that I voted on them all, with the exception of that one. I can give the reasons why I did not vote on that occasion, if the hon. Gentleman wants them, but I do not think we need go into them.

The real point is, what is the position of the Government? We are talking about the Secretary of State for Employment, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Secretary of State for Social Security. One could argue that each of those Departments, apart from the Northern Ireland Office, will be directly affected by the consequences of the Bill. The Department of Social Security will be affected by the payment of benefit to those who become unemployed because of the Bill, and the Treasury may be concerned with the balance of payments deficit. Perhaps those Ministers took the view that all they were doing was enabling the debate to take place; perhaps they just happened to be about that evening and voted for the Bill. We will accept that argument, if that is the case.

What will be the position tonight? What is the Government's position on the Bill, since the Committee was unanimous in its recommendations? My hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) asked the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) whether he had received any assurances from the Government. He was at pains to make it clear that he had had no discussions with the Government. I am glad that he was not asked about discussions with Associated British Ports. If we leave that aside, the Government have not approached him.

I want to ask only one question, because many hon. Members still want to speak. What is the Government's position on an energy policy, a coal policy, jobs and employment, the balance of payments and social security benefits? All those matters are directly involved. Is the Minister prepared to get up and tell us what the Government's position is? Has he been briefed on the Government's position, or will he be voting tonight on a Bill on which he does not have a view? Has he been told to vote in a certain way? Is that the kind of order that Ministers get from on high?

I shall give the Minister another chance. Will he now get up and give us an indication of the Government's view on the matter—or, more so, on the recommendations of the Select Committee? I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman.—He does not wish to intervene. It is clear that the Government——

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): Clearly the Minister does not intend to get to his feet because it is all part of a big fix. It is the height of hypocrisy. Some Nottingham Tory Members will vote with Labour tonight against the Bill, yet next week they will vote against the Nottinghamshire mining industry by voting for privatisation, by supporting a cut in the CEGB coal target and by voting for West Burton B not to go ahead. Those Tory Members are being allowed a night off tonight——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not make a speech.

Mr. Allen —when some other Back Benchers on the Conservative side——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Prescott: It is clear from what my hon. Friend has said that views on the matter are strongly held. They will be even stronger if the Minister refuses to intervene. It seems that the Government do not intend to give any opinion about the Bill, despite all the recommendations of the Private Bill Committee and despite the statements made by the Chairman and members of the Committee. We are witnessing a shabby use of Parliament in the private Bill procedures. More and more, the Department of Transport uses the private Bill procedure to avoid accountability. It has been argued that this is the place

[Mr. Prescott]

where the Government will be held to account, but here we have a Government entirely silent on a major issue that will affect thousands of miners, that will close pits, that will have a massive effect on our balance of payments, and that will affect the economy, but there is not one word from the Government.

The country will register precisely what is happening. The Government are working behind the scenes, sending in their troops to secure victory for this Bill. The country will register disgust at these private procedures and at the cowardice of the Minister, who could not answer our case.

Mr. Barron: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It appears from the Minister's inaction of the past few seconds that he is refusing to give the House an interpretation of the Committee's report on this Bill. You will be well aware of that report. It said that the procedure was

"stretched to its limits by the various arguments advanced before the Committee."

Now the Minister appears to be refusing to tell us the Government's opinion of the report. Is that in order? Surely, before Third Reading, the House should know the Government's attitude to the Bill.

Mr. Speaker: Whether a Minister rises is not a matter for me.

Several Hon. Members: *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall call an hon. Member who served on the Committee. Mr. Pat Wall.

9.37 pm

Mr. Pat Wall (Bradford, North): On the face of it, this is an unexceptionable Bill promoted by Associated British Ports, which runs 21 docks, whose holding company made £38 million profit in 1987—more than half of it from its docks operation—and which requested permission to build a deep water jetty that could take Panamax boats of up to 80,000 tonnes and Cape-sized boats of up to 120,000 tonnes, in competition with the ports of Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Antwerp, and possibly provide a number of jobs on Humberside and help to develop the Humber area. However, this supposedly unexceptionable Bill spent five and a half months in Committee, with sittings held three days a week, morning and afternoon, except during parliamentary recesses—the longest period in Committee of any Private Bill for many years.

As my hon. Friends have said, senior Ministers and the Prime Minister were seen marching into the Lobbies to cast their votes on Second Reading. That is unusual for a private Bill. Having attended every sitting of the Committee, apart from the first, and having been responsible in part for the report, which was unanimous, I observe that the Committee reached its decision only on the casting vote of the Chairman, that it rejected amendments only on the Chairman's casting vote, and that the Bill is controversial and deeply political.

The Bill is inextricably concerned with major political, social and economic issues of the deepest regional and national impact. It has to do with the massive importation of foreign coal and the effect that that would have on the already horrendous balance of trade figures. It deals with possible sanctions busting in connection with importing South African coal, and possibly with importing coal from the semi-slave coalfield of Colombia. It is concerned with the future of British Coal as a viable national organisation and with the future of at least 15,000 miner's jobs in some of the most productive pits in Britain. The Bill concerns those miners' futures and those of their families, and the knock-on effect on other jobs in Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire.

The Bill is about the future of the electricity generating industry—about supplies of steam coal, which is the basic fuel for the generating industry, and will be for the privatised generating industry if the legislation goes through. It means putting the basic raw material of the industry in the hands of foreign suppliers in half the major coal-burning power stations in Britain. It means enormous costs in redundancy payments, unemployment benefits, social security payments and the considerable social costs that to with a further massive wave of redundancies in areas already suffering large-scale unemployment and social deprivation.

Mr. Lofthouse: Did the Committee have all this in mind when it framed paragraph 22 of its special report, which says:

"Before the Committee came to make a formal decision on, first, the amendment proposed by the British Coal Corporation, and, secondly, the Preamble itself, we agreed that if the Bill were allowed to proceed, this would be subject to conditions set out in paragraphs 25 and 26 below."

As far as I am aware, the Chairman of the Committee, the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark), has not given us any assurance that those conditions will be fulfilled. Does my hon. Friend agree that the Committee said that the Bill should go through only if those conditions were agreed?

Mr. Wall: I shall come to that point, which will take up much of what I have to say.

I was speaking of the deeply political effects of the Bill. It will lower the purchasing powers of those areas—Nottinghamshire, Yorkshire and Derbyshire—affected by the redundancies and it will deeply affect the work that local authorities have done in trying to counter the effects of the redundancies which have already hit mining communities so severely in the post-war period. It would also have a serious affect on the already overcrowded road system and consequential effects on the environment if the coal is carried from Immingham to the Aire and Trent valley power stations by a vast fleet of lorries.

All these issues were raised and discussed in Committee. The Bill makes political decisions, and that is not the role of Members of the House under the private Bill procedure. For three of the four of us, this was our first private Bill. We are all Back Benchers, and three of us were Members of less than two years' standing.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr. Wall: No, I will not.

We do not say that in any modesty. All three of us feel that we have the ability to proceed on the Bill, but we did not have the experience of private Bill procedure, and are still learning the general procedure of the House. This private Bill was concerned also with issues of deep and national significance.

On Second Reading, the promoter made no case for the Bill whatever. No case has ever been made out for the Bill in the House. Only in the 26 sittings of the Committee were

these issues debated. However, because of the Chairman's casting vote, there is no Report stage, with the result that the House has no opportunity to debate amendments, even the important ones suggested by British Coal and the Union of Democratic Mineworkers to the North Killingholme Cargo Terminal Bill, which would have placed a restriction on the import of coal for three years after the passing of that Bill. I feel sorry for the Chairman.

Mr. McCartney: As a member of the Committee who served with the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark), will my hon. Friend ask the hon. Gentleman a question? When the hon. Gentleman spoke to the sponsors of the Bill a minute ago, did he say, "I am totally in your pocket and I had better come across to you"?

Mr. Wall: What is wrong with this Bill is that the Chairman of the Committee was placed in an impossible position. When we debated private Bill procedure in the House, the Chairman of Ways and Means, in a shrewd intervention, said that hon. Members are supposed to sit on a private Bill Committee to exercise independent and fair judgment. He did not use exactly those words, but that was what he meant. Normally, private Bills concern planning decisions which can be controversial. If they involve proposals to build a railway through Kent or a road through the Shipley constituency next to mine, or to build a tunnel under certain areas, they are controversial, but not politically controversial in the way that the future of the coal industry or the electricity generating industry in Britain is controversial.

Mr. Bellingham: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Hon. Members: Give way.

Mr. Speaker: Order. One at a time, please.

Mr. Wall: I shall not give way.

Such Bills are not controversial in the way that this Bill affects social services and local communities. The Chairman of the Committee has had to try to justify what happened to the Bill in Committee because the promoter of the Bill has not had the guts to explain the Bill to the House; nor has the Minister been prepared to explain the issues to the House.

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): Does my hon. Friend agree that one reason why Ministers might be scared to come to the Dispatch Box is that the Conservative Members enjoy wrapping themselves in the Union Jack and calling themselves the party of patriotism? While they stand at the front door defending this country, they are kicking the back door open with their heels and allowing our competitors to ransack our industries.

Mr. Wall: I wish to deal with the point that my hon. Friend has raised.

Mr. Eadie: I want to raise an extremely important point with my hon. Friend because he was present when a whole series of points of order were raised about amendments which were not selected. The occupant of the Chair promised me that the special report would be debated in the House and would be perfectly in order. This is our only opportunity to find out about the special report while my hon. Friend is making his speech. Will he explain to the House why the special report talks about energy policy, the Government being concerned and the free market when the Committee must have been well aware that the privatisation of the electricity supply industry was passing through the House and one of the Government's main points was that there would be a free market in the coal industry? Will he explain to the House how the Committee reached that decision?

Mr. Wall: That is the crux of the debate and the reason why the report was produced. A reasonable and modest amendment was proposed by British Coal, calling for a time limit, or a free period, of three years in which coal could not be imported in excess of current figures into the Humber ports, given the exceptionally and unusually low stock prices for steam coal on the world market, and to allow the modernisation programme, which in the past was largely financed by Government money, to go ahead to allow steam coal to be produced more competitively and to allow British Coal to plan ahead. No private or state-owned coal industry can possibly plan ahead and invest hundreds of millions of pounds in the Selby coalfield and other new coalfields on the basis of a fanciful and theoretical market in the future.

For those reasons, we moved our simple, modest amendment, which was not accepted by the Committee. We then made a statement. The fact that we had to make a statement shows that this is not a normal——

Mr. Bellingham: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Hon. Members: Sit down.

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall) does not want to give way, the hon. Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) should not persist.

Mr. Wall: I am sorry for the hon. Gentleman. He came in late—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] The Committee sat for five and a half months. We took the trouble to bring our report to the House and it is worth discussing. We said:

> "The petitioners' arguments put the Committee in a position of great difficulty. In effect we were invited to make a strategic decision affecting UK energy policy, and one which affects also Britain's general policy on trade, because it relates to whether protectionist measures are justifiable to safeguard the interests of an important sector of British industry. We do not consider that this is an appropriate decision to be taken by a small committee consisting of four backbench MPs, three of whom are serving in their first Parliament. It is a great burden of responsibility to place upon a private bill committee.
>
> There has been no technical breach of private Bill procedure, but we do consider that that procedure has been stretched to its limits by the various arguments advanced before the Committee. The decisions on energy and trade policy we have been invited to take are, in our opinion, national decisions which are the ultimate responsibility of the national government."

Mr. Ashton: Is my hon. Friend aware that he should, perhaps, give way to the hon. Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham), who may have something to tell us? In October 1988, according the Register of Members' Interests, he paid a visit to South Africa financed by the South African Government. We should know what has been going on in the background.

Hon. Members: Come on, Bellingham.

Mr. Wall: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention. I am not a vindictive or suspicious person, but the Bill is being considered by the House after three Conservative

[Mr. Wall]

Members have visited coal interests in South Africa. We should know who paid for those trips, what the connections were and what happened on the trips.

Mr. Bellingham: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wall: I am not giving way. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wall: I want to draw a contrast now. The Bill concerns the Humber ports. One of the interesting things about the Bill is that Conservative Members have been pushing the idea that Associated British Ports is wonderful. We have been told that it is a company whose total tonnage has risen since it was privatised from 77 million tonnes in 1972 to 90 million tonnes in 1987, with profits of £28 million. The total investment in new ports by the company is £80 million. Yet we are told that scheme ports are not viable, cannot operate, cannot attract investment and are not successful. On the one hand, we are told that Associated British Ports is a company that really needs and can really develop Immingham jetty; on the other hand we are told that we must abolish the dock labour scheme because scheme ports cannot provide such work. That argument is nonsense.

Mr. Bellingham *rose*——

Mr. Wall: The Prime Minister——

Mr. Bellingham: I seek your advice and guidance, Mr. Speaker, because the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall) has given way on several occasions to his hon. Friends, but not to any Conservative Member, including myself. I wish to tell him that my support for the Bill——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order for me.

Mr. Bellingham *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: If the hon. Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) wants to tell the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall) something, he must not do it through me.

Mr. Bellingham: My support for the Bill has nothing whatever to do with a trip that I made to South Africa —*[Interruption.]*—but everything to do with that part of the Bill which relates to King's Lynn and to the £4 million that will be spent there to bring jobs to my constituency.

Mr. Wall: Although a scheme port is proposing a £30·5 million investment in the Humber jetty, when the Government are arguing for the abolition of the dock labour scheme they tell us that there is no investment in scheme ports. Although the total amount of investment proposed over three years around Immingham on the river Humber is about £370 million, the Government say that investment cannot be attracted to scheme ports. That is what they say when they want to reduce dockers to the kind of conditions experienced by my grandfather in Manchester, and that is why I am political and here in the House.

The secret of these ports is their geographical position and it is that which affects this decision about bringing coal into the river Humber, which will then be used to make bigger profits for the privatised electricity industry. I quote yet again from the Committee's report, because it is not first a question of jobs. The Committee also decided

"that if the petitioners' assessment of the amount of coal likely to be imported through Immingham proves correct, then the consequences for the British coal industry could be, to use the word employed by Counsel for the Coalfield Communities Campaign, 'horrendous'. Those consequences might include the closure of as many as 15 collieries, the loss of 15,000 jobs, the permanent sterilization of energy resources, and knock on effects on local communities across Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and South Yorkshire. The Committee is aware of the dangers of allowing the import of coal on this scale, and is very sympathetic to the petitioners in the case they have made concerning this."

We must also consider the social costs of the proposals. The evidence given to the Committee by Dr. Benn Fine, reader in economics at Birkbeck college, stated:

"According to our figures, the economic and social costs of pit closures will be made up of three components. First, lump sum redundancy payments will be of the order of between £191 and £360 million, depending upon the extent and consequences"——

Mr. Michael Brown *rose in his place and claimed to move*, That the Question be now put.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am on my feet. I cannot accept the closure.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I seek your advice. I know that a heavy task is placed upon you in protecting the rights of Back Benchers and I want to facilitate that difficult task. I know also that you will be sympathetic to my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) because he attempted to move the Third Reading as soon as the Division on the previous business was completed. He was called at 7.29 pm. There were points of order for more than half an hour and all those points of order were ruled out of order by Madam Deputy Speaker. Indeed, it was quite clear that all those points of order were entirely bogus—*[Interruption.]* The first speech from the Opposition, from the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme), lasted over half an hour. It is clear that this is not an attempt to debate the issues, but to waste time.

I am sure that you, Mr. Speaker, would want the House to move to a decision on these important matters. Therefore, can you give me some intimation about when the Bill might be brought back to the House, because as we saw clearly in the vote on Second Reading, a large majority of hon. Members want freedom of trade——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is for the Chairman of Ways and Means to decide when the Bill is to be debated again.

Mr. Hardy: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I seek your advice on an aspect of the matter. We have not had a full three-hour debate, as points of order lasted until about 10 minutes to 8. We have had a substantial debate that has lasted over two hours, but we have not heard a single word in support of the Bill, either from its promoter or from any other hon. Member, apart from one reference to its minor King's Lynn content. If the House is further to consider this wretched Bill, I hope that Conservative Members who support it—whether or not they have been to South Africa as guests of the South African coal industry——

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.
Debate to be resumed upon Thursday 25 May.

Community Charges

10 pm

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. During the Speech by the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall), the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) clearly said in your hearing and in the hearing of other hon. Members that my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark), who was the Chairman of the Select Committee that considered the Bill, was in the pockets of the sponsors of the Bill. That was a clear allegation of impropriety and dishonesty against my hon. Friend. You should ask the hon. Member for Makerfield to withdraw that quite disgraceful slur.

Mr. Speaker: I did not judge that remark to be unparliamentary. The hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) was present, and he should have challenged it at the time.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. On 11 May and again on 23 June, the Second Reading debate lasted for three hours and 34 minutes. We have had two hours and 31 minutes of the debate on Third Reading of a Bill that has no amendments. I seek your guidance on how much longer we might have to debate the Bill. Last night, in just over an hour we had three Third Readings, and this debate has now been going on for as long as a Second Reading debate.

Mr. Speaker: When the Chairman of Ways and Means puts the Bill on the Order Paper we shall know how much longer it will take. It is clear that hon. Members on both sides wish to participate in the debate.

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am grateful to you for extending the debate tonight, but I ask that, in the next debate, consideration be given to hon. Members representing coalfield areas. So far in the debate, which has lasted for two hours, less than 25 minutes has been given to hon. Members from such areas.

Mr. Speaker: As always, careful consideration will be given to hon. Members with specific interests.

There are six prayers before the House.

10.2 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): This time, I think that we will need more than six prayers. Perhaps the Minister will join me in one in due course.

I beg to move the first motion on the Order Paper,

That the Community Charges (Administration and Enforcement) Regulations 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 438), dated 12th March 1989, a copy of which was laid before this House on 17th March, be revoked.

As you have stated, Mr. Speaker, we are also to discuss the next five motions:

That the Valuation and Community Charges Tribunals Regulations 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 439), dated 12th March 1989, a copy of which was laid before this House on 17th March, be revoked.

That the Valuation and Community Charges Tribunals (Transfer of Jurisdiction) Regulations 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 440), dated 12th March 1989, a copy of which was laid before this House on 17th March, be revoked.

[Mr. Clive Soley]

That the Valuation for Rating (Plant and Machinery) Regulations 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 441), dated 12th March 1989, a copy of which was laid before this House on 17th March, be revoked.

That the Personal Community Charge (Exemptions) Order 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 442), dated 12th March 1989, a copy of which was laid before this House on 17th March, be revoked.

That the Personal Community Charge (Students) Regulations 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 443), dated 12th March 1989, a copy of which was laid before this House on 17th March, be revoked.

Of the six prayers, the most important is the Community Charges (Administration and Enforcement) Regulations 1989, No. 438, and that is the one to which we will probably direct most of our comments in the relatively short debate tonight.

Not for the first time, late at night, the Government are trying to slip through important regulations to avoid getting the matter into the media and drawing attention to something that they know is a deeply unpopular tax that will be enforced by regulations that will be equally unpopular. The regulations contain powers and enforcement orders, and many people will be surprised to know their extent. The Local Government Finance 1988—the poll tax and national non-domestic rate—contains no fewer than 736 matters that are left to regulation, determination and order.

Once again, the Government propose to legislate by regulation, order and simple determination of the Secretary of State for the Environment. It is a centralising and authoritarian Government who choose to act in that manner. I cannot think of any previous Government who included no fewer than 736 matters in a Bill. The Secretary of State for the Environment will have enormous powers. Not for the first time, the Secretary of State has introduced a Bill in which he gives himself powers to do what he likes. That is what he has done in respect of the poll tax and what he continues to do in a number of other Bills before the House.

It is argued that in some way the poll tax will be an easier tax. It is claimed that it will be less bureaucratic, simpler to administer and easier to understand. It is said that it will carry the public with it because, unlike the rates, everyone will understand what the poll tax involves.

It is worth bearing in mind that there is a lot more to administer in the poll tax. The cost of administration will be much higher than the cost of administering the rates. Regulation 23(7) deals with joint and several liability. It contains a sentence which has more than 139 words with eight cross-references to other regulations, which contain another 30 cross-references. We are told that that is designed to make things simpler. It will not make them simpler; it will make them considerably more complex—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. How much longer are you going to allow 15 separate conversations to take place at the same time? This is a Tory tax, but there is no excuse for Tory Members trying to drown what my hon. Friend is saying.

Mr. Soley: Tory Members are trying to kid the electorate that somehow the poll tax is simpler. I will quote from the regulation which deals with joint and several liability. It states:

"Regulations 20(5)(b) and 21(8)(b) apply as if the reference to the chargeable person includes, insofar as concerns the difference between the joint and several liability under regulation 22(1) or (2) of the spouse or manager in respect of the appropriate amount or recalculated amount referred to in those provisions and the amount he has paid in respect of the estimated amount so referred to, a reference to the spouse or manager, and as if the reference to regulation 20(8) were a reference to that provision as applied by paragraph (9) below; and accordingly any requirement which may be made by the chargeable person under regulation 20(5) or 21(9) for a calculation of the appropriate amount or for a recalculation of the estimated amount (as the case may be) may also be made by the spouse or manager."

That is supposed to clarify the matter for people who are living together as man and wife. What nonsense. Most people will not understand it.

This part of the regulations came into effect yesterday. The Government postponed the implementation of regulations 4 and 5 which give community charge registration officers power to demand information, until 22 May. They did that, they said, to avoid the local elections and because they said that they wanted to enable their canvass to begin after the Government's so-called publicity campaign—or more accurately, propaganda campaign—had taken effect.

Of course, there were no elections in most Association of Metropolitan Authorities areas. Most of the regulations could have taken effect already in some of the areas, but they did not. The purpose of the regulations is to enable community charge regulation officers to address a form to the occupier and require any occupier to supply information in respect of other occupiers. it penalises any occupier for not providing that information.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): I do not want to anticipate a point that my hon. Friend may be about to make, but, in his experience, as in mine, is it not unusual that we should be debating regulations the day after they came into force? The Government cannot even organise their timetable so that the House, which is supposed to debate such matters, can do so before the regulations come into operation.

Mr. Soley: My hon. Friend makes the point that I have made on a number of occasions. The Government not only take incredible centralising authoritarian powers to themselves in a wide-ranging way, as they have done here, but they also slip measures through late at night in the way that he has described by bringing them into effect before the House has debated them.

Regulation 6 deals with information from public bodies.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Can the hon. Gentleman explain the difference between an occupier having a duty to fill in the electoral registration form in respect of other people in his House and having a duty to fill in the community charge form in respect of other people?

Mr. Soley: Yes, I can. One gives something and the other takes something away. The hon. Gentleman does not understand the importance of electoral registration as opposed to the poll tax, which is an unfair tax imposed on people in a way that will, in many cases, push them into poverty and is unacceptable. I would be more inclined to listen to the hon. Gentleman if he had lived up to the promise that he gave the Committee which considered the Local Government Finance Bill, on which I too was a member, to meet the homeless people with me tonight. He

refused and, instead, went off for dinner. Now, Mr. Speaker, you will notice that he wants to intervene. All of a sudden he wants to be heard. But he did not want to hear the people whom I was going to take him to hear. There is a lesson there for the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett *rose*——

Mr. Soley: When the hon. Gentleman promises to meet people and listen to them and then breaks that promise, he cannot assume that he will be listened to any more than the people to whom he has refused to listen. For that reason, I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Bennett: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order for an hon. Member to make a statement to the House that he knows to be untrue and then to refuse to allow the hon. Member to respond to it?

Mr. Speaker: I hope that no hon. Member makes any statement to the House that he knows to be untrue. We are all hon. Members here.

Mr. Soley: I know it to be true.

Mr. Bennett *rose*——

Mr. Soley: Those who do not think that it is true can read the *Official Report*.

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it not a long-established practice in the House where one hon. Member refers to another to allow that other hon. Member to give an explanation?

Mr. Speaker: That is certainly our tradition.

Mr. Soley: I do not think that the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) heard what I said. I told the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) that if he had listened in the way that he said he would, he would be entitled to be listened to. It is precisely because he will not listen to others that I am telling him that he cannot assume that he will be given the respect that he refuses to give to others. That is something that the hon. Gentleman should understand. It is quite good training for people to understand that and behave properly.

The Minister for Local Government (Mr. John Gummer): Will the hon. Gentleman remind the House that this is a prayer, not a sermon?

Mr. Speaker: Before we proceed, let me say that we should all listen to one another's arguments in the House.

Mr. Soley: The Minister is right.

Mr. Bennett *rose*——

Mr. Soley: He reminds me——

Mr. Bennett *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us listen to one another's arguments.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Did I hear you say that it is the tradition of the House that if an hon. Member accuses another hon. Member of something, the first hon. Member gives way?

Mr. Speaker: I certainly did say that. The hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) intervened and it seems that he did not like the reply that the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) gave him.

Sir Hugh Rossi: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I distinctly heard the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) suggest that my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) broke an undertaking. That is a serious matter——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I heard the hon. Member for Hammersmith say that the hon. Member for Pembroke was not listening. I am saying to hon. Members in all parts of the House that we should all listen.

Mr. Soley: It is a serious matter, Mr. Speaker, and the hon. Member for Pembroke should do something about it. As I was saying——

Mr. Bennett *rose*——

Mr. Soley: As I was saying to the Minister on the issue of prayers and sermons, the poll tax is a lovely example of the way in which Tory Members pray on their knees on Sundays and on their neighbours for the rest of the week. That is what the poll tax is all about.

Mr. Bennett *rose*——

Mr. Soley: No, I will not give way.

Hon. Members: Give way.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Hammersmith has impugned my integrity. He said that I broke a promise, and he now refuses to give way so that I may make it clear that that is not the case. This morning I telephoned his research assistant and explained that because there was a three-line Whip at 10 o'clock and because I was engaged on the previous business of the House, tonight was not convenient, and I said that we must arrange another night when I could take part in the visit.

Mr. Speaker: If we can get on with the debate, I might be able to call the hon. Member for Pembroke so that he can make those points at greater length.

Mr. Nellist: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. While I do not want to intrude, as the phrase has it, on private grief, or to raise instances from last April, you will have heard the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) explain—I appreciate that it is not your responsibility, Mr. Speaker—that he was on a three-line Whip at 10 o'clock. From 7 until 10 o'clock we were engaged on private business. It is interesting to hear that the Tory party puts on a three-line Whip—*[Interruption.]*—for private business.

Mr. Speaker: I know nothing about Whips.

Mr. Soley: As my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) points out, the hon. Member for Pembroke has given the game away. The Conservatives put on a three-line Whip for private business. But even that does not work, because the agreement with the hon. Gentleman was simple. It was that I would have him back here for the 10 o'clock Division, but he still would not come.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I urge you to use your influence to ensure that we get back to the debate, rather than consider the outside activities of hon. Members, because some of us actually want to talk about the community charge?

Mr. Speaker: I remind the House that this is a prayer—in fact six prayers—that the debate continues for one and a half hours and that a number of hon. Members wish to speak. I hope that we may now proceed in good order.

Mr. Soley: I am satisfied with that, Mr. Speaker, and I hope that the hon. Member for Pembroke has got the message.

The exemptions order deals with information from public bodies. The measure permits the Secretary of State to declare some information off limits to community charge registration officers. The Secretary of State has used his discretion nervously in this regulation. Names and addresses held by local authorities are off limits only if they are held for police or employment purposes. That means that if an authority has names and addresses held for sensitive purposes—child abuse or something of that nature—those names and addresses, but not the reasons for holding them, must be passed to CCROs on request.

Social services directors have criticised that—I recall my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) raising this issue in a late night debate—because it is seen as a breach of trust and a possible deterrent to those seeking help from, or volunteering information to, social services.

Confusion has also arisen over lists of names and addresses for education purposes. The Department of Education and Science has ruled that names and addresses of parents held by schools are not available to CCROs but that if the same names and addresses are held by local education authorities for the same purposes, CCROs must be given them on request. The upshot is that local authority employees and parents of schoolchildren will have greater rights of privacy from the CCRO than the people with whom social service departments have to deal in difficult circumstances in respect of child abuse, wife battering, and many other sensitive issues. Such information will not enjoy the same degree of protection.

Under regulation 17, people may have to pay a full year's charge in less than 10 instalments. Ministers say that in almost all cases people will be able to pay in 10 instalments, but that is not so. If the percentage payable falls below a certain level, the chargeable person will have to pay larger instalments or the full sum. That will hit the poor, despite the Government's assurance that it will not do so.

Regulation 23(7) deals with the famous "joint and several liability", which the Government tried to hide from public knowledge in distributing a leaflet that does not make it clear that one will be liable for the poll tax of one's spouse in certain circumstances. Right hon. and hon. Members know about that liability, but the public may not do so. It is important that they are given genuine information. When I forced the Government to withdraw the leaflet "Tenants' Choice" because it was misleading, they did so quietly and unannounced. If the Government know, as they surely must, that the community charge leaflet does not present good factual information that will help the public to understand the poll tax, then they should do the same again. The Government must appreciate that that leaflet can be misunderstood and misinterpreted by people who are trying to understand the complexities of the poll tax.

Part IV deals with enforcement and sets out the full panoply of the enforcement powers available to local authorites. In outline, having obtained a liability order from magistrates, a local authority can demand information from a debtor, make an attachment of earnings order, apply for a distress warrant or the sale of goods, and in certain circumstances apply for attachment of benefits and even imprisonment. We are debating regulations that will result in people who are unable to pay the poll tax being fined, and if they are unable to pay that fine, being sent to prison. We are considering the possibility that poll tax debtors will go to prison.

Conservative Members have perhaps deliberately hidden from the public the fact that if one is imprisoned for a criminal offence such as murder, one does not have to pay the poll tax. But if one is imprisoned because of one's inability to pay the poll tax, one is still liable to pay it even while in prison. The very people who cannot afford to pay the poll tax, and who are imprisoned as a consequence, are still expected to continue paying it while in gaol. One is better off committing a serious crime and being imprisoned for that than being sent to gaol for non-payment of the poll tax. Surely no one believes that that is desirable or necessary.

Other regulations deal with attachment of earnings orders, distress orders, and other provisions. Unfortunately, the debate is limited. It should have been much wider, so that right hon. and hon. Members could discuss the issues in depth. It is important to understand that when poll tax collectors use a device such as a distress warrant, for example, they will have extreme difficulty in identifying the ownership of goods.

Take the example of the young person of 18 or 19 who has just become liable for poll tax and who does not pay it. If a distress warrant is levied against him and an order for seizure of goods is made, that young man may say, "That is not my property. It belongs to my sister or brother." If Conservative Members are naive enough to believe such things do not happen, they should talk to fines supervision officers, for that problem is one that they frequently encounter. The Minister, who I believe is a magistrate, will know that that is right. We are prepared, however, to slip the regulations through after an hour and a half of debate.

Statutory instrument No. 443 deals with student regulations, which govern, among other things, who will receive the automatic 80 per cent. discount. YTS trainees will not receive it; nor will postgraduate students seconded by their employers in, for instance, the police, the armed forces and the Civil Service. Student nurses on the present nurse training schemes will not receive it—although some schemes allow them to do so—and 19-year-olds at school will not either. They are not exempt like 18-year-olds; they must apply for a rebate.

Such issues will hit the electorate suddenly in April next year. The Government may try to slide the regulations through late at night in the irresponsible and authoritarian way that they adopt from time to time, but people in the real world will not forget.

In the Personal Community Charge (Exemptions) Order, the Secretary of State has refused to use his discretion to extend the "severely mentally impaired"

criterion to degenerative conditions such as Alzheimer's disease. That, along with the hour and a half that we have been allowed in which to debate the orders, shows what a mean-minded Government we have. The exemption of certain mentally handicapped groups had to be squeezed out of them, and it is not difficult to find groups such as those suffering from Alzheimer's disease who are still not exempt.

What will Conservative Members do when people come to their surgeries and ask, "Why should my relative, who is suffering form Alzheimer's disease, pay the poll tax?"? They will use the same dodges as the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett), who slipped out rather than coming out with me tonight to see the homeless in the streets. They will do a big cover-up: they will con and duck and weave to fool people into believing that they care. They will say, "I will see the Minister about this." But tonight they will go through the Lobby and vote for the regulations, and that is why the Opposition will oppose them.

10.27 pm

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): I welcome the instruments, and I do not think that the Government have anything to hide or to fear from them. We made it clear at the time of the general election that we believed that there was a need for reform of the local government finance system, and these measures will ensure that that reform is implemented as fairly as possible. If anomalies crop up during that impression, we shall doubtless be able to take them into account.

I find no difficulty in giving my entire support to a system that replaces the present outdated and unfair rating arrangements. The idea that it reflects ability to pay is absolute nonsense. On Second Reading of the Local Government Finance Bill, I had the opportunity to ask the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham)—I am sorry that he is not in his place—whether he thought that the present system reflected ability to pay. It is obvious that it does not: there are so many anomalies.

When, not long ago, my right hon. Friend the Member of State visited my constituency, I was able to take him to an estate agent and show him the huge range of rates payable on properties advertised there, which did not relate at all to the capital value of those properties. So I think it is absolutely right that we press on with the introduction of the community charge under these instruments.

I want to ask my right hon. Friend for clarification on one point, and I am sure there is an answer to it.

I was rather perturbed to see from statutory instrument No. 439, in schedule 1, regarding the setting up of the tribunals, that in the area of each non-metropolitan county other than Essex and Hampshire the appointing body is the county council. It is a rather complicated order and I want to know whether the county council, when appointing these bodies, will have to comply with the Widdicombe demand that there should be a balance of political complexion. I am worried because, if not, in my county, the Labour party will undoubtedly pack the committee. I hope that my right hon. Friend can give me some assurance on that.

There has been some talk about the problem of joint and several liability. I do not think there is any problem here whatsoever. Most people will understand the fairness of this scheme.

In my opinion, the whole point of the introduction of the scheme is to bring greater accountability to local government. Unfortunately, that is sadly lacking with the present set-up. It is important that we have accountability, and by greatly extending the base of people who are paying for local authority services, we shall bring greater accountability.

We need to make it more and more clear that quite a considerable amount of money that local government spends will come either from Government grant or from the unified business rate. The amount that we are asking the community charge payer in each of the boroughs to pay is a very small proportion of the overall community charge. It is a small proportion that will represent an accountability of what a local authority is spending.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Can the hon. Gentleman explain where the accountability comes in? At present, something like 50 or 60 per cent. is raised by the local authority—that is accountability—and it is now being put down to 25 per cent. Accountability has been thrown out of the window.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am not quite sure why the hon. Gentleman is complaining. If he is complaining that the community charge will mean that a lower percentage of the money collected by the councils will come from the community charge payer, I should have thought he would welcome that.

Mr. McKay: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McLoughlin: Yes, because I think that the hon. Gentleman misrepresented his own point.

Mr. McKay: What we complain about is that most of the community charge falls on the community, not on business, as the rates do now. Therefore, 95 per cent. of the people that I represent will pay a vast increase on what they are paying at the present time.

Mr. McLoughlin: If 95 per cent. will have to pay a vast increase on what they pay at the moment, the hon. Gentleman must be representing some very high-spending councils. The hon. Gentleman really cannot have it both ways. He cannot suggest to me that the present system is in some ways fair, because I do not believe that anybody can justify the system as it stands at the moment. There is a need for a new system for greater accountability.

Mr. Gummer I wonder if it would help my hon. Friend in replying to the hon. Gentleman if he were to remind him —I am sure he would like to—that the proportion of local authority spending now covered by the domestic rate is about 25 per cent. That will continue under the community charge, and the business rate will continue to cover about 25 per cent. So the hon. Gentleman is talking through his hat.

Mr. McLoughlin: I do not wish to take issue with my right hon. Friend, but the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) asked me why the community charge would lead to greater accountability. Everybody will pay something towards local government expenditure. That will lead to greater participation in local government

[Mr. McLoughlin]

elections. All too often, we hear of only a very small number of people bothering to vote in county council or district council elections. The community charge will, I believe, lead to more people voting in local elections. They will take a greater interest in local government. Every hon. Member ought to welcome that. If they believe, as I do, that local government plays an important role, they ought to regret the abysmally poor turnout at local elections. There are no problems over joint and several liability. That is an Opposition red herring.

Ministers and many of my hon. Friends have criticised Greenwich for taking the Government to court. However, by doing so, Greenwich council ensured that my right hon. Friend's leaflet was given a great deal of publicity. We should be glad that Greenwich drew the nation's attention to the fact that the Government were telling people about the important changes that are to take place. Many county councils and other councils that are controlled by Labour have told ratepayers all sorts of falsehoods about the community charge. Rather than criticise Greenwich council, as many of my hon. Friends have done, I pay it a tribute. It has done a great service to the Government and to the nation. People now know what the community charge is all about.

We have nothing to hide. The regulations should be passed so that local government finance and accountability can be made much more fair.

10.37 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): These measures are the latest substantial step down the road towards three dangerous conclusions. For many people it is a step towards greater poverty, and for many people and many local authorities it is a step towards more bureaucracy. For many people it is also a step towards less liberty.

The poll tax will result in greater poverty because the system requires that, no matter how poor one is, in most cases one will not be exempt. The instruments implement attachment orders if people cannot pay. In the end, they will be unable to escape. I was once asked at a public meeting whether I advised people not to pay. I said, "I can't advise you to do that, because they will get you in the end—it would be far worse to suffer the penalty of going through the courts and your goods being taken than to stand up, argue the case and try to ameliorate the effects of the poll tax."

Like every other hon. Member on the Opposition side of the House, I opposed the Bill but came to the conclusion that if the system could cope with the bureaucracy it would eventually catch people. The legal penalties are in place. Those who already have to bear exceptional financial burdens will be susceptible to pressure from those who implement the distraint mechanisms provided for in the instruments. To escape that pressure they will have to borrow money. They will then fall prey to the abhorrent alternative of getting even further into debt to those who charge high rates of interest to help them out.

Secondly, some people who are extremely poor will not be exempt, for no good reason. The Government decided that students should pay only 20 per cent. If we have to have the system, that concession should be made. But people on training schemes may have an income substantially less per week that many students have, even on their low grants. The payment on a youth training scheme might be only £30 per week, whereas a student at a university, college or polytechnic might receive the equivalent of £50 per week. There will be differences between students and student nurses. Some people with higher activity costs will be expected to pay an undiscounted rate.

Thirdly, there are exemptions—thank goodness—for some mentally handicapped people. Those are the least of the concessions that could have been made. But other categories of people in equal mental adversity whose condition physically or mentally is equally problematical in terms of their ability to play a ful part in society, will still be required to pay. There is a specific exemption in the definition of residential homes for people who live in residential accommodation run by the Abbeyfield Society. That is specified in statutory instrument 222, paragraph 9(1). I welcome that—the society was founded in Rotherhithe—but I find it difficult to understand why it should be mentioned by name and be exempt when many other organisations running residential homes are not.

Next, there will be massive bureaucracy as a result of the measures. The estimate by the Department of the Environment of the amount that people will pay in poll tax was based on 100 per cent. compliance, with everybody being found and everybody paying, but I gather that it is now accepted that there was a substantial under-estimate of the cost of collection. I should be grateful if the Minister would tell us in his reply what was the original estimate for the cost of collection in Scotland and what is the latest figure in practice. I understand that the cost of collection in Scotland is about 20 per cent. higher than the Government estimated. That means that a massive additional cost will have to be met by the people paying the poll tax.

There is dangerous bureaucracy, as evidenced in the issue that my colleagues in the Isle of Wight county council have taken up with the Government and challenged. The Department of Education and Science has ruled that names and addresses of parents held by schools are not to be made available to the registration officers, but that if the same names and addresses are held by the local education authority they are to be available. Names and addresses might well be held by an education authority, because it might also be the social services authority, and might therefore know who the adults were in the house in which a child lived. The registration officer may acquire the information, but only by a bureaucratic procedure that will add to the work load not just of the collecting authority but of another authority as well.

The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) referred to but did not amplify the gory details of perhaps the most classic piece of drafting in any of the six orders —paragraph 23(7) of SI 438 on joint and several liability, a one-sentence paragraph of 139 words with eight cross-references in turn referring to 30 other regulations. If that is clear legislation, there is something wrong with the definition of clarity used by Government Departments.

There are also illogical and bureaucratic differences between people of 18 who are at work and have to pay, and people of 19 who are still at school. There are all sorts of ridiculous provisions which will make the system impossible to work. The worst aspect is tracking people down. Let us consider students in London. Students move around. They do not have the same accommodation for three years; often they do not even have the same accommodation for one year. In London there are more than 100 colleges, and there are 33 local authorities. Often the colleges do not know where the students are staying. There is a shortage of accommodation. Students move and cannot be tracked down, but local authorities will be charged with the responsibility of trying to find them.

Equally, there are many homeless people in constituencies such as mine. People live on the floors of other people's homes. They stay for a week or a fortnight at their brother's, sister-in-law's, aunt's or friend's and then move on. It is naive to imagine that when they move their first act will be to go to the local treasurer's office to inform him that they have changed flats and will be living somewhere else for a short time. The administration involved is ludicrous.

Another bad bureaucratic development has to do with payment by instalments. Apparently, it will be possible to pay in this way. That is fine. We can pay our rates in instalments now—10 of them per year—if we ask to do so. But the regulations require a minimum instalment of £5. The Government said during the debates on the legislation that poor people would have maximum rebates and would be able to pay, for example, on a weekly basis—with their rent, if they were council tenants. If the minimum instalment is £5, they will not pay small amounts regularly over the year. To a basic pensioner, £5 is a substantial sum if he has little else on which to live.

Finally, there are the dangers to liberty, which constitute the most frightening aspect of the six

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

regulations. I hope that all hon. Members are aware that the enforcement officers can demand that occupiers of houses give information about other occupiers, even if they have no legal responsibility for them. We can be required to grass on other adults to whom we are not related. Two other adults live in my house now. As the occupier of the house, I shall be obliged by the regulations to divulge information—if I am asked—and there is a penalty if I do not comply. The system should be directed at making us personally responsible, not at creating a nation of sneaks to do the Government's job for them.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hughes: I will not give way unless the hon. Gentleman is generous enough to concede that grassing should not be included in the legislation and to vote against it. It is an unjustified invasion of the civil liberties of a country which is supposed to be setting an example——

Mr. Bennett *rose*——

Mr. Hughes: I will not give way, unless the hon. Gentleman is prepared to make the concession that I asked for, and I do not think that he is.

Local authorities will be given a wide brief to collect information for the register, including collecting from the commercial sector. If they collect information from every Tom, Dick and Harry, there will be even more risks of data-based private information being leaked.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): I hesitate to interrupt, but unless there are extreme differences of which I am unaware in the English and Welsh legislation, it is the poll tax registration officer and not the local authority who collects the information—and is responsible to no one.

Mr. Hughes: I accept the hon. Gentleman's point. Technically, he is right. The poll tax officer is responsible to the Government, if to anyone. The problem is that he will be perceived as going out on behalf of the local authority, because unless the local authority receives the money it will not be able to spend it. So local authorities face a horrendous dilemma—if they want the full whack to spend on social services, home helps and care for the mentally ill, they will have to employ a large number of people to do the impossible bureaucratic job of securing maximum compliance with poll tax, and they will waste a great deal of money in the process, so their other budgets will suffer accordingly.

Reams of sensitive information about people's past records, their relationships and their mental and physical history will be around. If all such information is to be open so that the system can acquire it, people will be able to pry on behalf of the Government to collect money in a way that we have not seen before. It is already clear that the Government are centralising our society. Through these measures, they are taking steps that will allow them to pry and probe into homes in England and Wales as well as those in Scotland in a way that has never before been tolerated. If we had a representative Government, we should never have these instruments. The sooner we get rid of the present Government and replace them with a representative Government, the sooner we shall get rid of these measures.

10.50 pm

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): I shall first place on record the facts of what the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) said yesterday and today, rather than what he chose to say in the House, after which he refused to let the hon. Member whose honour he impugned have the opportunity to reply. He wrote a letter to me yesterday, saying:

"I have arranged for us to be in Centrepoint (hostel for homeless youngsters) at 8.45 tomorrow as agreed.

I shall have to return to the House of Commons to lead the Poll Tax debate at 10 pm but workers at Centrepoint would like to take you to meet other youngsters who can't find a hostel place."

When I got that letter, I pointed out to his research assistant, as I could not get hold of the hon. Gentleman, that I also had to be in the Chamber for the debate at 10 o'clock, and that I had to be there before then because I was acting as Whip for the Bill being promoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown), the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill. I offered the hon. Gentleman's research assistant another date. I said that I would be very happy to go on another occasion.

I am still happy to do that, but I am not happy to go with the hon. Member for Hammersmith, who has been so dishonest in his suggestions that I had tried to get out of an engagement. I put that on record as an example of the behaviour that we had from the hon. Gentleman in Committee considering the Local Government and Housing Bill, and what we are getting now. That is cheap, dishonest and contemptible.

The debate on the community charge is an important one, but I cannot understand the attitude of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) who has just said that it is outrageous that he, as the occupier of a house, should declare who the other adult occupiers of his house are. He has to do that for the electoral roll. That is the duty imposed by law on the citizen. The Liberal party always supported it. The Representation of the People Act 1918 was a Liberal Act. It is strange that the hon. Gentleman should think it right for the Government to impose a duty on the occupier to declare who is living in the house in order that they may vote, as is their right, but that he does not think it is also his duty, as the main occupier of the house, to declare, for the purpose of paying the charge for which they get that vote——

Mr. Douglas: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bennett: I am not giving way to the hon. Gentleman because he has repeatedly told the House that he intends to break the law, and that he does not intend to pay the community charge, so we do not want to listen to him.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the hon. Gentleman take on board this point? The difference between the two, as I am sure that he understands, is that the opportunity given to the occupier to declare who is there so that they have a vote gives those people a right and an intitlement. This is different. It imposes on them an obligation with financial consequences and prospective penalties for them as well as

for the occupier. This, in legislation, where people are meant to be individually accountable, by his Government's definition.

Mr. Bennett: That is an interesting proposition. The hon. Gentleman thinks it right that the law should say that where someone is to get a right, that must be declared, but when there is a duty or an obligation on them as a citizen, we keep quiet about that. That is disgraceful. That is the mentality of someone who does not report accidents to the police and does not want to know when there has been a crime because that is not a part of his duty as a member of the community. The SDLP should be in favour of citizens playing their full part.

Mr. Gummer: The duty and obligation to pay the community charge occurs not because a person's name has been put on the list but because the person has that duty as a result of an Act passed by the House. Therefore, the person who fills in the form does not extend the duty and the obligation to the people whose names and addresses he puts on that form.

Mr. Bennett: My right hon. Friend anticipates my next point. The Local Government Act 1988 was in the Conservative party manifesto on which I and my colleagues fought and won the 1987 general election. It was clearly set out in that manifesto and was passed by both Houses of Parliament without any difficulty whatsoever.

Opposition Members are seeking to tell the public which laws they should have to obey and which laws they should ignore.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): The Conservative manifesto specifically excluded any commitment to poll tax capping. Will the hon. Gentleman ensure that an amendment is introduced to remove that?

Mr. Bennett: The Conservative manifesto contains nothing whatsoever about the poll tax. When the hon. Gentleman talks about the community charge, we might listen to him. It is important that we call it the community charge because that is what it is. It is a fundamental philosophical point that the community charge is a charge for local government services. It is not a tax; it is a charge to all adults who are not exempt to pay for the services that they receive. It is a charge, just as the cost of a television licence is a charge, or the excise duty on a motor vehicle is a charge. People would find it strange if they were charged different sums for exactly the same services. Every person over 18 has one vote and has equal benefit from local government services.

The nonsense of the rates was that they were fixed not on the ability of the person to pay or his ability to use the services, but merely on the size of his house. A ridiculous and unfair situation could occur when four or five adults in a house would pay exactly the same in rates as one person living next door—*[Interruption.]* The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) is shouting, perhaps he would like to intervene.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the opportunity to intervene. Does he not recognise that, on the whole, richer people live in higher-rated houses?

Mr. Bennett: That is totally irrelevant, because it is not the house that uses the services. The people inside the house use local government services. The house is irrelevant. It was a convenience used by Victorian administrators who introduced the rates as a simple way of collecting a charge from local ratepayers. It had no bearing on the services that those ratepayers used. Houses do not use local government services, and five adults living in a house will use those services five times as much as one individual.

Mr. Carlile: Is it not a logical corollary to assume that the hon. Gentleman believes that all people should pay the same amount of income tax, whatever they earn?

Mr. Bennett: The hon. Gentleman does not recognise the difference between a charge and a tax. Income tax is a graduated tax for all the services available within the community, and quite clearly people are charged according to their ability to pay. The community charge applies to local authority services, and there is a limit to the services that a person can use.

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): Does my hon. Friend accept that people on higher incomes would be paying more for local government finance as they will be paying more taxes towards central Government funding of local government? Does he accept that there is a rebate system of up to 80 per cent. so that those who are less well off will pay less under the community charge?

Mr. Bennett: Like my right hon. Friend the Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) anticipates my next point. In England, 46 per cent. of local government services are provided by central Government grants, and in Wales the figure is 66 per cent. Therefore, those paying the top rate of income tax will pay 15 times as much towards local government services as those on the bottom rate.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Is my hon. Friend aware how much pain the Labour party's proposals will cause poor people in Northolt and other parts of my constituency who are fortunate enough to own their own home? They would be forced to pay rates according to the updated capital value of their home, as well as local income tax, under Labour's proposal. Those people are already in great difficulty trying to pay rates that have been doubled by the Labour-controlled Ealing council in three years. Many have to go without food to pay those rates.

Mr. Bennett: I have the most perceptive colleagues possible. My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) anticipates what I was going to say. In Ealing, the rates are currently £537 per head, for those who pay them. The community charge will be £234 and on the Labour plan of 80:20 for capital value tax and local income tax, the unfortunate Ealing resident would pay £695.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): May I take my hon. Friend back briefly to the point raised by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile)? Surely my constituency is not unusual, in that it contains many elderly couples and many elderly people who, sadly, have lost their spouse. They are living in houses that represent what they were earning many years ago. The houses no longer represent their current income,

[Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo]

because the owners are pensioners. Those are the people who are paying outrageous rates at present and for whom the community charge will deliver justice at long last.

Mr. Bennett: I am grateful to my hon. Friend who, as usual, speaks for the under-privileged in his constituency in a way that Labour Members do not.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): Is not the logic of the hon. Gentleman's argument about the relation of individuals to the service that they require that those who have the most children and who need the most social services should be paying even more because they use more services?

Mr. Bennett: The hon. Gentleman used the word "require". I said that the community charge was fair because it imposed the same charge on each individual who had a vote. The important point is, if it is related to voting, that people have a vote in local government elections, so they should make an equal contribution if they are able to do so. For those who cannot, as my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford said, there is a rebate of up to 80 per cent. of the full charge.

It is a misnomer to talk about "student nurses". They are receiving a salary and are earning twice as much—if not more—as students on a grant. To describe them as students is not correct. They earn as much as many other young workers and those other young workers will be in the same position with the community charge. I regret that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey should speak about student nurses without making that point clear.

The Social and Liberal Democrats want to have some form of local income tax which would mean, in most cases, the doubling of what people will pay in the community charge. The Labour party wants to go further. It wants local income tax and capital value rates as well. That would mean, in many cases, three or four times the amount people will pay under the community charge. The community charge is a fair tax and a reasonable charge to make on people, so we should support it.

11.12 pm

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): The debate has been immoderately short——

Mr. Nellist: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I do not presume to attempt to influence your choice of speaker. I want only to ask you to consider the following. This evening, the Government tabled six sets of instruments, with more than 94 pages of detail. We have had the maximum allocated time of one and a half hours. It may not be in your province to decide how much business can be tabled within a certain length of time, but it must be obvious to you—given that one of your roles is the protection of Back Benchers' interests—that to have no Opposition Back Bench speaker called during the debate due to the compression of business is not a democratic way to debate these matters. Perhaps when we come to consider the regulations further, either extra time could be allocated or those who have shown an interest by attempting to speak today might be borne in mind.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): The House agreed last Friday that we should proceed in this manner today.

Mr. Murphy: I can understand the feelings of my hon. Friend the member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist). It is of course, important to have a Welsh dimension to this debate, and although the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) represents a Welsh constituency, I am bound to say that he does not by any means speak for the vast majority of people in the Principality on the question of the poll tax. Indeed, he does not even speak for his own constituency, in as much as 60 per cent. of the people in his constituency voted for parties which opposed the poll tax at the last general election.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I won.

Mr. Murphy: Hidden in the details and complexities of the legislation lie some of the most fundamental problems of the poll tax and of how to administer it. We already know that the Government have introduced a tight timetable for registration. The period from 22 May—yesterday—to 1 December gives local authorities very little time in which to put the registers into operation.

There will be problems with social security records, which are bound to be used. Even library records will probably be used. The lists of parents that have to be provided to local authorities under the Education Reform Act 1988 will also probably be used.

There is no special treatment in the regulations for youngsters on youth training schemes, for student nurses, or for 19-year-olds who are still at school. We all know that the expense to both higher and further education colleges of appointing certification officers is bound to be immense and to add to the financial strain that is already affecting our educational establishments.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin), who has now left the Chamber, referred to the tribunals to be set up by this system of regulations. I ask the Minister to ensure that they are properly staffed and properly financed, because my experience as a former member of a rating and valuation panel is that such staff have had to suffer a shoestring budget for many years. All the signs are that the tribunals will be used much more extensively than they are at the moment.

I also ask the Minister to ensure that Ministers in Wales and his fellow Ministers in England consult valuation officers because I know that in south Wales there is great unease among those civil servants about the loss of their jobs. On the issue of enforcement, the court order for the attachment of earnings could lead to the dismissal of badly protected casuals and part-time employees. In Wales, we know all about that, because half our female work force is in low-paid part-time employment. Deductions from earnings take no account of the number of dependants or of mortgages or other vital commitments that people may have.

One problem with the method of payment and billing is that low-income poll tax payers will not benefit from instalments if the instalment results in a payment of less than £5. That is bound to hit those areas of the country, especially Wales, with an above average number of low-paid workers. One in four workers in Wales earns below £150 per week. If that is not a measure of low pay, I do not know what is.

Just before Christmas 1988, the Minister visited Cardiff and the local paper, the *Western Mail*, reported:

"According to Mr. Gummer, the son of a Welsh speaking vicar, the poor will get a better deal under the community

charge as will Wales itself because the new poll tax system will transfer almost £800 million a year from the rich south-east to poorer parts of Britain."

That not only shows a fundamental misinterpretation of how the business rate operates in Wales and England separately, but also a fundamental lack of knowledge of how ordinary people live in Wales and in other parts of the country. I hope that when the instruments come into force they will be enforced with a certain amount of compassion.

As for the cost implications of these measures in Wales, we were told only last week that the district councils in the Principality will be some £3 million pounds short. The local authorities wanted a specific grant of 75 per cent. towards the cost of administering the poll tax, not the uncertainties and the vagaries of the block grant. In my local authority of Torfaen, because poll tax spending was counted as part of the GRE, the council would have been better off without the grant.

The position in England is different. A specific grant of 50 per cent. is given to local authorities, and the other 50 per cent. is taken from the block grant. My colleagues from Wales and I do not understand why Wales has been treated differently from England. Whether in Wales or in England, the regulations are bound to have an enormous administrative and financial impact on local authorities and the people whom they serve. In my local authority, the number of staff dealing with those matters will have to be doubled. The number of distress warrants will increase from 1,200 to 5,000, the number of accounts from 25,000 to 77,000, and the number of payments from 95,000 to a staggering 570,000 in any given year. If that is not a recipe for administrative chaos in the months ahead, I do not know what is.

It is certain that the regulations are as offensive to British people as the poll tax. They impose a heavy financial and administrative burden on our councils and the people whom they serve. They threaten our civil liberties and offend the basic sense of fairness and decency among British people. The Government tried to delay registration, but it made no difference—the people rejected the poll tax in the Vale of Glamorgan by-election and in the county council elections in Wales and in England. By every measure of public opinion that we have seen in the past few months, the poll tax is as deeply unpopular as ever it was. I ask the House to reject the regulations.

11.11 pm

The Minister for Local Government (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): I will address some of the specific points that have been raised by hon. Members on both sides of the House.

The hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) referred to the way in which the grant was operated in England and Wales. In Wales, every local authority is in grant, while some authorities in England are not. If there is no specific grant, authorities receive nothing towards their costs. It was felt to be more reasonable to operate the system in that way. In Wales, all authorities receive the sums of money that are put aside for them because of that technical difference. I do not think that there is a great difference between us on that issue.

I thought that we came to the nub of the arguments against——

Mr. Pike: We did not reach the nub of the arguments, because we were not allowed to.

Mr. Gummer: Perhaps I should address the points that I believe constitute the nub of the argument.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) set out the three reasons why he believed that the measures should not be passed. He said that the measures should not be passed because they would create greater poverty. The hon. Gentleman was wrong. The rebates under the community charge are more generous than the present rate rebates. That means that, because of the rebates, many people will find themselves better off. It will also mean that single parents with families will be particularly helped. The poorest people will be most helped by the community charge.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey clearly has not understood the system. People receiving an 80 per cent. rebate will also receive an extra amount of money in their social security income support, which, in most cases, will cover more than the 20 per cent. It will be covered in all areas where there is no exorbitant spending by the local authority concerned. The hon. Gentleman was wrong in that regard.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey was wrong also, because the Liberal alternative as admitted by the Liberal party states that those on average incomes would be worse off if we have a local income tax than they would be under the community charge. The hon. Gentleman is wrong on his own party politics and policy.

Mr. Nellist: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey went on to claim that the regulations will mean more bureaucracy. I find it extremely difficult to take the argument seriously.

Mr. Nellist: Will the Minister give way now?

Mr. Gummer: I want to answer the point raised by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey.

The hon. Member claimed that the measures would involve more bureaucracy. That is rich, coming from a party that wants a local income tax. The Liberal party wants every local town hall to decide the details of income tax—to have a locally operated income tax supplement. The hon. Member cannot complain about bureaucracy if he proposes a system which would be far more complicated and expensive. Under his system, the whole of income tax would have to be rebased. At the moment, in most cases it is based on where people work. It would have to be rebased on where people live in order to be effective. The hon. Gentleman cannot complain about bureaucracy, given his proposal.

Mr. Nellist: Will the Minister give way now?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey also said that the regulations would mean less liberty. He said that somehow or other——

Mr. Nellist: Will the Minister give way now?

Mr. Gummer: I hope to answer the points which were specifically, carefully, and I thought courteously raised by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey.

However, the hon. Member lapsed into some rather odd words. He said that he would not want to grass on people. He did not want to be a sneak. He is asked to provide names and addresses so that those people may

[Mr. Gummer]

bear their fair share of the costs of local authority services. If they do not do that, others will have to bear more than their fair share.

I accept the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett). We understand that the Liberals are happy to give information when it means that people get their rights, but they are unhappy to give information when it is a question of people's duties. I had always thought that the Liberal party, in its fine old tradition which many people in the past might have liked, believed that duties and rights went together. The late-lamented Gladstone would have had some pretty tough words for the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey about duties going with rights.

Mr. Nellist: Will the Minister give way now?

Mr. Gummer: I want to respond to questions which have been raised.

The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) raised a number of points, most of which were spoiled by his rather churlish attitude to my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke. My hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke showed that the hon. Member for Hammersmith had gone as near to misleading the House as it would be parliamentarily proper for me to refer to. The hon. Member for Hammersmith said that my hon. Friend had refused to accompany him on an appointment when my hon. Friend had actually explained that he could not do so because of his duties in the House and he offered another date to accompany him. The comments of the hon. Member for Hammersmith were a scandal. For that reason, I do not see that any of his other points are worth answering.

Mr. Nellist: If the benefits of the poll tax are so self-evident, as the Minister has spent the past five or six minutes claiming, why are we debating 94 pages of regulations and orders in 90 minutes in the dead of night? Why were 21 million leaflets issued before the measures were debated, even though they came into effect before the House had debated them? Why did the Minister two weeks ago send a 620-word article to my local paper the *Coventry Evening Telegraph* and to the local paper of my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker)? Indeed, as I discovered today, why did his boss the Secretary of State for the Environment send similar letters to 500 newspapers? If the benefits of the poll tax are so self-evident, why have so much public money and so much Government time been spent on this? Does this not reflect the Minister's panic about the fact that the overwhelming majority of people hate this Tory tax?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman suggests that it is wrong to write a perfectly fair article explaining the community charge in his local newspaper. I understand that that local newspaper offered opportunities for others to write in as well. However, in its editorial, that paper stated that the opposition to the community charge was a load of old rubbish.

The hon. Gentleman is embarrassed because the *Coventry Evening Telegraph* wrote a good article in its leader column saying how out of date were the views put forward by the Labour party. I am sorry that it did that. I should have liked an article from the Labour party explaining the two taxes that it would like to put in place of the poll tax.

I come back to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey on this, because I do not want him to miss out. He asked whether it was true that rich people generally lived in bigger houses than poor people. The answer to that is that four out of 10 people living in above average rated accommodation have below average incomes. That is a fact of life. There is little connection between the ability to pay and the value of the house in which a person lives.

When the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) has explained in the *Coventry Evening Telegraph* why Coventry city council still will not carry out the ombudsman's directions on the poor people whom it cheated out of money, he could go on to explain to the tenant of a council house who had decided not to buy his house, that he would, under the Socialist tax, be taxed on the freehold value of the council house even though he did not own it and even though his income was not sufficient to buy it. I hope that he will be able to explain that on the doorstep. Very few Labour canvassers have been able to do so, and that is why there is such an argument in the party about it.

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: I shall have to give way to the hon. Gentleman. I made some personal remarks about him, so it would be only right to give way.

Mr. Nellist: Will the Minister accept that, 10 days later, the *Coventry Evening Telegraph* gave me the opportunity to put our opposition to the poll tax in the same number of words as he put the case for it? I am grateful to my local newspaper for that.

Over half the families in Coventry depend on state benefit, and the poll tax will force thousands into penury. Artificial arguments about what will happen in two years' time after an election are hypothetical and cut no ice with people in Coventry who view the tax with horror.

Mr. Gummer: If the hon. Gentleman is saying that, he is saying something that is untrue, so I am sure that he is not saying that. Anybody on social security in the way that he has suggested will get an 80 per cent. rebate and will have their social security uprated to cover the other 20 per cent. The only case in which that would not be true would be if Coventry city council was overspending to such a degree that it should be ashamed of itself. If that is the case, the hon. Gentleman may like to explain to the tenants that he represents that the council is overspending and living off the backs of those who can least afford it. But I am sure that he will not want to explain that.

Mr. Soley *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: I am not giving way to the hon. Gentleman, for reasons that he perfectly understands.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Gummer: I am happy to give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Wilson: I want to put one specific point——

Mr. Harry Greenway: The hon. Gentleman has only just come in.

Mr. Wilson: I did not just come in. I have been present throughout, trying to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister's weasel-like performance will not enable him to avoid answering one point about the regulations. He has not yet answered one point that has been made about the regulations—but he will answer one at least, and that relates to the alleged generosity of rebates. Will the Minister confirm that in the vast majority of districts in England and Wales, as in Scotland, any 25-year-old single person with a net income in the region of £60, will qualify not for an 80 per cent. or an 8 per cent. rebate, but for none at all?

Will the Minister also confirm that a person earning up to £65 a week and not qualifying for any rebate could have arrested from his wages only £2 a week, which the courts deem to be an appropriate amount? In other words, if a person in receipt of such earnings does not pay, and the Government are creating an incentive not to pay—*[Interruption.]*

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: It is clear that the hon. Gentleman gets his figures from the pamphlet "Ability to Pay" published by the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, the Child Poverty Action Group and the Local Government Information Unit, which unfortunately have their facts and sums wrong. The hon. Gentleman and I can discuss this matter in detail.

The help that is given to those who are not able to pay the community charge is more generous than that which is offered to them under the rating system as it stands. It is a means of making sure that one in four of the population will have the opportunity of a rebate, and 5 million people will get the rebate. Therefore, with the uprating, unless they have a local authority which is maliciously overspending or is unable to bring its spending under reasonable control, they will have sufficient to cover the 20 per cent.

Mr. Simon Hughes *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: No, I will not give way. The hon. Gentleman has had a good slice of time.

There are difficulties in taking any fairer system. It is much easier to have an unfair system such as the rates because it is levied on people's property, even though property has no connection with people's ability to pay and the property does not use the services. We tax property because 19th-century local government services were largely property services. We now have a personal charge, because we are dealing with services which are overwhelmingly personal services; 80 per cent. of them are concerned, for example, with education and personal social services.

The reality of the argument about the regulations that we are discussing is that the Opposition parties—both parties or both sets of Opposition parties or whatever collection one might refer to nowadays—do not want to have the rates, they both have an alternative of their own and their alternatives are more expensive to collect, less reasonable and accountable and put larger numbers of people in unacceptable positions to pay; and neither of them has suggested any sensible system of rebating to deal with the considerable attacks on poverty that have taken place. I feel strongly about this issue, because, as I have gone round the country, I have discovered why.

Mr. Soley: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are debating statutory instruments, and you will be aware of the complaints about the lack of time being given by the Government to hon. Members to debate them. Is it not out of order for the Minister to stray so widely that he is discussing the proposals of other political parties, rather than the instruments? *[Interruption.]* We will certainly debate the alternatives, but we want to debate the regulations now.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): That is not a point of order for the Chair.

Mr. Gummer: I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman's attack is based on the principle that he does not like the facts when he hears them. The difficulty for the Opposition is that the more one looks at the alternatives——

Mr. Soley: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I must insist that this is a debate about the instruments. If the Minister wants to debate the alternatives, we will do that. I ask you to rule that it is not in order to widen the debate into what other political parties are proposing when we are debating these issues.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Time is very limited, and the Minister is endeavouring to answer the debate.

Mr. Soley: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member is getting very close to disputing the judgment of the Chair. I am sure that he does not intend to do that. I remind him that time is short.

Mr. Soley: I am aware that time is short, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I am not disputing your ruling. However, I have not yet heard you rule on whether it is order, in a debate on statutory instruments, when prayers have been tabled, to widen the debate to include the philosophies of other political parties. I ask you to ask the Minister to stay in order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Minister is answering a debate on a wide group of prayers.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Member of Hammersmith devoted much of his speech to complaining about the complexity and nature of the orders. I suggest that, if it were ever the misfortune of this country to suffer a Labour Government in which the hon. Gentleman formulated orders, they would be so complex that there would be a longing to return to so simple a series of regulation as those before the House now.

The hon. Gentleman attacks the regulations without saying what he would put in their place. That is a very comfortable position for the hon. Gentleman to adopt. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), who attempts to interrupt from a sedentary position, wrote a newspaper article that was attacked in the editorial as being out of the dark ages. The hon. Gentleman was attacked by his own local newspaper for being totally unable to answer the case that I put in it.

[Mr. Gummer]

Perhaps that is why the hon. Gentleman has not favoured the House with a contribution on the community charge this evening.

The regulations are the proper way to move forward to the new system, which is fairer than the old because everybody pays their bit. It is fairer than the old because those people who need help to pay the community charge will get it. It is fairer also because, at long last, it gives accountability to local people and not to the management committee of the local Labour party.

11.32 pm

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dumfermline, West): As a Scottish Minister is on the Government Front Bench, I want to draw attention to some of the anomalies that now exist in Scotland. The hon. Member——

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the Order [19 May], to put forthwith the Question already proposed from the Chair.*

Question put:—

The House proceeded to a Division—

Mr. Pike *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As a Back Bencher, and having noticed that you and Mr. Speaker and Madam Deputy Speaker have occupied the Chair during what has been a difficult debate, I seek your guidance as to whether there is any procedure whereby the Chair can prevent such a sham of a debate and a sham of democracy that right hon. and hon. Members have endured tonight. Many Back Benchers wanted to speak on major issues, but they have been given no opportunity to make points for the Minister to answer.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman makes a debating point that is not a matter for the Chair. The debate was conducted in order. The House decided last Friday that the debate on the group of prayers should last for one and a half hours.

The House having divided: Ayes 144, Noes 295.

Division No. 211] **[11.32 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Cleiland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
George, Bruce
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Hardy, Peter
Haynes, Frank
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loftthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Neillist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Llin Golding and
Mr. Nigel Griffiths.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John

Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Staml'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. David Lightbown.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Nellist: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will be aware that the poll tax legislation, passed last year, left 736 items to be determined by orders and regulations. In a debate from 10 pm to 11.30 pm, we have considered six measures that take up 94 pages.

Four Front Bench spokesmen of various parties and two Conservative Members of Parliament were called to speak in the debate. Labour Members of Parliament wished to express the anger felt by constituents about the regulations, but they did not have the opportunity to do so. The regulations were introduced in a way that meant that the Opposition had to place a prayer on the Order Paper to force a debate.

You have just declared the result of the vote on the measures. During the last minute or so, they have become resolutions of the House. However, they came into force yesterday, 22 May. They became law for community charge registration officers 24 hours before the House took a decision on them. Those outside Parliament will be unable to understand the arcane and archaic way in which legislation that is enacted on 22 May is not debated until 23 May.

Is there any way in which you and your colleagues, including Mr. Speaker, can exercise any authority over the business of the House and ensure that the remaining 736 items that are to be dealt with by regulation or order are dealt with not at the dead of night but in prime time, or are given sufficient time so that all hon. Members can express an opinion on them on behalf of their constituents?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All that the Chair was doing on this occasion was carrying out an order of the House that was made last Friday. The Chair has no control over the length of speeches when prayers are being considered.

Mr. Nellist: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No, I have dealt with the point of order.

Mr. Nellist: Further to that point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have dealt with the hon. Gentleman's point of order.

Mr. Nellist: I shall be brief.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Nellist: On a different point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Very well.

Mr. Nellist: I thank you for your ruling, which I am not challenging; nor was I challenging the length of the speeches or your selection of speakers. I was challenging the length of the debate, which restricted the number of hon. Members who could be called.

PETITION

Football Identity Cards

11.47 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): I beg leave to present a petition on behalf of several thousand supporters of Derby county and members of the Football Supporters Association. I believe that I am allowed briefly to summarise their concern, although I am not allowed to speak to the petition.

They believe that the proposal to have football identity cards will have little impact on the problem of football-related violence. What concerns them is that much of the violence takes place outside the ground and that it is best dealt with, as it is in Derby, through co-operation with the local police. Where such violence has taken place within the ground, the club—Derby County—has taken its own steps, through a key club and in some cases through a lifetime ban, to deal with such difficulties.

The petitioners also believe that the proposal will hinder attempts to attract a new generation of supporters to our own or to other football clubs. In particular, they are concerned that this will deter the casual attender, who might have been attracted towards becoming a long-term supporter of the game.

Finally, they are very concerned—as are all football supporters—by the entry problems that they believe a card system would cause. They were concerned about it before the Hillsborough disaster, but their concern has been heightened by what happened at Hillsborough. They call on the Government in their petition to bring forward proposals that would have the support of genuine football supporters.

I beg leave to present the petition.

To lie upon the Table.

Rain Forest (Government Policy)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

11.49 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): This has been a good parliamentary day for the rain forests when the chairman of the 1922 committee chose to use his question to the Prime Minister on that subject. It is a reflection of his own interests, which I respect, in conservation. It is a reflection, too, of the work done by television companies in programmes like "The Fragile Earth", and the work of the Friends of the Earth and many others who have raised the consciousness of this important subject of the tropical rain forest.

I wish to put some questions of which I have given the Minister and the Department notice. First, on Népal, can anything be done about the urgent problem whereby, on account of relations with India, Nepal is so short of fuel that it has to cut down more of its forests than has been happening over the last few months? Could not something be done to help in the Gurkha situation which reached a climax with yesterday's statement?

Secondly, on Papua New Guinea, is there a case for helping those areas of the world that have rain forest that have passed laws where, if any tree is removed, another tree is planted? Those laws may be difficult to implement in the light of what the Japanese are doing in the island of New Guinea. May I recommend to the Minister a remarkable book by Evelyne Hong on the natives of Sarawak and the survival of Borneo's vanishing rain forest? Those of us who remember confrontation and were out there might reflect, as Michael Blair, who recommended the book to me and veterans of confrontation have done, that they did not risk their lives in order to see interesting peoples like the Punans and the Sea Dayaks being deprived of their eco-system. There is a moral issue involved.

Thirdly, I asked about the directives to the World Bank. I hope that the Minister will be able to make a statement. I put it as my personal controversial opinion that the World Bank should be able to make loans for nuclear stations. Many of my hon. Friends do not agree with this. I refer to the Minister's answer on 4 May:

"The development committee of the IMF/IBRD has already agreed to discuss environmental issues at its next meeting in September. Meanwhile, the World Bank is intensifying its work on these issues, including its role in the tropical forestry action plan.

The role of nuclear power is considered within the energy development plans of a few IBRD borrowing countries but its cost, high technology and demand on scarce human resources make it generally inappropriate at present for the vast majority of developing countries."—[*Official Report*, 4 May 1989; Vol. 152, c. *189*.]

That may be true, but the position in southern Brazil is different. It is immoral that the western world should get Brazil into deepening debt for nuclear power stations that are working at far from optimum capacity.

Fourthly, the Amar Indian chiefs Megaron and Payakan were my guests in the House of Commons. I took them to meet Mr. Speaker, for which I thank him. I also know that they saw the Minister. Perhaps he will reflect on his meeting with them.

Fifthly, I gave notice that I would ask what the attitude of the Government was in involving the European Community. I reflect that last week I was on an official delegation that had an audience with the King of Spain. I had the opportunity to ask Juan Carlos about the subject in the presence of our ambassador, Lord Nicholas Gordon Lennox. Is there any way in which we can persuade the Spaniards, who cut much ice in South America—even in Portuguese South America—to help with the problem of the rain forests?

My sixth question, about climate, comes from the Friends of the Earth's Charles Secrett and Koi Thomson. What can the Government do to help Brazil come to terms with the burning season, which is from early July to October? I am glad that Ghillean Prance, the director of Kew, and Ron Kemp and Tim Sinnott should be going out for the Department. Could we adopt a system like that of the United States, and have a check list of human rights and environmental criteria for evaluating proposed loans, taking into account whether the projects for which they are sought are environmentally sustainable?

We must think in terms of providing guaranteed access to satellite imagery, and help with interpretation, so that the rain forest countries can know what is going on—what forests are being destroyed, and why. Most rain forest countries' Governments face difficulties, and assistance must be given in a non-interventionist way.

On 11 May, the Prime Minister answered:

"The further assistance which we are currently discussing with the Brazilian Government with respect to the protection of the rain forests is likely to be in the area of technical co-operation rather than capital aid for equipment like helicopters."—[*Official Report*, 11 May 1989; Vol. 152, c. *490*.]

The Prime Minister, helicopters and I do not usually mix, but at the top of the Brazilians' list of requirements are four large cargo helicopters and two personnel carrying helicopters. They also say they need fire fighting planes, twin engined planes, gliders, vehicles, trailers, tank lorries, equipment-carrying lorries, trailer-pulling vehicles, boats for the establishment of bases, hard-hulled boats for sub-bases, hard-hulled boats, low draught fliers, camping material, and a radio and communication system. When Mr. Mesquite, the Brazilian Minister for the north, saw me in Brasilia, this was the list that he had in mind. We should take it into account.

Finally, I gave the Minister notice that I would refer to the *New Scientist* leading article of 20 May 1989, which states:

"Now it is the turn of the poor countries to expand. If the populations of the Third World are to be supported in their present and projected numbers, they must industrialise. The question is how. If they follow Europe and America—inefficiently burning large amounts of cheap coal and oil, demolishing forests and using inexpensive, chlorinated hydrocarbons for everything from pesticides to refrigerators—we will all drown, or fry together.

In Helsinki, China sought an international fund to help it to replace ozone-threatening chemicals with safe ones. The Chinese are not holding the planet to ransom. They know we are all in this together, and they want to use clean technology. But they will not be able to impose more expensive technology on an already hard pressed population when cheaper technology is to be had.

The same applies to India, Brazil and the other poor giants whose farms, factories and populations will one day control the fate of the atmosphere. And yet, Ridley, and his counterparts in the EEC, bitterly opposed such a fund in Helsinki."

What is the Government's attitude to accepting some moral responsibility? The rain forest countries may naturally be proud of their sovereignty, but rain forests are part of a world problem.

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

I shall cut short my remarks, to allow my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), who has played a distinguished role in this area, a chance to speak. I hope that he will catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Do I understand that the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) has the agreement of both the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) and the Minister to speak?

11.58 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I thank the Minister and my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). It is a welcome tribute to my hon. Friend that so many hon. Members are here for the debate.

My hon. Friend has pointed out a fundamental problem that the whole world is facing, and that the British Government and the British Parliament can assist in solving.

I have tabled a number of questions to the Prime Minister on the subject of the rain forests. Today's asked:

"what information she has received concerning the rate of destruction of the world's forests for each of the past 20 years; and if she will make a statement."

The answer she gave was that she did not have the information for the whole of that period but

"the latest internationally comparable figures were published by the Food and Agriculture Organisation in 1982 and relate to tropical forests during the period 1976-80."

So this is quite some time ago. The destruction rates were —in Africa 1·33 million hectares a year or 0·61 per cent. of the total; in Asia and the Pacific, 1·82 million hectares a year, or 0·59 per cent. of the total; and in Latin America, 4·12 million hectares, or 0·61 per cent. of the total. Overall, in that period, on average 0·61 per cent. of the total rain forest is being destroyed every year. In some countries in west Africa and Latin America, the rate has increased visibly since 1980, to the extent that the Gambia has lost 90 per cent. of its tropical rain forests. The situation there is catastrophic.

The Minister has answered questions on this subject many times in past debates. The main question concerns what can we do to influence the policies of the European Community, the World Bank, the international monetary fund and the foreign aid policies of the British Government. Much of the past development in Brazil of the Grand Carejas project was funded largely by loans from the World Bank and the European Community, which paid for cheap iron ore to be excavated, in order to pay for Brazil's debt. That also financed the destruction of much of the rain forest and the habitat of much wildlife and many people who lived in that area.

There are many examples of the IMF adopting a strategy of insisting that every poor country must produce its way out of debt—in other words, by going for export-led promotion of primary products, which has often led to the destruction of forest. It is short-sighted and inefficient. I have three quite graphic personal examples produced by the Sierra Club, the club of people acting as global environmental monitors on what the World Bank is doing. It quotes a man called Renato in Brazil, who could not believe his luck when he was given 100 hectares of rain forest to clear. The problem was that, after he had cleared it, as his friends also found, they produced good crops for a couple of years, but the soil was unsustainable for future crops, and the land turned into desert.

In Botswana, massive grazing was introduced for developing a cattle industry. The grazing took place, but that led to desertification as the forests were cut down to promote it. In Java, Indonesia, people from the city were given two or three hectares each to produce crops, but the deforestation led to local climatic changes, which led to serious problems of leaching of the soil, and subsequent infertility, and desertification.

For each country concerned, it is disastrous. For the individuals concerned, be they the indigenous peoples of the Amazon or the farmers encouraged to move into those places, it is disastrous, but for the planet as a whole, it is doubly disastrous because we are losing many sources of wildlife and flora. We are losing a major producer of oxygen and replacing it with a major producer of carbon monoxide, which contributes to the global warming effect.

We are looking for the strongest possible representations by the British Government for environmentally sensitive policies that protect the rain forests, and an understanding that, if we are to contribute to the world's environment, we cannot go on demanding such enormous debt repayments from the poorest countries and peoples. By doing so, we are contributing to the destruction of the planet on which we all rely for life. I know that the Minister has looked into this on many occasions, and that many changes are taking place in the attitudes of the IMF and his Ministry. We look forward to a much more robust performance in the future to protect the environment of the world and the people who live in it.

12.4 am

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Christopher Patten): I welcome the opportunity to debate a subject of considerable global significance with the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), who I know feels very deeply about it. I am pleased that the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) was able to intervene. The hon. Member for Linlithgow knows that I feel as strongly as he does about the subject. I visited the Oxford Forestry Institute for much of last Thursday and that visit increased my concern and interest. I greatly admire the work of that world-renowned institute and I hope that we shall be able to give it greater assistance in future.

I welcome the opportunity today to report the activity by my Department since the hon. Gentleman last raised the subject, in a debate on 13 March. On that occasion my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs set out the consequences of deforestation in the rain forests and elsewhere, and described our existing aid. Most importantly, he explained the outlines of the forestry initiative that we are undertaking in response to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's pledge to the House that

"we will direct more of our aid to encourage the wise and sustainable use of forest resources." *[Official Report, 24 October 1988; Vol. 139, c.15.]*

Since the last debate, the significance of my right hon. Friend's pledge has been reinforced by the seminar that she held on global climate change. Forest destruction contributes up to 20 per cent. of man's total carbon dioxide emissions—yet forests could provide a significant way of locking up carbon for lengthy periods and in that way alleviating global warming.

Halting and reversing the current alarming rates of loss of all types of forest would thus benefit us all. Promoting alternative sustainable livelihoods for the desperately poor around the world who are currently forced to clear forests for agriculture would help them by stopping soil erosion, flooding and loss of soil fertility. Trying to halt the unsustainable destruction of rain forests has the added global benefit of preserving the world's richest store of genetic diversity. With the prospect of all those benefits, it is no wonder that we are devoting considerable effort to our forestry initiative. We are concentrating especially on the most important facet—encouraging individual developing countries to direct more of our aid to forestry.

It is important that, before we spend money on projects, we should engage in dialogue with our partner Governments so that we agree the relative priority to be given to forestry within our relationship. Projects that do not meet the priorities of our partners are unlikely to be effective. As a prelude to that dialogue, my staff reviewed the possibilities and identified more than 20 countries where we are particularly well placed to help. The list is long because we in Britain are fortunate in the wealth of our tropical forestry expertise.

Since the last debate, dialogue with those countries has already resulted in an impressive amount of action. Most importantly, we have actually reached agreement with India on £40 million of new local costs aid for environmental projects. As the House might expect, given the high priority that India gives to forestry, we expect the bulk of this to be spent on forestry projects although it is also available for local costs incurred in helping India to adopt alternative strategies to the use of chlorofluorocarbons. I shall return to that point. We hope that the first project to benefit from the agreement will be a scheme to conserve the forests of western Ghats in Karnataka state of south western India. The western Ghats include the largest area of evergreen rain forest in India. The project will involve a joint effort by the local people and the Forest Department to reduce forest clearance, burning and grazing and to rehabilitate or replant degraded areas.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned Brazil and asked about my recent meeting with Chiefs Payakan and Raoni. As the hon. Gentleman knows, Latin America is not in general a focal point for our aid programme. The poorest countries and the Commonwealth continue to be our first priority, but we are very conscious of the importance of Latin America's forests and we are actively seeking ways in which we can help.

We have had fruitful discussions with two very senior Brazilian officials, the Secretaries-General of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and of the Interior. I shall be meeting Dr. Mesquita, director of the Brazilian Institute of the Environment and Natural Resources, at the beginning of next month. The Brazilians think highly of the research being carried out by the Royal Geographical Society and others in the Maraca rain forest project, and they would like the ODA to do more in that area. As the hon. Gentleman said, this week a group of experts, led by my senior forestry adviser and including Dr. Prance, the distinguished director of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, are visiting Brazil to discuss with institutions there how we could help.

One of the projects that our mission will be looking into is possible help for research on the effect of rain forest loss on climate and rainfall—a point to which the hon. Member for Linlithgow has drawn attention in the past. That is of particular concern to all of us. The group will also include an expert on urban environment, as the Brazilians are eager for us to help with the many problems of their huge and growing cities. It is reasonable that we should try to assist there as well as in the forests.

Mr. Dalyell: Is Tim Sinnott the urban environment expert?

Mr. Patten: I will give the hon. Gentleman further information on that later.

The Brazilians have not asked us for capital aid. I gather that they are likely to put forward proposals for support of that kind to the World Bank. Until our mission reports, I cannot say exactly what form our collaboration will take, but I am hoping to visit Brazil myself in July to carry matters forward. We give this issue priority. I have not only met Brazilian officials. I have also had meetings with the Indian Chiefs Raoni and Payakan, who have vividly, movingly and with considerable dignity, told me of their problems and of the need to demarcate their reserves to save them from further exploitation. I emphasise that I have promised to consider positively any proposals that the British charity, the Rainforest Foundation, might put forward to us for joint funding.

In that context, I was delighted to hear that the hon. Gentleman had discussed Amazonia with His Majesty the King of Spain. There is obviously a need for everyone to engage in dialogue with the countries of the Amazon basin about the global importance of their resources. Spain is especially well placed to help. The hon. Gentleman is right in saying that the European Community, in appropriate programmes, should take account of the environmental impact of development.

The mission to Brazil is not the only one that my staff are undertaking. A team has recently returned from Sri Lanka and is currently preparing proposals for a joint project with the World Bank aimed at research, forest management and reaforestation in the southern uplands. A team of experts are travelling to Indonesia this week to identify in discussion with the Government there areas in which we can provide further assistance.

We have also been active in west Africa. One of my forestry advisers took part in the tropical forestry action plan sector review in Cameroon in late April and was able to offer our support for a project in forest management and regeneration techniques as part of total donor pledges of more than $50 million. At present, there is little forest management or application of sustained yield principles in Cameroon, which contains twice as much utilisable lowland forest as the rest of west Africa.

Mr. Dalyell: I acknowledge the importance of west Africa, which the Minister knows well, but before the Minister leaves the subject of Asia, will he tell us whether, the delegation to Indonesia will also consider the questions of Papua New Guinea and Sarawak?

Mr. Patten: I am coming to Papua New Guinea shortly, if I have the opportunity. I have not exhausted the list of activities that are under way, but I had better turn to some of the other specific points raised by the hon. Gentleman.

The hon. Gentleman referred to relations between India and Nepal. We had a useful debate on that issue on 28 April, in which I made clear the Government's views. As both countries know, we very much hope they can reach a settlement satisfactory to both, before lasting damage is

[Mr. Patten]

caused to the development and economy of Nepal—already one of the world's poorest nations. We are, of course, particularly disturbed by the delays and extra costs inflicted by this dispute on development projects of great importance to Nepal's future and the consequences for its forests. The World Bank is evaluating the effect of the dispute. There has been no evidence yet that special measures are necessary but, as always, we would look sympathetically on any request for help. I was able to discuss that issue informally with Nepal's distinguished Finance Minister in Beijing a couple of weeks ago.

Of course, Nepal's forest degradation long preceded the present dispute and forestry has had a high priority in our aid programme over the past 10 years. Our current commitments to forestry projects in Nepal are about £7 million. A forestry master plan for the development of the sector over the next 25 years is being discussed by the Government and donors. We have agreed that the ODA should build on our existing strengths in forestry research and large-scale community forestry programmes.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow asked about Papua New Guinea. My hon. Friend the Minister for Trade recently met Mr. Philemon Embel, who described the existing structure of forest management, logging, export from and replanting in Papua New Guinea. I understand that efforts are being made to ensure that appropriate re-afforestation takes place, in accordance with the country's laws, but that enforcement remains a problem. At present exports, which go mainly to Japan, consist primarily of logs, and little processing of timber is carried out in Papua New Guinea itself. During the short meeting, Mr. Embel made no specific request for assistance from the United Kingdom or elsewhere.

As hon. Members will appreciate, Papua New Guinea is a signatory to the international tropical timber agreement. I look forward to hearing a report of the discussions this week at the ITTO council meeting in Abidjan. It is of vital importance to all who care about the rain forest that the International Tropical Timber Organisation should reach agreement on codes of conduct for the sustainable management of commercial logging. That is the only way to ensure that the resource will still be available for our grandchildren.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow mentioned the World Bank. Since its reorganisation in 1987, the bank has significantly expanded its environmental work, with special attention being paid to the threat of deforestation. In the bank's last financial year, it made nearly $170 million of new commitments for forestry projects, including conservation.

The hon. Gentleman referred in passing to climate research. Man-made climate change is possibly the greatest challenge to the principle of sustainable development. That is one reason why we attach such importance to the work of the intergovernmental panel on climate change. Dr. John Houghton, director general of the Meteorological Office, chairs the scientific assessment working group of the IPCC. The Government fund plenary meetings of the group and have made available a further £665,000 for a special centre and staff. This is the largest international review ever undertaken. The hon. Gentleman will be familiar with the research now taking place in this country.

We do not believe that panic measures are justified, but equally we agree with the hon. Member for Linlithgow that it is not enough simply to sit back and wait for our research programmes to bear fruit. To have any real effect, our responses must be internationally agreed and implemented, and they must recognise the difference between countries. It is with this in mind that we have recently called for the urgent consideration of a framework convention on climate change.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow drew attention to an article in the *New Scientist* about the Helsinki conference. That article is worth a whole debate. My views on the issues raised form the basis of an hour's lecture that I gave in Cambridge, a copy of which is available in the Library. All that I would like to say now is that the opposition of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and of other Ministers present at the conference, to a common fund for CFC replacement projects was based in part on the fact that the bureaucratic process needed to set one up would delay the practical help that we could provide under the bilateral aid programme. As I said earlier we have already offered such help to India. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will read my right hon. Friend's statement, and I will ask that it be placed in the Library.

I have no doubt that, as the hon. Gentleman said, we have to help countries such as India, China and Brazil to cope with CFC substitution as well as with the problems of forestry to which the hon. Gentleman has eloquently referred again today.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at nineteen minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 24 May 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

ENVIRONMENT

Unleaded Petrol

1. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentages of car refuellings now take place at garages which stock unleaded petrol.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): There has recently been a dramatic increase in outlets. The UK Petroleum Industry Association has advised that approaching two out of three refuellings now take place at petrol stations where unleaded fuel is available.

Mr. Martin: I welcome that reply from my hon. Friend and also the leaflet, "Adjust to Unleaded", which the Department of the Environment and the Department of Transport are producing and which I hope will have very wide circulation. Will my hon. Friend confirm that the wider availability of unleaded petrol is vital if we are to have more stringent controls on exhaust emissions? What are the Government doing about that and what do they intend to do in the future?

Ms. Bottomley: I thank my hon. Friend for his comments. The "Adjust to Unleaded" leaflet is supposed to give practical advice and encouragement to people to use unleaded petrol. It is certainly the case that the distribution and use of unleaded petrol pave the way towards the strict car emission standards to which we are committed. I know that my hon. Friend will welcome the announcement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State today that—provided that the industrially unrealistic interim standard of 1991 is withdrawn and there is a commitment to respect the unity of the market—we shall agree to the Commission's proposals for the new standards for small car exhaust emissions.

Mr. James Lamond: While joining in congratulating the hon. Lady on the information that her Department has issued to the public, I draw her attention to one point. When the owners of a number of cars listed as being fully available to use unleaded petrol consult the dealers—for example, Volkswagen vehicles—they are told that they have to use a tank of leaded petrol from time to time to keep the engines in good order. Will the hon. Lady investigate that?

Mrs. Bottomley: Indeed. I chair the unleaded petrol group which works with members of the motor, petrol and oil industries and various Government Departments. We have been at great pains to ensure that proper and reliable information is available throughout the country. Of course, the information provided by the dealer or the garage mechanic is vital. I have even attended a training day for garage owners to encourage them to give the proper information to their customers.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: I congratulate the Government on carrying out the recommendation of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry for a 10p per gallon gap —the largest anywhere in the EEC—in the taxation of unleaded and leaded fuel. Will my hon. Friend confirm that it is just as important to reduce the carbon dioxide emissions from power stations by having a balanced element of nuclear power as to control the amount of lead going into the atmosphere from petrol, which is also very important?

Mrs. Bottomley: I thank my hon. Friend for his comments about the substantial differential, which I believe is the second highest in the European Community. It has made a significant difference to the uptake of unleaded petrol. He is right, of course, to identify the whole question of carbon dioxide. At the Council of Environment Ministers the Minister for Housing, Environment and Countryside, my hon. and noble Friend the Earl of Caithness, will be pressing the Commission to bring forward measures to tackle greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles, which is a matter of great concern to us all.

Mr. Allan Roberts: The Minister has just made a most significant announcement, which should have been in the form of a formal statement. After a virulent, sustained and misinformed campaign by the Government against the catalytic converter and the adoption of stricter United States standards for vehicle emissions in Europe, have the Government not just done a U-turn by accepting the EEC directive on stricter vehicle emissions? Will the Minister confirm that although this will mean that all new cars will have to run on lead-free petrol and have a three-way catalytic converter the Minister's statement makes it clear that the Government are still trying to delay the implementation of those new standards from 1991 to 1993 and intend to move an amendment along those lines at the Council of Ministers meeting on 8 June? If that amendment is not carried, will the Government still try to hold up implementation of the directive?

Mrs. Bottomley: I apologise for having taken the wind out of the hon. Gentleman's sails and for disappointing him with my announcement today. For a long time the Government have believed that three-way catalytic converters and oxidation catalysts would have an important part to play in controlling pollution. That is one of the reasons why we have been so determined to extend the distribution and availability of unleaded petrol.

There is concern about the accumulation of carbon dioxide and the greenhouse effect. We believe that the right way to protect the environment is on the basis of hard science, not hot heads. We are seeking an agreement and it is time that the motor industry and the consumer knew the way forward. We shall welcome the Commission's proposals on the basis of the few conditions that I have made clear. We hope that we shall be able to encourage

others to follow our example in taking sufficiently seriously the problems of the greenhouse effect and climate change.

River Polluters

2. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment at what date members of the public were given the right to prosecute polluters of rivers.

The Minister for Water and Planning (Mr. Michael Howard): Members of the public were given the right to prosecute polluters of rivers by sections 31 and 32 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 which were brought into force by the present Government on 31 January 1985.

Mr. Hughes: Will my hon. and learned Friend confirm that all the extra measures contained in the Water Bill will be implemented fully by the Government whereas the measures brought in by the Labour Government were never implemented? When we combine that fact with Labour's total opposition to the Water Bill, it is difficult to see the Labour party as the friend of people who want clean water. Labour is on the side of the polluters.

Mr. Howard: I can indeed confirm that the rights of private prosecution will continue under the Water Bill, which is designed to achieve substantial improvements in our water environment and will help to correct the mischief from which we are still suffering as a consequence of the lack of investment in the industry under the Labour Government.

Ms. Primarolo: In view of the Minister's reply to the main question, may I ask what steps the Government intend to take against the South West water authority, which has now polluted rivers for the third time, this time with aluminium sulphate?

Mr. Howard: The incident to which the hon. Lady refers is certainly regrettable, but it did not affect the quality of drinking water in any way. The South West water authority has substantially reviewed its procedures since the Camelford incident and is reviewing the incident to which the hon. Lady refers.

Mr. Key: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that hon. Members on both sides of the House and Members in the other place who care deeply about the purity of our river systems should not be hoodwinked into believing that there is a simple answer to pollution? While it is clear that sometimes the worst polluters are the water authorities themselves, the ecological balance of our river systems is extremely delicate and a great deal more research needs to be carried out by bodies such as the National Environmental Research Council and the Freshwater Biological Association.

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is quite right. However, the National Rivers Authority will have a crucial role to play in ensuring that we have the highest possible river standards in this country. I am sure that my hon. Friend will be pleased to know that 95 per cent. of the rivers in the United Kingdom fall into grades 1 and 2—the highest proportion in any member state of the European Community.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: Does the Minister accept that the pollution incidents in the South West water authority area —there have been three within 10 months—are serious public problems and not private ones? Will he initiate a proper independent inquiry to discover why South West Water has mishandled things in such a way as to allow aluminium pollution to occur three times in succession? Will he do something to ensure that the privatisation of South West Water does not go ahead until that proper independent inquiry has taken place?

Mr. Howard: I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not suggesting that those three incidents are an advertisement for public sector control of the water industry. The latest incidents need to be seen in perspective. Neither of the two more recent incidents affected the drinking water supply, but a thorough investigation of both is being conducted by the authority.

Mr. Harris: I accept what my hon. and learned Friend has to say about South West Water but how many times have water authorities prosecuted themselves for the pollution of rivers or water supplies? I appreciate that he may not be able to answer that, but does he not agree that one of the great benefits of the Water Bill is that the prosecution role will be taken away from the water authorities and given to the National Rivers Authority?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It is most unsatisfactory that under the present system water authorities combine the roles of gamekeeper and poacher. We are moving away from that. The National Rivers Authority will be responsible for prosecuting under the new system which is being put into place and which I expect to bring a substantial improvement in standards.

Playing Fields (Sales)

3. **Mr. Radice:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to protect playing fields from being sold for purposes other than sport and recreation.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): We have urged local authorities to take into account the needs of the wider community and to consult local sports and recreational interests before allowing recreational land to be developed, but these must be matters for local authorities themselves to decide.

Mr. Radice: Is the Minister aware that according to the National Playing Fields Association 800 sites, or 100,000 acres of sports facilities, have been lost for ever as a direct consequence of Government policy? Will the Government therefore withdraw circular 909 and prevent even more of our playing fields from being taken over by property developers?

Mr. Chope: The fault does not lie with the Government but, often, with Socialist local authorities. The hon. Gentleman may not be aware that yesterday the Socialist ILEA decided, over the heads of the London Playing Fields Society, to sell 20 acres of playing fields in south London. That proposal was hotly contested by the Conservatives, but sadly the Socialists had a majority.

Mr. Tracey: Is my hon. Friend aware that a few months ago Mr. Neil Fletcher, the leader of the Socialist-controlled Inner London education authority said that he would take all steps to prevent property developers from buying ILEA sports grounds and building houses on them?

Yesterday ILEA agreed to sell 20 acres of unencumbered sports ground. Does my hon. Friend realise the consequences of that precedent, given that ILEA has more than 200 acres of satellite sports grounds? Will he give the House an undertaking to call in any planning applications to build houses on those sports grounds?

Mr. Chope: Any planning applications that are made would have to be referred to the local planning authority, which would consider whether the local plan was such as to give a clear indication as to what should be done with those playing fields. My hon. Friend is right to draw the attention of the House to what happened with ILEA. Fortunately, ILEA is soon to be abolished and will thus be unable to pursue any more of this Socialist humbug.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Does not the Minister accept that this is a national matter and, therefore, a matter for Ministers? Is there not a responsibility to ensure playing fields facilities for generations of sportsmen yet to come? Does he think that his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would be so supine if someone wanted to flog off the playing fields of Eton?

Mr. Chope: The fact that we should have more recreational facilities is a national matter. I am pleased to say that as a result of the Government's policies more people are participating in recreation than ever before. That is a sign that we have achieved a good balanced policy at national level. We shall be updating the planning policy guidance on this and hope to issue a new document before the end of the year.

Mr. Denis Howell: Is the Minister aware that most of ILEA's playing fields are in the outer London boroughs, which are not controlled by Socialist authorities? Will he therefore stop this nonsense and join me today in saying that it is absolutely essential for the future of community sport and school sport, on which all British sport depends, to stop selling off sports fields in any local authority whatever its political complexion? [HON. MEMBERS: "What about Labour ILEA?"] Labour ILEA has playing fields in Conservative areas, where the authorities will not purchase them—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Howell: It is all right, Mr. Speaker; they think they are on the terraces.

Finally, I draw the Minister's attention to the fact that in 1984 the now Minister for Sport—he is not present today—promoted a Sports Fields and Recreational Facilities Bill requiring the Government to monitor the sale of sports fields carefully and to take appropriate action. Why has he surrendered that proposal since taking office?

Mr. Chope: I hope that Socialist authorities up and down the country will heed some of the right hon. Gentleman's advice.

Mr. Hayward: Does my hon. Friend believe that any of the contributors from the Opposition have read his reply to the Adjournment debate on Monday night, particularly the reference to the sale of a sports ground in my constituency by the Co-operative Wholesale Society?

Mr. Chope: That comment is a further indication that the Opposition are clutching at straws. They do not have a consistent policy like ours; the sooner they develop one, the better.

Unauthorised Development

4. **Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any intention to strengthen the powers of planning authorities to deal with unauthorised development; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Yes, Sir. My right hon. Friend invited comments by 31 May on Mr. Robert Carnwath's report on this subject entitled "Enforcing Planning Control". When the response has been considered my right hon. Friend will seek an early legislative opportunity to strengthen the enforcement regime at present contained in the Town and Country Planning Act 1971.

Mr. Redmond: I am grateful for the Minister's reply, but will he tell us whether the Government intend to adopt the recommendations in the Carnwath report? If so, what are his views on the 10-year immunity for unauthorised use?

Mr. Howard: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman really expects me this afternoon to pre-empt the entire consultation exercise on which we are engaged. The Government take consultation seriously, and I want to study carefully the views expressed in response to the consultation before I make up my mind about any of the proposals.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: I welcome my hon. and learned Friend's announcement that there will be legislation, but he will be aware from representations that he has received from many local authorities, including my own, that they consider their present statutory position quite inadequate. There is now insufficient provision to deter a developer who wishes to break all the rules. Can my hon. and learned Friend give a guarantee that that deterrent will be there in the future?

Mr. Howard: I agree that the enforcement powers now available to local authorities are inadequate. That is why my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State asked Mr. Robert Carnwath to report on the matter, and why we are consulting on the report and hope to proceed to action.

Mr. O'Brien: Can the Minister give us any idea of the timetable for the introduction of legislation, and when the consultation process will end? In the past 10 years of Tory rule, little has been done to prevent the abuse of planning laws. The appeal procedure is a costly and lengthy one for local authorities, and they must also suffer uncertainty about the outcome. It is therefore important that action be taken as soon as possible. Will the Minister also take on board the issue of third parties who may be aggrieved? Will they receive protection so that they can make representations in the event of abuse of planning laws?

Mr. Howard: There will certainly be opportunities for all interested parties to make representations. As I said in my original answer, my right hon. Friend will wish to legislate on the matter at the earliest opportunity.

Peak Park Planning Board

5. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to introduce direct elections to the Peak park planning board.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): I have no plans to do so.

Mr. Knox: How does my right hon. Friend justify the fact that the Peak park is one of only two areas in the country where planning decisions are made by people who are not directly elected? Does he regard that as fair to those who live there?

Mr. Ridley: I know and acknowledge my hon. Friend's strong feelings and persistence on that point, but he will appreciate that if any change is made it will be necessary also to alter the arrangements for electing national park planning authorities—all of them, not just one or two. In Northumberland, only 2,500 people live in the national park, so such a solution would not be appropriate.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does the Secretary of State recall that when greater Manchester council was abolished the place for its elected representatives on the Peak planning authority was abolished? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that large numbers of people in greater Manchester enjoy visiting the Peak district for recreation and feel that they ought to have more say in the way in which its planning authority operates? They are particularly concerned that existing guaranteed access to water authority land should be retained and that the Peak park planning authority will not have to pay more for that access.

Mr. Ridley: Yes, and I am equally certain that many people living in the countryside would like more say in the way in which Manchester city council runs its affairs.

Mr. David Nicholson: Is my right hon. Friend aware that those of us who represent constituencies in which national parks are situated appreciate the consultations that his Department holds with right hon. and hon. Members on the selection of the people who are to serve on planning authorities? Does he agree that voluntary organisations and societies representing people who love the countryside have an important role to play? Is he aware that last weekend the Exmoor Society, which started with a victory over a proposal to plant conifers on a large part of Exmoor, celebrated its 30th anniversary? Will my right hon. Friend encourage the work of such voluntary societies?

Mr. Ridley: I shall certainly do so, and I join my hon. Friend in celebrating the anniversary to which he referred. I hope that he feels that our decision to restrict grants for coniferous plantations on the uplands of England makes a contribution of comparable value.

Mr. Harry Barnes: Does the Secretary of State agree that one problem arising in direct elections is the size of constituency which should be involved? My constituents make regular use of the Peak park and should therefore be included in any extended franchise. If that happens, they should also have some control over what happens in the Peak park area. Water privatisation is interfering with rights of access there. Does the Minister agree that those elected under any transformed electoral system should be able to influence that?

Mr. Ridley: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that 12 different local authorities have part of their areas within the Peak district national park, but I entirely disagree with his comments about the Water Bill, to which the democratically elected Government and Parliament have given a fair wind because they believe it to be the right measure. The hon. Gentleman may be unaware that the Bill provides full safeguards for access to hitherto accessible water authority land.

Mortgage Repossessions

6. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the latest figures for homelessness arising from mortgage repossessions in the south-east and south-west of England.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. David Trippier): Estimates from local authority returns for the fourth quarter of 1988 are that about 300 households in London and the south-east, and about 100 in the south-west, were accepted by local councils as homeless as a result of mortgage repossessions.

Ms. Primarolo: Does the Minister accept that as a result of the Government's continuing disastrous economics policies, which brought yet another rise in interest rates today, the problem of mortgage repossessions is becoming even more serious? Is it not true that the figures that he gave do not take into account repossessions by banks and finance houses, and that the true proportion of homeless people in the priority need group presenting themselves to local authorities is one in 10? Is the Minister aware that the situation is deteriorating rapidly, and what action does he intend to take to solve this disastrous problem in the housing market?

Mr. Trippier: I can only describe the hon. Lady's figures as nonsense. The figures that I have already given in the substantive answer do not help the case that she is seeking to advance. The truth is that, according to the latest statistics, there has been a decline in the number of mortgage repossessions in the past two years. On the very point that the hon. Lady made about the economy, the director general of the Building Societies Association recently said:

"The decline in the number of repossessions and arrears is consistent with the improvement in performance of the economy in recent years and . . . the sharp fall in unemployment"

since

"the middle of 1986."

Mr. Heddle: Does my hon. Friend agree that the best advice that he can give those who find themselves in difficulties with their mortgages is not to wait until the 59th minute of the 11th hour with the bailiffs knocking at the door, but to go to the building society office that they deal with, put the problem to them and reschedule the borrowing? Does he further agree that in such cases there may be a case for building societies and other reputable lending institutions to take properties back and relet them to the former owners to prevent pressure on housing waiting lists?

Mr. Trippier: I agree with my hon. Friend's earlier point. That is sound advice. Experience has shown that in those circumstances building societies are, in the vast majority of cases, sympathetic, and that has contributed to the fairly dramatic fall that we have seen in the figures that I have already given to the House.

Mr. Soley: The Minister's figures are misleading because they apply only to building societies, as the societies make clear. My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) is right. The fastest growing area of homelessness for families is mortgage repossessions from all mortgage companies and the local authorities are having to pick up the bill. Why does not the Minister put that right? Does he remember the Tory party's promise in 1979 given by his ex-housing spokesman, supported by the Prime Minister in 1980, that mortgage rates would not rise above 9·5 per cent. under the Tory Government? Except on two brief occasions they have never been under 10 per cent. in the past 10 years.

Mr. Trippier: The hon. Gentleman knows why we have to have this temporary period of high interest rates. Several undertakings have been given by my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer on that front. The main purpose is to reduce inflation—a lesson that was never learnt by the Labour party in office when its record was disastrous. We have not got anywhere near the 27 per cent. that inflation reached then.

I question where the hon. Gentleman gets his figures for his earlier point. We have to give the figures that are available from a number of sources. They have to be correct and subject to parliamentary reply. The hon. Gentleman's figures are pure hypothesis.

Mr. Squire: Does my hon. Friend agree that, given that all the published statistics show that homelessness through mortgage arrears is a small proportion of those facing homelessness, the only purpose of the campaign being waged by the Opposition must be to alarm many people who have fallen into mortgage arrears and possibly to deter those who would otherwise buy their homes?

Mr. Trippier: I could not agree more with my hon. Friend. I genuinely believe that the campaign to which he referred which has been waged this week will not do a single thing to solve the problem—not a single thing. To put the matter in perspective, although it is distressing to the people involved—I emphasise again that no individual or political party has a monopoly on compassion—the latest figures show that less than one third of 1 per cent. of mortgage advances result in possession of the property by the lender.

County Hall, London

7. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has regarding the future use of the county hall, London SE1.

Mr. Ridley: The future use of county hall is in part the subject of an appeal to the Court of Appeal against a High Court decision made in March 1988 and in part the subject of planning appeals recently submitted to me. Arrangements are in hand for the holding of a public inquiry. I cannot comment on the proposals.

Mr. Banks: Is not the conversion of county hall into a luxury hotel a studied insult to the homeless of London and to Londoners generally? Would not the Secretary of State do well to advise the sleazebags who are coming up with this particular proposal that a Labour Government will take county hall back into public ownership by compulsory purchase and they will lose an awful lot of money unless they back off now?

Mr. Ridley: I cannot comment on the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question, but I can assure him that the hypothesis contained in the second part certainly will not come true.

Mr. Gow: In what ways would the progress of mankind be impeded if further municipal headquarters, notably those owned and occupied by Socialist authorities, were sold to the private sector?

Mr. Ridley: I confess that I am stumped by my hon. Friend's question.

Bad Landlords

8. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to counter the activities of bad landlords in the private rented sector.

Mr. Ridley: The Government significantly strengthened the law against harassment in the Housing Act 1988.

Mr. Meale: As there will certainly be a future Labour Government, has the right hon. Gentleman noted the Labour party's commitment to tenants in private sector accommodation to provide additional protection by offering them the opportunity to opt for decent landlords in non-resident properties? Is the right hon. Gentleman prepared immediately to offer that to tenants in the private sector?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman is too early in that he predicts something that will not happen, yet too late in that we have already taken legislative steps to improve the law against harassment. The offence of

"Harassing a tenant knowing or having reasonable cause to believe that this was likely to cause him to leave his home"

is an improvement on previous law.

The hon. Gentleman probably is not aware that there is a new right to civil damages effective from 9 June based on the landlord's profit from illegal eviction. In a case brought by the Hammersmith and Fulham tenancy relations department a landlord was put in prison for 28 days under the new legislation. I can hardly think that the hon. Gentleman is dissatisfied with that.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: As the other half of the coin of private landlords is public landlords, is my right hon. Friend satisfied that enough is being done to deal with bad public landlords such as Camden council and others?

Mr. Ridley: I agree with my hon. Friend, who knows that we are continuing to take measures both to get publicly owned stock properly and fully used and to improve the standard of management of some local authorities, which leaves a lot to be desired.

Mr. Soley: Why is it that the tenant of a Mr. Rachman or a Mr. Hoogstraten cannot have the right to change his landlord?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman knows full well that the public sector is not in competition with the private sector in many areas, and that shows very much in local authorities' service to their tenants.

Mr. Leigh: Does not the history of well-intentioned efforts by Government since the first world war to regulate the private rented sector prove beyond peradventure two economic facts of life—that shortages raise prices and that Governments create shortages?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend is right. The effect of the Rent Acts since the end of the first world war has deprived large numbers of people of the opportunity to have the sort of accommodation that they wanted. One of the great achievements of this Government is that that restriction on supply has been ended, at least for new tenants.

Recycled Paper

9. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of paper used in Government offices is recycled paper.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Most paper and paper products used by Government Departments contain some recycled paper. A growing proportion is 100 per cent. recycled.

Mr. Bruce: Does the Minister acknowledge that one of the brakes on the expansion of the use of recycled paper is that, in general, it is more expensive than freshly produced paper? Would not a considerable expansion of purchasing by a major purchaser such as the Government ensure that manufacturers had the volume to reduce prices and so extend the use of recycled paper? Are the Government prepared to expand the figures that the hon. Lady has given to the House?

Mrs. Bottomley: Government Departments are responsible for their own purchasing policies, but Her Majesty's Stationery Office is able and willing actively to explain to Departments the qualities of the paper that are available at an economically viable price which offer good value for money. All Department of the Environment ministerial correspondence uses fully recycled paper. A great deal of the Department's other paper is fully recycled. In other areas, a proportion of the paper has been recycled. My hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins) co-ordinates a group of Ministers who are trying to encourage and promote recycling. Other Government Departments are looking again at the issue.

Mr. Paice: Does my hon. Friend agree that most paper is made from coniferous soft woods that are grown in many parts of the northern hemisphere as a crop, just like a conventional agricultural crop? In attempting to protect the overall quantity of paper that is used, we must ensure that we maintain an adequate level of afforestation in the northern hemisphere.

Mrs. Bottomley: As my hon. Friend has said, the wood used for paper production is a managed crop. However, the Government recognise that recycled paper has a very important part to play. The majority of the input into the mills is recycled. We are the fourth largest user of waste paper in the world.

Ms. Walley: Does the Minister agree that there is far more to a comprehensive waste policy in the United Kingdom than bagging, binning and winning it? Does she not agree that 70 per cent. of domestic waste consists of packaging and newsprint and that currently—this is what concerns the Opposition—less than 30 per cent. of our total consumption of paper and board is recycled? When will the Government introduce an integrated waste management policy that takes full account of the need to recycle? When will the Minister put her own house in order and say why all my previous requests that recycled paper should be used in the Palace of Westminster have fallen on the deaf ears of the Secretary of State for the Environment, who is sitting next to her?

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Lady must know that her last point is a matter for the Services Committee. The Government fully recognise the importance of recycling in helping to minimise waste and conserve resources and energy, whenever it makes economic sense and the proper quality can be provided. There are many remarkable initiatives to promote recycling. Only this week I launched Sheffield's recycling city initiative. Where it makes economic sense, Sheffield hopes to recycle a great number of products. It is important to work with the private sector. The way in which the private sector in Sheffield is working with the voluntary bodies and the local authority is a good example.

Mr. Redwood: Has my hon. Friend had a chance to work out how many trees have had to be cut down to provide material for all the press releases, letters and motions put forward by the Liberal party, claiming credit for other people's good ideas and hard work?

Mrs. Bottomley: I have not had the opportunity to work that out, but, rather than bagging and binning them, I hope that they will bag them, bin them and send them off to the City of Westminster where I know that the waste paper will be recycled and put to good use.

Urban Development Corporations

10. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of each urban development corporation's budget in both 1988-89 and 1989-90 is allocated for community projects and voluntary sector initiatives.

Mr. Trippier: The percentages of UDC budgets allocated for community projects and voluntary sector initiatives for each of the years specified are as follows:

	1988-89	*1989-90*
Black Country	1·3	1·8
Bristol	0	1·0
Central Manchester	1·4	1·6
Leeds	0·9	0·1
London docklands	3·3	6·5
Merseyside	4·5	3·1
Sheffield	0·4	0·7
Teesside	2·4	0·3
Trafford Park	0·1	0·3
Tyne and Wear	0·3	0·9

Mr. Michie: Obviously the figures are not as high as we should like them to be, and we are disappointed. Does the Minister agree that it is essential that priority should be

given to community projects, such as sports, open space parks and social housing? What advice is he giving to the chairmen of the UDCs to discuss these issues with the local authorities and the voluntary sector, both of which have vast experience of these matters?

Mr. Trippier: I certainly have no quarrel with the last point that the hon. Gentleman made. Sheffield development corporation is anxious to work with the local authority. As the hon. Gentleman knows, a number of local councillors are on the board. Among the initiatives supported by the development corporation are ethnic minority, social, educational and recreational projects, which is impressive. There are statutory responsibilities of Sheffield city council that have not passed to the urban development corporation. Those powers are retained by the city council. I cannot believe that the hon. Gentleman would wish us to transfer those powers to the UDC.

Mr. Patnick: I thank my hon. Friend for the answer that he gave to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie) who, as a former Sheffield city councillor, will probably recollect that the powers are there. The local authority has power to do such things. Various leaders of Sheffield city council are members of the UDC and I am sure that the two bodies talk to each other. Furthermore, Sheffield city council is the planning authority or assists with planning for the development corporation.

Mr. Trippier: Indeed. We have an agreement with Sheffield development corporation and the city council that the council should be the agency for planning. That is a step forward. I detected in the substantive question on the Order Paper some antagonism. Contrary to what I expected, the hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie) was not antagonistic in his supplementary—in stark contrast to his contributions in the past.

Mr. George Howarth: I welcome the revitalisation work that is being carried out on the waterfront in Liverpool and the work of the Merseyside development corporation. The Minister will be aware of the widespread concern because some of the voluntary sector and community initiatives that are desperately needed in the area have not got off the ground. Will the Minister give continued attention to trying to find ways of using resources to benefit the local people rather than just tourists and businesses?

Mr. Trippier: I shall consider the point that the hon. Gentleman has raised. The main point is that a development corporation should not in any way supplant work that could be done by a borough council or, as in Liverpool, a city council. I recognise that development corporations can in some cases act as a catalyst. There is a good example in the Merseyside development corporation with regard to training and the support that it gives to Merseyside Education Training Enterprise Limited.

Paper Conservation

11. **Mr. Nicholas Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce environmental measures to stop the excessive use of paper so as to save depletion of timber resources.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Government promote recycling of paper wherever it is economically viable to do so. The use of recycled paper is increasing and already the United Kingdom is the fourth largest user of waste paper in the world. There are no plans for compulsory restrictions on the use of paper.

Mr. Baker: Is my hon. Friend aware that efforts on recycling will be welcome on both sides of the House, as will efforts to encourage the planting of trees? Will my hon. Friend join me in a campaign against the excessive use of paper by mindless lobby campaigns, oversized and unreadable Sunday newspapers, junk mail and unnecessary photocopying, the waste of paper in Whitehall and, last but not least, the waste of paper in the House of Commons?

Mrs. Bottomley: I endorse the points made by my hon. Friend. I think that most hon. Members and members of the Government agree that there is far too much paper in Whitehall. The only difficulty is that it has to go through Ministers' boxes on its way to being recycled by the City of Westminster. The only redeeming feature of junk mail is that if it has been through the Post Office in the last month it has at least arrived with "We love unleaded petrol" franked on it.

Mr. Haynes: Does the Minister agree that there is a shocking waste of paper? I cannot agree with her reply. The Secretary of State at her side is responsible for the environment. Why do we keep finding confidential Government documents on landfill sites? That shows clearly that the Government are wasting paper because the documents do not tell us anything. I suggest that we should recycle the Secretary of State.

Mrs. Bottomley: That was an uncharacteristically ungenerous remark from the hon. Gentleman about my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State who has pioneered many achievements for the environment. I shall not respond in kind as, although I should like many Opposition Members to be recycled, I would not apply that insult to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Burns: Is my hon. Friend aware that enough litter and waste paper is deposited illegally in Britain each year to reforest an area the size of Wales? Does she accept that any initiatives taken by her and the Department to encourage the recycling of paper and, therefore, saving the timber stock, are to be warmly applauded?

Mrs. Bottomley: I thank my hon. Friend who has done a great deal to promote activity and interest in the war on litter. Litter is offensive and needless and, as my hon. Friend well knows, the Government are determined to tackle the problem of litter once and for all. Not only is it a waste of resources, but it is unsightly and offensive and there is no place for it in a modern Britain.

River Quality

14. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of rivers in the United Kingdom were in good or fair condition at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Howard: The 1985 river quality surveys for England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland indicated that about 95 per cent. of river lengths in the

United Kingdom were classified as good quality or fair quality; that is the latest year for which comprehensive figures are available.

Mr. Shepherd: Will my hon. and learned Friend confirm that the River Wye in my constituency is up to the mark, as it should be? Secondly, will he confirm that he is bringing the greatest possible pressure to bear on rivers in the United Kingdom which are not yet up to the top mark and that he is sustaining the greatest possible pressure on the rivers in the remainder of the European Community countries so that British industry is not disadvantaged in such an important area of trade?

Mr. Howard: Yes. No other member state in the European Community has a higher proportion of its river length in the top two grades of river quality than the United Kingdom. The River Wye has consistently been of class 1 quality for a considerable time.

Mr. Barron: Will the Minister tell us the exact class of the River Rother from which my constituency gets its name? When are we going to start cleaning up that river?

Mr. Howard: Unfortunately the River Rother is not in either of the top two grades of river quality, but the hon. Gentleman should appreciate that its present condition is the result of activities that have continued for generations. The clean-up has started and its pace will quicken when the water industry is in the private sector.

Sir Giles Shaw: I entirely agree with my hon. and learned Friend's comment about the River Rother. Does he accept that the River Aire, which also suffers from excessive industrial effluent, will likewise take a considerable time to reach the proper grade? In that regard, will he confirm that the National Rivers Authority will not be slow to set up regional operations within the Yorkshire Water region so that a proper plan can be developed and adhered to in the new-found capacity of the plcs to borrow and spend money?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The National Rivers Authority will take precisely the action that he has identified. The attitude of Opposition Members on this, as on so many other matters, is that things are absolutely dreadful as they are, so let us keep them exactly as they are.

Mr. Blunkett: Will the Minister comment—as there has not been a statement on the subject in this House—on the decision, announced in the other place, that £5·5 billion will be written off the debt of the water authorities to make their flotation a success? Is he aware that it will not be the sale of our water industry but a daylight giveaway?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman's comments are entirely incorrect, and I refer him to the *Hansard* of what my noble Friend Lord Caithness said in the other place. The write-off of the £5·5 billion refers only to the debt to the national loans fund which takes place on every privatisation. It will be replaced by securities with which each company will enter the private sector, and we shall announce our decisions on those securities at the appropriate time. If Opposition Members are really interested in these matters, I suggest that they read in *Hansard* precisely what was said in the other place, rather than relying on totally inaccurate reports of what was said by my noble Friend.

Mr. Allason: How far into river estuaries is testing conducted? Is my hon. and learned Friend aware that recent tests undertaken just off the coast of south Devon displayed figures of six times the acceptable rate of viral contamination?

Mr. Howard: I am aware that those recent tests showed results which left a good deal to be desired, and those matters are being considered by the South West water authority.

Bottle-nosed Dolphin

15. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to ensure that marine nature reserves are able to provide effective protection for the two remaining resident populations of the bottle-nosed dolphin in Cardigan bay and Moray firth.

Mr. Ridley: My scientific advisers, the Nature Conservancy Council, have no proposals for the designation of Cardigan bay or the Moray firth as marine nature reserves. They have no evidence to suggest that such action would be an effective measure to conserve the bottle-nosed dolphin. This species of dolphin is, of course, already protected by virtue of its listing in schedule 5 to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Mr. Home Robertson: Is it not time that we had more than one solitary marine nature reserve in this country? Indeed, is it not time that the Nature Conservancy Council was given power to prevent toxic pollution of marine nature reserves in addition to other coastal waters? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that dolphins and other species are literally being driven to extinction in the seas around Britain because of the Government's determination to assert Britannia's right to foul the waves? Is he further aware that it is time that we surrendered some of that sovereignty to more responsible authorities in Europe?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman must know that it is for the Nature Conservancy Council to suggest marine reserves, and I can only consider proposals put forward by that council. The hon. Gentleman is under a typical delusion in thinking that the death of the seals last year was due to pollution, whereas it is now known that it was due to virus diseases. It might help if the hon. Gentleman got his facts right, which is what I want to do before I propose any solutions concerned with dolphins.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Is the Secretary of State aware that the highly respected organisation Greenpeace will early next month be undertaking a survey of marine life in the Moray firth? Should Greenpeace produce evidence showing that steps need to be taken to protect the dolphin, the porpoise and other species, will the right hon. Gentleman act on it?

Mr. Ridley: I am glad to say that I am not responsible for the activities of Greenpeace. The Natural Environment Research Council considers it inconceivable that there are only two remaining groups in United Kingdom waters of the bottle-nosed dolphin, which is what Greenpeace has apparently alleged.

Rural Enterprise and Development

16. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will revise and reissue his Department's planning policy guidance note number seven, dated January 1988, on rural enterprise and development.

Mr. Howard: We hope to do so later this year.

Mr. Key: I am glad to hear that. My hon. and learned Friend will be aware that there is great concern in rural parts of Britain about inappropriate levels of development, particularly by parish councils. Does he agree that the circular was way ahead of most planning authorities, that district councillors tend not to read circulars, that they then do not agree with the advice of their professional officers and that events end up with the matter going on appeal to the Secretary of State?

Mr. Howard: I agree with my hon. Friend and I wish that our circulars were more widely read. Indeed, I sometimes wish that a local authority controlled by the Labour party would take action to ban some of our circulars, as that would no doubt ensure that they received much wider circulation.

Residential Property

17. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he takes to ensure that his Department is making the best use of its residential property.

Mr. Chope: Where empty residential properties are not required for further Government use they are sold. If they cannot be sold because of legal restrictions, or sold within six months, they are offered first to the local housing authority and then to a housing association.

Mrs. Clwyd: How does the Minister explain that, at a time of record homelessness, 5·5 per cent. of residential properties owned by his Department have been empty for more than a year—twice the national average for local authorities? Instead of admonishing local authorities to put their house in order, why does the Minister not do so?

Mr. Chope: I welcome the hon. Lady's interest in the 38 vacant residential properties which is the total number owned by my Department. I hope that she is not trying to divert attention from over 100,000 properties owned by local authorities.

Drugs (Inner Cities)

3.31 pm

Mrs. Maureen Hicks (Wolverhampton, North-East): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the problem of drugs in inner cities in the light of the drug-related disturbances involving crack in Wolverhampton last night".

Only last night in the Chamber I highlighted the vast improvements in the quality of life for residents in the high-rise area of Heathtown, in my constituency. Therefore, it was like waking from a nightmare this morning to hear on the radio news that, as a result of a police raid at the Traveller's Rest public house in which 20 people were arrested, large amounts of cannabis and crack had been seized. I received a full report of the disturbance from acting Chief Superintendent Jones of the Wolverhampton police early this morning and I have discussed the matter with my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department.

As a result of the vigilance of the people living at the heart of the Heathtown community in alerting the police of suspicious activities in recent weeks centering on their local public house, the police responded to their concerns, took out a warrant under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 and mounted their initiative at 9.45 pm yesterday. Initially, it involved 120 police officers and subsequently 250 riot police.

It is unfortunate that hundreds of youths saw fit to take advantage of the situation and converged on the scene. I am sure that the vast majority of law-abiding citizens will join me in praising the police for their urgency and initiative in dealing with the drugs problem. The police were well prepared in terms of clothing, training and the use of a helicopters with a night-sight facility. Their actions demonstrate their ability to control and contain what could have escalated into a highly explosive incident. The evidence of crack for the first time in Wolverhampton could have serious consequences for the Wolverhampton community. I regret to say that my worst fears have been realised.

You, Mr. Speaker, may recall that, on 17 January this year I raised this matter with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and asked her to ensure that the Government were taking every possible step to deal with the problem of crack. I have been reassured by my right hon. Friend's actions. Crack is referred to as a drug of the under-class —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady has had her three minutes and I have listened with concern to what she has said. She asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that she believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the problem of drugs in inner cities in the light of the drug-related disturbances involving crack in Wolverhampton last night."

As the hon. Lady knows, my sole duty in considering an application under Standing Order No. 20 is to decide whether it should be given precedence over the business set down for this evening or tomorrow. I regret that the matter she has raised is not appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20, and I therefore cannot submit her application to the House.

Anglo-Soviet Relations

3.35 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the present crisis in Anglo-Soviet relations."

The matter is specific, in that the Soviet authorities have stated that the number of personnel of British institutions and missions in the Soviet Union must be reduced from 375 to 205. The latter figure is the quota allowed by the United Kingdom authorities for the personnel of Soviet institutions in this country. I would argue that the matter is important both for Anglo-Soviet relations, which have improved considerably—at least until the end of last week—and for British trade with the Soviet Union. The present crisis could cause immense damage to relations.

As Labour Members made perfectly clear in exchanges on a private notice question on Monday, we have no wish to condone actions by embassies in London, including the Soviet embassy, which would in any way undermine our national security. However, we are not convinced—I am certainly not convinced, as I pointed out on Monday—that the British Government did not have alternatives in this matter. We remain suspicious that the expulsions were carried out deliberately just before next week's NATO summit, at which the Prime Minister will press for the modernisation of short-range nuclear weapons. Would such expulsions have taken place a week before Mr. Gorbachev came to this country?

These events are occurring at an important time for the Soviet Union. Tomorrow, for example, the new Parliament is due to meet. It is probably the first Parliament of its kind for 70 years because it will not be a rubber-stamp one. That is all the more reason why we should be able to have reports from journalists in the Soviet Union, but a number of British journalists are, unfortunately, likely to be expelled. I hope that, before the recess, we shall have an opportunity to debate these matters. It is extremely important that there should be good relations between the Soviet Union and ourselves. The sooner this crisis is over, the better.

I hope that you, Mr. Speaker, will give careful and serious consideration to a debate on this subject.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the present crisis in Anglo-Soviet relations."

I regret that I have to give the hon. Gentleman the same answer as I gave the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Hicks). I have listened with concern to what the hon. Gentleman has said, but I regret that I do not consider that the matter he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20. I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will not take points of order at the moment because I must take a third application under Standing Order No. 20.

Interest Rates

3.37 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the decision to raise interest rates to 14 per cent. and its implications for the economic policies of the Chancellor of the Exchequer."

Today's interest rate rise is the tenth in a year. It is of urgent and serious concern to industry, small businesses, farmers and home buyers, because, although there is to be no immediate rise in the mortgage rate, how long will it be before that follows? We are paying the price for the Chancellor's mistakes last year in both monetary policy and in stoking up demand in his Budget measures.

You may recall, Mr. Speaker, that it was the Prime Minister's remarks in the House yesterday, expressing confidence in the Chancellor, that started the run on the pound which has given rise to the interest rate increase. You may feel, therefore that a period of silence would be welcome and that if the Prime Minister were to say any more it might add to the problems of confidence.

The Prime Minister is answering to a large conference of Conservative ladies on these matters. She ought to answer to the House of Commons on them as well. She ought to answer for the mess of the Government's economic policy and for the deep disunity on fundamental economic issues which is at the heart of the Government. The House is entitled to know whether the Government are prepared to take steps to deal with the fundamental problems of inflation and the balance of payments, or whether we are to expect further interest rate rises to bolster confidence every time there is a run on the pound. The country is entitled to know, and to know now.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the Bank of England's announcement of a percentage point rise in interest rates."

I regret that the matter does not meet the requirements of the Standing Order, and I cannot, therefore, submit the application to the House.

Mr. Kaufman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Without in any way questioning your ruling on the application under Standing Order No. 20 of my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), may I put it to you, in the presence of the Leader of the House, that since the developments in Anglo-Soviet relations, which concern a considerable number of hon. Members, have taken place since the debate on the spring Adjournment when we would have had the opportunity to raise them, and in view of the fact that we have only two more days left before the spring Adjournment, it would be greatly appreciated if the Foreign Secretary were to consider making a statement on this matter before we rise for the recess.

Mr. Speaker: I am sure that that has been heard by the Leader of the House.

Points of Order

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I refer to column 255 in the *Official Report* of 16 May in which the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) is reported as having referred to a television programme on Tyne Tees and stated:

"The cat was let out of the bag during the debate when the regional organiser of the Transport and General Workers Union, Joe Mills, said:

"Of course things are better in the north-east now. It hurts me to have to say so but begrudgingly I have to say that Margaret Thatcher has been responsible for this."—[*Official Report*, 16 May 1989; Vol. 153, c. 255.]

The latter paragraph is printed in the *Official Report* in a manner that suggests that it is an extract from the transcript of the television programme. However, I have today received a copy of the transcript of the programme, and not only did Mr. Mills not make any such statement, but in his only reference to the Prime Minister he said:

"The final point I want to make is this, I don't want to give Mrs. Thatcher any benefit at all, let's make that absolutely clear."

Is it not a gross abuse of the privilege of this House for the hon. Gentleman to have done that, and should he not apologise to the House and to Mr. Mills?

Mr. Speaker: That seems an extension of last week's debate. The hon. Gentleman knows that I cannot be responsible for what is said in the House, provided that it is in order.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I was informed just a few moments before 3.30 pm that the hon. Gentleman intended to make that personal attack, which gave me no opportunity to refer to anything. Anyone who watched the programme, as I did—I do not think that the hon. Gentleman did—would have known from the tenor of the programme that there was an admission by Joe Mills that it was the Government and the Prime Minister who had improved matters in the north-east——

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We are not on television yet.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Further to the Standing Order No. 20 application of my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), Mr. Speaker, I wish to raise a question, which I believe is before the Select Committee on Procedure, about the way in which the House investigates difficult matters. It will be within your recollection, Mr. Speaker, that when the Foreign Secretary made his original statement on this, I asked extremely clearly and politely whether he would refer it to the Security Commission. The Foreign Secretary chose not to reply to that question, although it was pressed from the Front Bench.

Subsequently, I tabled a question yesterday at the Table Office, which I believe was in total order:

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

"To ask the Prime Minister if she will refer the matters which led to the recent expulsion of Soviet diplomats to the Security Commission."

As very often happens now to hon. Members of all parties, but especially to Opposition Members, we get the monosyllabic answer, "No," and no explanation of any kind such as used to be given to the House by Prime Ministers and Foreign Secretaries.

There may be good reasons why this should not be referred to the Security Commission, but if the proper channels of communication are gone through when the proper questions are politely asked, does not the House of Commons, of which you are the protector, Mr. Speaker, at least deserve some kind of explanation in matters so grave and serious? After all, why do we have Lord Griffiths of Govilon at the Security Commission, Sir Philip Allen and other distinguished people, unless it is to deal with precisely such matters? In a way, it is circumventing not the constitution—we do not have one—but the traditional bastions of British security and intelligence.

Mr. Speaker: I fully understand the point that the hon. Member has made. Again, I cannot possibly be held responsible for answers to questions—provided that they are in order, of course.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The matter that I raise involves the *Official Report* of yesterday. In an intervention during a speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall), I said:

"As a member of the Committee who served with the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark), will my hon. Friend ask the hon. Gentleman a question? When the hon. Gentleman spoke to the sponsors of the Bill a minute ago, did he say, 'I am totally in your pocket and I had better come across to you?'".—[*Official Report*, 23 May 1989; Vol. 153, c. 893.]

That was a misquotation. The Editor of *Hansard* has checked the tape, and that passage should have read, "I am totally in your pocket and I had better come across to speak to you."

The hon. Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) indicated that I should be present at 3.30 this afternoon because he wished to raise with you, Mr. Speaker, my conduct in this matter. As he is not here, he must now accept the *Official Report* and your order yesterday——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Allow me to interrupt the hon. Member at this point. I confirm that he has had a letter from the Editor of *Hansard*, putting his correct words on the record. Furthermore, he has written to me on this matter, drawing to my attention the fact that it is a matter of privilege. Therefore, we cannot discuss it in the Chamber now.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle) *rose*——

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: In fairness, I will call the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark).

Dr. Clark: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Last night I was present in the House when the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) made his accusation. I found his accusation so outrageous and so far from the truth that I did not believe that anyone could take it seriously. I did not rise at that time to rebut it. It is true, however, that, after one hour of accusations from Opposition Members that I had behaved improperly in Committee, I left the Chamber after I had spoken. I went out that way—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The point of order is to me, not to hon. Members.

Dr. Clark: I left the Chamber, going that way out, and I saw the sponsors of the Bill. As I said, it was after one hour of being accused of impropriety by Opposition Members. As I went past the sponsors of the Bill, I said, "Since I am being accused of being in your pocket, I had better say hello to you." That is all I said; I said nothing else. Then there was uproar in the House as Labour Members objected to my being there. I stood there with my back to the House, saying nothing further until the House settled down. That is what I said. There was nothing improper.

I have made an appointment to see the Clerk of the House at 6.15 this evening to object in the strongest possible terms to the accusation by the hon. Member for Makerfield.

Mr. Speaker: I repeat that this matter has been referred to me as a matter of privilege.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: All hon. Members are aware that, when an issue is raised with the Speaker as a matter of privilege, it may not be raised in the Chamber.

Mr. Leigh *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: It cannot be on this same matter.

Mr. Leigh: On a general point, Mr. Speaker. You have often reminded us that we are all hon. Members. Is it in order for an hon. Member to accuse a Chairman of a Select Committee of being in the pockets of one of the sponsors?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I have said I cannot take points of order on this matter.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): You have taken one from the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh).

Mr. Speaker: I am not responding to it, and I am not taking further points of order on this matter. The House well knows the rules. When an issue is raised with the Chair as a matter of privilege, it may not be raised on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it on a different matter?

Mr. Grocott: It is. It follows earlier exchanges about the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Clelland). It is clear that a correction will have to be made, in view of the admission of the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt)——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have already dealt with that point of order.

Mr. Grocott: The hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) has clearly said that it was not a verbatim report that he was quoting in the House; it was his view of what he heard on a television programme. In *Hansard* it is clearly recorded as being a verbatim report of what occurred on a television programme; it is in inverted commas in the usual way. Clearly it is a serious matter that the hon. Member for Langbaurgh should have had such a grossly contorted view of a television programme and one that was different from that of everyone else who watched it. However, that is more a problem for the hon. Gentleman than for the House.

What is a matter for the House is that the hon. Gentleman purported to quote verbatim from a record —in the form of a video cassette, which could be checked —but now says that it was not a verbatim report but simply his general impression of what went on. That surely must warrant a correction.

Mr. Speaker: I will cause the Editor to look into the matter in the light of what has been said about it this afternoon.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): On an entirely different point of order, Mr. Speaker. It refers to yesterday but has nothing to do with the exchanges.

You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that a large number of amendments to the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill were presented. I prepared most of them. I was aware of the difficult circumstances which surround the preparation or presentation of amendments to a private Bill that has not had a Report stage, which the Opposition regret. I was aware that such amendments had to be insubstantial in character, and I hope that I presented the amendments in an insubstantial way. I accept that some of them may have verged on the substantial, while others may have been too narrow or too broad, so that none of them was selected by you.

The point that I am raising, Mr. Speaker, is historically rather important, because people are asking me why those amendments were rejected. I have every confidence in your judgment, Mr. Speaker, and I would not challenge it in any way, but people interested in that Bill, in private Bill procedures now, and perhaps for the next 200 or 300 years, might benefit if you were to give the House some guidance on the nature of amendments that are likely to be accepted.

Could the Standing Orders of the House be made more precise so that hon. Members may have a way of obtaining an opportunity to debate a Bill in detail and avoid the situation that faced my hon. Friends and myself? We found it extremely difficult to oppose this dreadful Bill because of the absence of a Report stage and engaged in an unnecessary amount of work in regard to that Bill. Your advice to the House, Mr. Speaker, would be welcomed by the general public.

Mr. Speaker: I have a responsibility to the House, of course, rather than to the general public. The House will know that the question of verbal amendments to private Bills is set out at some length in "Erskine May".

Mr. Hardy: I looked at "Erskine May".

Mr. Speaker: I draw the hon. Member's attention to that. In any event, Madam Deputy Speaker gave an explanation, reported in *Hansard* in column 864, as to why the amendments had not been selected.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Was the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) in order when he raised his point of order?

Mr. Speaker: Yes; otherwise I would not have called him.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 16 JUNE

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. Alan Meale
Mr. Dick Douglas
Mr. Michael Stern

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Set-Aside (Amendment) Regulations 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

Car Telephones (Safety) Bill

3.54 pm

Mr. Douglas French (Gloucester): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to enhance safety in the use of telephones in cars.

This Bill is a road safety measure. It addresses itself to the dangerous practice of driving a car with one hand on the steering wheel and the other hand holding a car telephone. That practice is becoming much too prevalent.

We have all seen people on motorways or driving round roundabouts more engrossed in their phone calls than in the road before them. That practice reduces the driver's control over the vehicle at a time when his concentration is, in any case, likely to be distracted by the call. It increases the chances of accidents and it should be stopped.

The first provision of the Bill is to require all such telephones to be of the hands-off type. That is to say, they should have remote microphones so that it is not necessary to speak directly into the mouthpiece and remote loudspeakers so that it is not necessary to hold the receiver to the ear to hear. Many car phones already have those facilities. All car phones should have them. The Bill would make it an offence for the driver of a moving car to use a phone which is not hands free.

The second dangerous practice which my Bill tackles is the way in which drivers dial the number of an outgoing call. If the dialling mechanism is in the handset, some drivers will hold the handset in one hand and key in the digits with the other. No hand is than available for the steering wheel. Some drivers rest the handset on the lower quarter of the steering wheel and steer the car with their wrists or their elbows. Others steer with their knees, which is not easy when one is driving round a corner.

I have considered carefully whether the Bill should stipulate that outgoing calls by the driver should require a voice-activated dialling facility. The technology for that exists and is in use, but it is much more expensive, not altogether reliable and must be reprogrammed for each individual driver. To insist on that provision, it seems to me, would place an unreasonable burden on equipment manufactures and users. The alternative is to require all numbers which are not voice activated to be pre-programmed using the facility which most car telephones already possess, whereby a number can be selected by keying in only one, or at most two, digits. My Bill would make it an offence for a driver to call an outgoing number except by voice-activated or pre-programmed dialling.

The third danger which the Bill addresses is the extent to which drivers take their eyes off the road while operating telephones. That happens because phones are often located well below dashboard level on a centre console near the gear lever. To dial even a short number from a unit fixed in that position diverts the driver's eyes from the road for several seconds. My Bill therefore provides that all the controls should be fixed towards the top of the fascia so that the driver's eyes remain in the line of vision of the windscreen and the road.

All these changes relate to the design and fitting of telephones used by a driver of a car while it is in motion. The same problems do not arise when a telephone is used by a passenger or when the vehicle is stationary.

I propose two exceptions to the general rule: lorries should be exempt because the high level of noise in the driver's cabin would render remote microphones and remote loudspeakers ineffective; taxis and certain emergency vehicles should be excluded for much the same reasons that they were excluded from the seat belt legislation.

During the past year I, like other hon. Members, have asked a series of parliamentary questions to draw attention to these problems. The answers which I received were not always illuminating. In reply to a question on 20 June last year about voice-activated dialling, my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic said:

"Our advice is clear: anyone who can afford a car phone can afford a hands-free microphone."—[*Official Report*, 20 June 1988; Vol. 135, c. *444*.]

That answer does him less than credit. It suggests that the problem has been treated less seriously than it deserves, which is an impression confirmed by the complete absence of any reference to the subject in the recent White Paper entitled "The Road User and the Law."

It may be argued that current legislation already gives the police adequate powers to prosecute a driver who uses a car phone dangerously. Section 3 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 covers driving without due care and attention, and driving without reasonable consideration for other road users. The Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986 make it an offence not to have proper control of a vehicle. However, that legislation provides the statutory basis for a prosecution once the danger has been caused. My Bill, apart from being much more specific, is preventative: it seeks to prevent what would be an offence under those provisions from taking place.

Does not the Highway Code already do that? It states:

"Do not use a hand held microphone or telephone handset while your vehicle is moving, except in an emergency. Do not stop on the hard shoulder of a motorway to answer a call, however urgent".

That is sound advice. Unfortunately, too few people read the Highway Code, and, of those, even fewer take notice of it. Furthermore, it is only advisory and failure to observe its provisions is not an offence, even though such failure may be adduced in evidence in other proceedings. What is needed, which my Bill provides, is a clear and firm framework of law, with appropriate penalties. I envisage the penalties being incorporated into the points system.

Anyone who doubts the seriousness of the problem has only to consider that the number of car telephones in use has nearly doubled in the past 18 months. The number is now in excess of 400,000. By 1991, it is likely to top 1 million. That is a very large number of drivers who are in less than full control of their vehicles. Those figures apply only to fitted cellular car phones. The totals will be considerably more, and the danger much greater, as portable telephones become more powerful and capable of in-car use.

Legislation may not look easy to enforce, but it need be no more difficult than it was for seat belts. Despite the claim that the seat belt rules would be unenforceable, the usage rate for belts rose from 30 per cent. before legislation to 90 per cent. after it. The emphasis of my Bill is on the design and fitting of the equipment. If that is right, the correct usage of it will follow.

I regard car telephones as an increasingly essential amenity of modern business life. I do not wish to restrict their freedom of use. However, I want them to be used in a way that is safe and sensible and does not spell danger to other road users. I believe that my Bill achieves that end.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Douglas French, Mr. Alan Amos, Mr. Jacques Arnold, Mr. Tim Boswell, Mr. John Bowis, Mr. James Cran, Mr. Roger Knapman, Mr. Keith Mans, Mr. David Nicholson, Mr. David Porter and Miss Ann Widdecombe.

CAR TELEPHONES (SAFETY)

Mr. Douglas French accordingly presented a Bill to enhance safety in the use of telephones in cars: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 7 July and to be printed. [Bill 148.]

DOCK WORK BILL (ALLOCATION OF TIME)

Ordered,

That the Report [23rd May] from the Business Committee be now considered.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

Report considered accordingly.

Question, That this House doth agree with the Committee in their resolution, *put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 80 (Business Committee), and agreed to.*

Following is the report of the Business Committee:

That on the allotted day which under the Order [8th May] is to be given to the proceedings on Consideration and Third Reading those proceedings shall, subject to the provisions of that Order, be brought to a conclusion as follows:

TABLE

Proceedings	*Time for conclusion of proceedings*
New Clauses	6 p.m.
Remaining proceedings on Consideration	8 p.m.
Third Reading	Midnight

Orders of the Day

Dock Work Bill

[ALLOTTED DAY]

Not amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New Clause 1

COMPENSATION FOR FORMER REGISTERED DOCK WORKERS

'(1) Any dock worker to whom the Scheme applied shall be entitled, on leaving employment as a dock worker, to a payment of £6,000 plus £3,000 for each complete year of employment under the Scheme.

(2) Payments under subsection (1) shall be funded on an equal basis by the Secretary of State and former registered employers.

(3) This section shall lapse ten years after the passing of this Act unless renewed by affirmative resolution of both Houses of Parliament.'.—*[Mr. Meacher].*

Brought up, and read the First time.

4.7 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take amendment No. 3, in line 12, leave out clause 5.

Mr. Meacher: New clause 1 is designed with a simple but important purpose: to offer to dock workers made redundant after the abolition of the dock labour scheme, a level of compensation which more closely matches that which is available in other industries. For dock workers made redundant in the first 18 months after abolition, the Government propose a lump sum of £5,000, plus £2,000 for every full year of work, up to a maximum of £35,000. Those made redundant in the following 18 months will receive £5,000, plus £1,000 for every full year of service, up to a maximum of £20,000.

We propose a lump sum of £6,000, plus £3,000 for each complete year of employment under the scheme.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): That is not good enough.

Mr. Meacher: My hon. Friend says that that is not good enough. I take his point, but we shall be happy to settle for it if the Government concede it. It means that a dock worker who has served 15 years would receive £51,000 in compensation, and a dock worker who had worked 20 years would receive £66,000. Those may sound quite large figures, but they are in line with redundancy compensation currently being paid under other schemes.

The redundant mineworkers payment scheme is, in many respects, more generous than the Government's draft proposals for dock workers. Older mineworkers who are made redundant receive a lump sum based on age, length of service and pay, plus a weekly benefit. If those figures are added together, they amount to a substantial sum.

I have a British Coal press release, dated 7 October 1986, which quotes an average—I emphasise "average"—figure of £74,600 redundancy payment for men made

[Mr. Meacher]

redundant at the age of 50 to 54. Some will receive more than that. It is against that comparison that the Opposition have drawn up their proposals.

It is only fair to point out that the Government scheme for mineworkers has been replaced by British Coal's own scheme. Although it is not as generous as the Government's proposals for dock workers, under the British Coal scheme, redundant mineworkers with 15 or more years, service are paid an additional lump sum of £7,500, plus £500 a year for service aged between 16 to 34, and £750 a year for service aged 35 to 65. On top of that, statutory redundancy pay can be paid, so that the maximum total is nearly £40,600 for someone with maximum service who retires before his or her 60th birthday. That figure is considerably more than the one proposed in the Government scheme for redundant dock workers, especially those who lose their jobs in the second 18-month period after the abolition, when, as I have said, they will receive a maximum of only £20,000. In other words, they will receive only half as much as is payable under the British Coal scheme, which is itself less generous than the redundant mineworkers' payment scheme.

The level of compensation that we propose is not particularly out of line with the redundancy terms current in many parts of the private sector. I went to some trouble to obtain an Industrial Relations Service publication which reviews 22 redundancy pay agreements made in 1988. It quotes a good many examples in considerable detail. It tells us for example, that the Alliance and Leicester building society provides payments of up to £60,000 for some senior managers. It may be said that managers constitute a different layer of the work force, but another example given is Express Newspapers, which provides up to £50,000 for members of the National Graphical Association as part—not all—of the severance terms covering job losses caused by major reorganisation of the group. Those, too, are substantially more generous than what the Government proposed.

I am not sure whether the phrase "brass handshake" has been used before, but it seems appropriate. Such handshakes are now fairly common throughout industry. I have deliberately abstained from citing the growing number of golden handshakes of which we hear fairly regularly from board rooms. Only six weeks ago, however, amid all the fuss about Blue Arrow's £25 million loan to Peter de Savary—in which the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) was involved—we were told that Mr. John Sharkey has been paid off handsomely with a golden handshake of £225,000. All I can say is that he is lucky not to have been a docker; if he had been, he would have received about one seventh of that sum.

Again, two months ago, amid all the rumpus over the sale of three cemeteries by Lady Porter, it emerged that the lips of Westminster council's chief executive had been sealed with a £1 million golden handshake. It is a pity that the dock workers are not privy to a few more secrets. As people always say, what counts is not what a person does or how long he has been doing it, but who he knows—or, perhaps even more important, what he knows.

The new clause proposes that dock workers who have given a lifetime's service to the ports should receive proper and just recompense for the compulsory termination of their livelihood when, if they are over 50, they have little chance of obtaining an alternative job. Unemployment is significantly higher in the scheme port travel-to-work areas. I have checked the facts: male unemployment in those areas averages 11·5 per cent., which is well above the national average. I am not saying that that figure is absolutely correct—I believe it understates the position—but, whatever the correct figure, the difference in relative terms is substantial.

It has been calculated, moreover, that unemployed men in scheme port areas have less than a 40 per cent. chance of obtaining a job—and, of course, the older they are the smaller the chance will be. Those older men will be the most affected by the compulsory redundancies that are about to be handed out. The latest count of the ages of registered dock workers produced an average age of 46·7, largely because of the port employers' unwise decision to get rid of so many younger men. Now it is those above that age whom they are most anxious to displace. Already the average number of unemployed over-forties in scheme port areas is 24 per cent., and that number is undoubtedly set to increase significantly when the Bill is implemented.

We simply propose that older men who are deprived of their jobs by compulsory Government-instigated reorganisation schemes, and who in many cases will probably never be able to work again, should be compensated in accordance with best practice for the loss forced on them. "In accordance with the best practice" is the crucial phrase: I am not saying that the terms are mean, but they are not best practice and we believe that they should be. The Government's proposals do not meet our criterion, and we are seeking to improve them.

4.15 pm

It is not as though either the National Association of Port Employers or the Government cannot meet those obligations. I need not remind the House that corporate profitability now stands at its highest for at least a decade, and the port employers in particular have not been doing too badly in recent years. The annual report of Associated British Ports, the largest employer, shows profits of £38 million in 1987, a 46 per cent. increase. In the first half of 1988, the company's profits rose by a further 59 per cent., and dividends per share by 25 per cent. Sir Keith Stuart, chairman of ABP, described it modestly as "a highly successful year"—as well he might, as he increased his own salary by 23 per cent. in 1987 to £97,000. Last year, deciding that he must keep the wolf from the door, he increased it by a further 23 per cent. to a modest £120,000.

The Opposition say that what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. If ABP is making profits hand over fist, if its chairman can pay himself a six-figure salary and greedily award himself a 23 per cent. increase two years running, and, above all, if it is to make an extra £20 million in profits from the scheme's abolition as it claims, it can expect to pay a proper whack to those on whose backs it has made those growing profits, and whom it now intends to throw on the scrap heap so that it can increase those profits still further.

The money is there. One side—the company, its shareholders and its managers—is receiving enormous increases; only the dock workers are not receiving that level of remuneration. It cannot be said that the Government are exactly pinched at present, with an unprecedented Budget surplus of over £15 billion. The redundancy proposals in the Bill have been costed by the

Government at about £25 million. Our alternative proposals would cost about £35 million, not a great deal more.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): Not much for a Socialist.

Mr. Meacher: As they have £15 billion or more to dispense with, an extra £10 million for making 2,000 people redundant is something that the Government could well afford. That was a very foolish interjection.

Our proposal constitutes a much fairer distribution of Government funds than general Exchequer Budget policy.

According to a parliamentary answer of 17 May, last year, 100,000 people in Britain with salaries of more than £70,000 per year have, over the past 10 years of Tory Budgets, received an average cut in their income tax worth no less than £37,550. If the richest people in this country who do not need a penny in extra assistance are given largesse by the Government of £37,550 each year, those whom the Government make redundant and who may never get another job deserve a good deal more than a one-off payment of less than £37,550.

In Committee, the only argument made by the Minister for Public Transport—not the Minister of State, Department of Employment, who is on the Government Front Bench today, but it is said that Ministers take collective responsibility—for refusing a better level of compensation for redundant dock workers was that higher compensation payments previously paid to miners were "exceptional". He stated:

> "It is true that a few years ago some miners received much higher compensation payments than will be available under the Bill. However, I emphasise that the circumstances of the industry at that time and the miners who received such payments were exceptional."

As though the abolition of the dock labour scheme is not highly exceptional. In trying to justify his claim that nothing special is proposed in respect of the docks, the Minister added:

> "I should not imagine that the rate of loss of men from the industry would be entirely out of scale"—

he meant, as a result of the scheme's abolition——

> "with what has happened in recent years."

However, the Minister's own figures reveal that abolition will, not surprisingly, be both out of the ordinary and exceptional. In Committee, the Minister for Public Transport also stated:

> "The . . . £25 million that we have included in the explanatory and financial memorandum would cover between 1,500 and 2,000 redundancies".—[*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 16 May 1989, c. 505-37.]

That number of redundancies represents between 16 and 21 per cent. of the entire work force under the scheme. To get rid of one fifth of the work force and claim that such action is in no way exceptional is either cynical or extremely disingenuous.

Those redundancies represent a far quicker rundown than has occurred in the past. In 1983, there were more than 14,500 registered dock workers but now there are only 9,400, which represents an average decline of 840 per year. Under the Bill, the Government intend to bring about between two and three times more redundancies than in the past decade. Why did they bring in the Bill otherwise? Of course its intention is to increase redundancies. Even the present Government, whose record of concern over unemployment does not place them in the first ranks of compassion, must acknowledge that that is an exceptional level of redundancy and one which commands an exceptional level of compensation.

New clause 1 will go a long way to countering some of the most malign consequences of this miserable little Bill. Given that the port employers have amassed huge profits in recent years, and have stated openly that they will make an additional packet out of sacking one fifth of their work force under the Bill, it is only right and just that dock workers should enjoy redundancy terms at least as good as the current best practice in other industries. I stress that we are not asking for a bigger pay-off that they can take and run with, because dock workers will receive those redundancy payments only if their employers decide to sack them. Redundancy will not be a choice that they can make for themselves. In those circumstances, we say that decency and justice require a more reasonable and upbeat deal than the distinctly unexceptional offer provided for in the Bill.

If the Government were as generous to dock workers and to trade unionists as they are to employers and to top-rate taxpayers, they would embrace the new clause with all the eagerness with which we press it.

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. John Cope): As the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) made clear, new clause 1 proposes a compensation scheme to replace that suggested by the Government. The Labour party scheme—although in fairness I should call it the Meacher scheme, because the hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) has already made clear his view that his hon. Friend's scheme is not generous enough—is considerably more generous, and in some cases would pay the sum of £130,000. The Opposition scheme operates on a basis different from that included in the Bill and in the draft regulations that back it up, which amendment No. 3 seeks to omit.

The generosity of the Opposition's proposals gives an interesting insight into their view of the scheme's value to a registered dock worker. It is not only that the amounts of money differ but the entire basis is different, even though the hon. Member for Oldham, West, in his closing remarks, suggested that the basis of new clause 1 is essentially similar to that of our scheme.

The Government's proposals in clause 5 and in the regulations provide for enhanced redundancy pay for registered dockers who lose their jobs in the changes following termination of the scheme. The proposals in new clause 1 involve paying every registered dock worker who leaves the industry, for whatever reason, just because he is a registered dock worker. Under both schemes, the Government will normally pay half the cost, with the employers paying the other half. However, if an employer goes out of business and cannot meet his obligations, the Government's scheme will pay the entire cost so that the former docker will receive the full amount even if his employer becomes insolvent.

As I understand Labour's scheme, the Government would only ever pay half the cost, so if the employer cannot meet his obligation to pay the balance the docker will receive only half the sum due to him. That arrangement has some interesting consequences, to which I shall refer shortly. Perhaps it is intended to reward employees of profitable firms, for that is its effect. That is an interesting if slightly odd example of profit sharing. I certainly support the principle of profit sharing, but the

[Mr. John Cope]

Opposition's proposals are not a very sound application of it. I would rather see port companies negotiating more conventional profit-sharing schemes with their employees.

At first glance, the Opposition's improvements may seem modest, offering as they do basic compensation of £6,000 plus £3,000 per year of employment, compared with our proposal for initial compensation of £5,000 plus £2,000 per year of employment. Under the Government scheme, there is a maximum payable of £35,000, whereas the Opposition impose no limit, except the arithmetic maximum of £132,000.

4.30 pm

We are proposing that payments should be paid in full only in the first 18 months and at lesser rates, as the hon. Gentleman said, for a further 18 months. The Opposition have a theoretical time of 10 years—theoretical for a reason that I shall come to—but, crucially, the Government are proposing to pay dockers made redundant whereas the new clause proposes to pay any registered docker who stops dock work.

The Government's scheme has a taper as retirement approaches because, beyond the age of 62½, redundancy has a more short-term effect. That is one of the differences between a redundancy scheme and a scheme for paying former dockers whenever they leave dock work.

The last difference between the two schemes has a particularly interesting consequence for the older docker. Consider the case of two dock workers aged 64 approaching retirement. Suppose that both dockers had worked all their lives in the docks and been registered dock workers ever since the scheme started in 1946. One of them, whom I shall call Mr. Meacher in order to attract the Opposition's sympathy, was a little older than his colleague, whom I shall call Alf Garnett. My theoretical Mr. Meacher's 65th birthday falls just before Royal Assent, whereas that of my theoretical Alf Garnett falls just after. Both retire on the same pension, but Alf Garnett will receive an additional £132,000—£6,000 plus £3,000 for each of the 42 years of the scheme because his birthday was a week or a month after that of his colleague. That would be his bonus for being one of the last of the registered dock workers. I imagine that the theoretical Mr. Meacher would be furious about that, but, in contrast, the hon. Member for Oldham, West has recommended the scheme to the House and we shall presumably vote on it shortly.

That points up what I said about the different basis of the Opposition's scheme. The Opposition's scheme is a reward for having been a registered dock worker, but the Government's scheme is an enhanced redundancy scheme, which is what it sets out to be. We recognise that there may be some redundancies when the scheme ends. We cannot tell how many—nobody can. Overmanning is a consequence of the scheme. We realise that the relatively generous voluntary severance payments will stop and we aim to compensate at a suitable rate those who find themselves redundant as a consequence.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): May I ask a simple question? A number of my colleagues have been reliably informed that Sir Jeffrey Sterling, chairman of P and O, has been ringing the Department of Employment—perhaps even the Minister's private office—on matters relating to the Bill and the possibility of industrial action in the docks. Will the Minister tell us exactly what those telephone calls were about? Were they about the proposals before the House today? It is in the interests of the general public and the industry to know about the special relationship that exists at times such as this between major business men and Ministers in Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Cope: I know of no telephone calls of that sort to my private office or to the Department. For all I know, there may have been some to the Department, but certainly not to my private office, and I am not conscious of any having been received by the Department.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Would the Minister automatically be informed of telephone calls on such matters by his Department's officials or by people in his private office?

Mr. Cope: That would depend on the content of the telephone calls, whether they were significant and what was happening. If they were significant, yes, I would be told.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the problems of making the terms of redundancy too generous is that people will decide that they want to be made redundant and will do everything possible to achieve that? I should have thought that hon. Members on both sides of the House would agree that we should be trying to encourage more employment in the docks. Therefore, to make the Government's already generous terms even more generous would be self-defeating.

Mr. Cope: That is one of the consequences, as I propose to explain.

Under the new clause, any registered dock worker who leaves dock work will receive the money. Why he leaves does not matter. He may have been convicted of and sacked for stealing. Examples were given in Committee of registered dock workers convicted of stealing whose employers were, under the scheme, made to continue employing them. But that is another story. Under the new clause, a registered dock worker of 30 years' standing who was sacked for stealing would nevertheless be paid £96,000.

Similarly, a docker with 30 years' service, sacked for persistent absenteeism—he might have got into the habit of bobbing off and not got out of it quickly—would, under the new clause, be paid £96,000, not for stopping doing the job—after all, that is why he was sacked—but for having been a registered dock worker. That is an interesting commentary on the Labour party's view of the value of the scheme to a registered dock worker.

I wonder what other workers in the docks think about the Opposition's proposal—if they are aware of it. Registered dock workers are only one third of the employees of registered port employers. I wonder what the rest of them think about it. For that matter, I wonder what members of the Transport and General Workers Union think about the proposals. We know from something that the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) complained about in Committee that the TGWU has not been providing its supporters in Committee with much guidance, so it may not have seen the proposals. However, if it has not, it should look at them carefully.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce) said in an intervention, the Opposition's scheme will also provide registered dock workers with a

considerable incentive to leave dock work. The lump sum payable is calculable at the time of Royal Assent and does not thereafter increase. A registered dock worker aged 40 with 20 years' service would immediately be paid £66,000 if his employer was solvent. If he worked on in the docks for another nine years, he would be paid £66,000 in nine years' time, again if his employer was still solvent. That demonstrates my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Tim Boswell (Daventry): I am relatively new to these debates, but can my hon. Friend illuminate one point? Under the new clause, would a registered dock worker be able to take some other employment for a period and then return to the docks, perhaps to a non-scheme port, having claimed the full amount of the large redundancy payment to which he had become entitled?

Mr. Cope: As the new clause stands, yes. In addition, such a man would be able to return to employment in the same port where he had previously been employed. He would be able to return to employment with the same employer after an interval and still qualify. I used the period of nine years in my example, but, under the new clause, after 10 years the scheme may or may not come to an end. There is provision for it to be extended, but only by leave of the House. In practice, that would not matter, since I assume that most former registered dock workers would have taken their money long before and left, even if they were to return, as my hon. Friend has said.

I am not sure whether all the employers would last that long. Any employer who had, say, 100 dockers with an average of 20 years' service would have to provide in his accounts at once on Royal Assent for a potential liability of £3·3 million. I strongly disagree with the hon. Gentleman's estimate of the cost of his scheme; it would be far higher than he suggested. I have not worked out what effect it would have on each of the companies currently employing registered dock workers, but it would make life extremely difficult financially for some of them. I spoke of a potential liability——

Mr. Meacher: The Minister appears to be having a great deal of fun. He is both frivolous and rather silly in his criticisms of the new clause. We are not drafting legislation *—[Interruption.]* It is true, and it is always the case with Oppositions. The new clause does not mean that any dock worker could simply choose to take the money and run. The payments are quite clearly to be given only after a dock worker has been made redundant by his employer. The Minister's figures are figments of his imagination.

Mr. Cope: The hon. Gentleman's comments are very interesting because they mean that the new clause has been tabled on a false basis. The new clause, together with amendment No. 3, removes from the Bill all provisions relating to redundancy. The Opposition could have left them in, but they did not. Yet the hon. Gentleman says that he does not support the basis of the clause. In that case, will he assure the House that he will not vote for it? The House is being treated in a rather peculiar manner. It has been presented with a new clause with which the hon. Gentleman now says he does not agree.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): This is almost a contempt of the House. The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) tabled a new clause that, presumably, he hopes to persuade the House to accept. My right hon. Friend has devastatingly shown why it should not be accepted. The hon. Member for Oldham, West, obviously having been convinced by my right hon. Friend's argument, now says that he does not expect the House to agree to it. It is incredible that my right hon. Friend should be expected to respond in all seriousness, as he is doing, to the debate when the hon. Member for Oldham, West has admitted that his new clause is an absolute sham.

Mr. Cope: My hon. Friend is right and I find myself in some difficulty. The hon. Member for Oldham, West has given up his new clause before I have finished opposing it. I have more to say, but I do not know whether to proceed *—[Interruption.]* It appears that the hon. Gentleman still intends to vote for his new clause and to recommend his hon. Friends to do so. That is rather peculiar.

It is not right to reward men simply for having been registered dock workers.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): It is time that the Minister stopped all this frivolity and dealt with the serious question before us. His behaviour today is similar to his behaviour in Committee. The Government are treating the Bill as a joke. The Minister should deal seriously with the new clause, because men's livelihoods is a serious issue, and should be treated as such.

Mr. Cope: I agree that it is a serious issue, but it is not a serious new clause. It clearly provides that there should be compensation for all registered dock workers. The Labour party is not alone in proposing that idea; others have suggested the same. I am glad that, apparently, the hon. Member for Oldham, West intends to withdraw it.

The Government's proposal provides for a maximum of £35,000, which is a fair and suitable sum in the circumstances. It compares reasonably with the voluntary severance payment now available, which is usually a maximum of £25,000, although under special arrangements some people have received as much as £35,000.

The Labour party's proposal—even if, as the hon. Gentleman now says, it applies only to redundancy—multiplies the present usual maximum by five. That is an enormous increase. The new clause is put forward on a false basis and does not deserve the support of even the hon. Gentleman. It tells us a great deal about the value that the Labour party places on registered dock work. It believes that maximum compensation should be increased fivefold. The new clause is fatally flawed, and should not be accepted by the House.

4.45 pm

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): I support the new clause because there are several hundred dock workers in my constituency and several of them are good friends of mine. Dock workers are usually sensible and sound members of the community. If they had been here today to witness the Minister's frivolous contributions they would have recognised that it was just a poor, sixth-form debating society speech and not a serious response to the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher).

It was only today that I had the benefit of reading the new clause, and my understanding of it is rather different from that of the Minister. If the drafting is in any way defective so that the new clause does not achieve what we want—enhanced payments for dockers who will be made

[Mr. George Howarth]

redundant under the Bill—I am sure that my hon. Friend would readily agree to it being redrafted by the Government's draftsmen to ensure that our aims are achieved. The House has been treated to a 20-minute discourse of banal triviality that is unworthy of the Minister and does not help those whom we seek to represent.

My hon. Friend referred to generous payments—I prefer to describe them as further payments—to those made redundant. I want to make two points that, as yet, have received little attention. The old image of a dock worker heaving about heavy cargoes went out of the window with the mechanisation of the ports. I do not profess to be an expert, but I know from my acquaintances that dock work is now a highly skilled job. Those skills are constantly being reviewed and updated and the dock workers have to attend training courses to keep up with advances in technology. That is not uncommon. An increasing number of technical skills are required in most industries. The kind of skills that registered dock workers have cannot easily and readily be transferred to another industry. That is an important point to bear in mind when we consider compensation.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): The hon. Gentleman is making exactly the point that was made on Second Reading and in Committee—that because the ports have become automated the old dockers' jobs have disappeared. Many of the registered dock workers do not have the new skills that they need to use technical equipment, so they sit around ghosting the people who do the work. They need to be retrained for the new skills, but they will not get the new skills by sitting around and doing nothing while other people do the work.

Mr. Howarth: I was not a member of the Standing Committee, but it is fairly well known that employers have not provided the amount of training that is necessary for dock workers to use the new equipment.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): They have refused to give training.

Mr. Howarth: Yes, they have refused to provide it.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Howarth: Let me finish this point and then I will give way.

Many of the dock workers that I know, as well as many of the dock workers in Liverpool, are highly skilled. They use all kinds of complicated equipment to move cargoes from one place to another and to load it on to ships.

Mr. Bennett: It is quite extraordinary for the hon. Gentleman now to say—*[Interruption.]* I do not know what the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) is shouting. He should try to intervene while the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) is speaking rather than while I am intervening during the hon. Gentleman's speech. That would be more helpful.

The hon. Member for Knowsley, North ought to be aware that in Committee his side moved amendments to replicate the training scheme that is provided under the national dock labour scheme in the non-scheme ports. He is now telling us that the employers in the scheme ports are not providing training. The hon. Gentleman cannot have it both ways. Either they are providing training or they are not. Felixstowe, which is a non-scheme port, has an excellent training scheme. We want that to be replicated after the national dock labour scheme has gone into abeyance.

Mr. Howarth: I am not sure that that takes us any further. Our point is that there is not enough training. It is difficult to get the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) to understand even the simplest concept, but let me explain what we want. He should watch my lips. We want the best practices to be transferred to the dock workers training system. That is not necessarily a bad thing, so we can have it both ways. We can say that there is not enough training, and we can also say that where the best training is provided we want it to be replicated throughout the industry. It is as simple as that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West referred to the coal mining industry. It is a good comparison. It is not just a job that dock workers do. It is a way of life. A docker does not go to work for a certain number of hours a day where he carries out a certain job. A whole way of life is attached to dock work. As with the coalfields, there are whole communities of dock workers. There is a long tradition attached to dock work. A social network is based upon it. If we take away the employment of a registered dock worker, we take away not just a job for which he needs certain skills that cannot easily be transferred to another industry; we also take away a way of life that may have been in existence for several generations.

Mr. David Davis (Boothferry): I should like the hon. Gentleman to explain exactly what are those skills that cannot be transferred. He talks about the automation of the ports. That means heavy cranes, forklift trucks and mechanical shovels. Most of the training for using that equipment is done in the construction industry. That would be an alternative use of dockers' skills. Forklift trucks and the mechanical handling of goods can be found in every factory and warehouse in the country. What is non-transferable about those skills? What are the greater skills that dockers claim to have?

Mr. Howarth: First, they have a combination of skills. Secondly, I do not profess to be an expert upon it but I understand that most of the equipment—*[Interruption.]* I can see that there is a lifetime of experience among Conservative Members of working with their hands in the ports. I doubt whether any of them have any knowledge of it whatsoever, yet they criticise the Opposition.

Most of the equipment is specifically designed and custom-built for work of that nature. It is not a question of dockers being able easily to transfer their skills to another industry. They have experience of using equipment for a specific purpose. That equipment is often not used in exactly the same way in other industries.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Howarth: No. I have given way quite enough.

For all those reasons, the level of compensation for which my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West has argued is appropriate and fair. Despite the juvenile behaviour of many of those who sit on the Conservative Benches, I hope that the Minister will take our point

seriously. Even at this late hour, and even after such frivolous responses to it, I hope that he will accept the new clause.

Mr. Michael Brown: The Labour party's support today for dock workers is touching. It is a pity that the Opposition did not support the dockers yesterday. I represent the port of Immingham. Many registered dockers work in the port. I guess that they would have much more respect for the Labour party and the new clause if the Opposition had given a little more support yesterday to the dockers and had thought a little more about their future.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), referred to Associated British Ports and its profitability and to the need to use some of its profits to compensate the dockers. The dockers of Immingham would like Associated British Ports to be able to spend its profits on investment in the port of Immingham, to the tune of £30·5 million, in order to enable the port to attract the largest vessels in the world.

The port of Immingham was built in 1912. Its lock gates, which were installed in 1912, do not now allow the largest ships in the world to enter the port. Those ships have to go to Rotterdam. The port of Immingham—a scheme port—is trying to become competitive. It is trying to ensure the livelihood of dockers by bringing new jobs to the port, by expanding the port and by ensuring that the port can go forward into the 21st century. But what does the Labour party do?

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brown: Let me finish this point and then I shall gladly give way.

The Labour party had its chance last night to demonstrate its genuine support for the registered dock workers of Immingham, so I am not taking any lectures from the Opposition and I advise my hon. Friends not to take any lectures from them about their support for dockers. When it came to the test of whether the Opposition were prepared to support the expansion of the dock industry, we found that their support was not there last night. Whenever the Opposition have had an opportunity to show it, it has never been there. We should bear that point very much in mind before we consider accepting the new clause.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): My hon. Friend has made a very good point. Does he not agree that last night the Labour payroll vote, sponsored by the National Union of Mineworkers, was here to sabotage our Bill? Whenever the Opposition have a chance to help dockers, where are they? They are not here this afternoon.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I realise that the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) was still on his preamble, but he should come to today rather than deal with what happened last night.

Mr. Brown: My hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham), who represents the port of King's Lynn, is doing his utmost, in a much more practical way than the new clause would ever do, to provide for the future of dockers. Conservative Members, by supporting the Bill and resisting the new clause, want to ensure that there is freedom in the docks industry to employ more dockers.

5 pm

The new clause is nonsense. We had the admission from the hon. Member for Oldham, West that it is a joke clause; he more or less said that. He objected when my right hon. Friend the Minister went to great lengths to advise the House about why we should reject the new clause. If I had been minded to support the hon. Member for Oldham, West on the basis that it must be right to increase the amount of compensation for someone being made redundant, my right hon. Friend would have been negligent in his duty to the House if he had not drawn my attention and the attention of other hon. Members to what could happen if we voted for the new clause.

A docker in the registered docks of Immingham could cease to be a registered docker, not through redundancy but voluntarily, because he saw an advertisement in the *Grimsby Evening Telegraph* for work in the non-scheme port of New Holland, four miles down the road in my constituency, or perhaps in Gunness, 14 miles down the road in the constituency of the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley). Under the proposals in the new clause, that dock worker could leave Immingham with up to £132,000 in his back pocket, and walk or take his car down the road to Scunthorpe, New Holland, Barrow or Gunness wharf and take a new job. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State was correct to draw attention to the effects of the new clause.

Labour Members should not say, "We are the Opposition; we do not have a constructive role to play in the House." Surely it is their duty to consider the consequences of new clauses that they table. It is just possible that some foolish Conservative Members, who did not listen with the care and attention that they should to Ministers at the Dispatch Box, might be tempted to vote for this extraordinary new clause. Thankfully, the hon. Member for Oldham, West more or less told the House that he did not expect the new clause to be taken seriously. My right hon. Friend the Minister takes his duties seriously. In his response to the Opposition he rightly drew the attention of the House to the consequences of the new clause.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West made unfair comments about Sir Keith Stuart. Sir Keith has been chairman of Associated British Ports since it became a private company. Before that he was chairman of the old British Transport Docks Board, which was a great favourite of the Labour party. Sir Keith should be congratulated on securing the future of dockers and on creating profitability for Associated British Ports, which does not want to sack every docker. It wants opportunities to create more jobs in the docks industry. The dock labour scheme and restrictive new clauses such as that proposed by the Opposition would shackle prospects for dockers and for the profitability of Associated British Ports. They would also restrict opportunities for more new jobs in my constituency.

We must resist the new clause because it would lead to a scandalous waste of resources. The compensation proposed by the Government is fair. It strikes the right balance and ensures at the same time that dockers can look

[Mr. Brown]

to a future based not on the restrictive practices of the past but on their ability to seize the opportunities that exist in this great industry.

The dockers in my constituency know which political party stands up for their interests. They know what happened last night in the House, and they will be waiting to see what happens in the future. They will not be seduced by the new clause. That is not the way for the Labour party to buy the votes of dockers in my constituency. Those dockers know that only one political party will look after their interests. They know which political party safeguarded their long-term interests.

Mr. Roy Hughes: The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) has dealt with development proposals for the port of Immingham. My mind goes back some years to a time when similar proposals were put forward for the port of Bristol. Very wisely, as has been borne out by events, the Labour Government turned down those proposals. Subsequently, the Conservative party realised that there were marginal seats to be won in the city of Bristol. It stated that if it were returned to power at a subsequent election, it would give the go-ahead for development in Bristol. The dock was built as a result of authorisation by the Conservative Government, but it has been a disaster. Bristol could not give it away; it has become a heavy load on the ratepayers of the city.

I support the new clause which sets out proposals to try to combat the worst provisions of this hasty Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) set out the case for the new clause. Throughout the proceedings in Committee, my hon. Friend was the voice of reason, as he was this afternoon. He gave glaring examples of people who have received huge amounts of compensation, but when we ask for a little more for dockers we are ridiculed. All we hear from the Conservative side is mirth and laughter.

Subsection (1) of the new clause says:

"Any dock workers to whom the Scheme applied shall be entitled, on leaving employment as a dock worker, to a payment of £6,000 plus £3,000 for each complete year of employment under the Scheme."

That is not really generous when one considers that the Bill was introduced so hastily and that the livelihood of people is at stake.

In a press notice issued on 11 May, subsequently amplified in Committee by the Minister, the Government indicated that any dock worker made redundant within three years of the legislation receiving Royal Assent would be entitled to a special lump sum payment. For instance, if the dock worker was made redundant in the first 18 months, he would be eligible for a maximum of £35,000, based on 15 years' service. It is worth reminding the House of the provisions. The Government proposed that the payment would be made up of a lump sum of £5,000, plus £2,000 for every complete year of service. The mean side of the Government was revealed when they said that the amount of compensation will be tapered off for every registered dock worker over 62½ years old. For every three months by which he exceeds 62½ years when he is dismissed, his compensation will be reduced by 10 per cent.

In comparing new clause 1 with the Government's provisions, it is necessary to consider the age of registered dock workers. It tends to be an aged work force. My hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West said that that is due to the stupidity of employers in the past in getting rid of their younger employees. Only 19 per cent. of registered dock workers are under 40 years of age; 41 per cent. are between 40 and 50 and more than 40 per cent. are 50 and over.

Mr. Devlin: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hughes: Not at the moment.

In the past decade I have witnessed many thousands of redundancies in south Wales in the coal and steel industries. This afternoon we have heard a great deal about the redundancy scheme for coal miners. It is worth reminding the House that coal had to be mined where it was found, and it was often found in the most inaccessible valleys. When a pit closes, a whole community is put in jeopardy, and, as a result of those pit closures, thousands of miners will never work again. Considering the arduous and hazardous nature of that occupation, when a miner in an isolated community is made redundant, one might say that it is an ending for him. He cannot simply cope with his new life.

In the steel industry, there were thousands of redundancies in Newport and Cardiff. When East Moors closed in Cardiff, 5,000 jobs went at a stroke. The steel industry was wiped out in the capital city of Wales. There were 6,000 redundancies at Llanwern and jobs have been cut drastically at other steelworks.

A few years ago, a social survey of redundant steel workers revealed the dire distress felt by many of those people. They had not found work, they had probably spent their redundancy money and many of them were likely never to work again. In Committee we were told many times that our dockers have adapted to new equipment and new working practices in the industry. But when they leave the ports industry, they are unlikely to take up unemployment in finance houses or microchip enterprises which are the nature of new industries in south Wales and elsewhere. The most likely outcome is that older workers in the ports industry will tend to stagnate, and as a result could create all sorts of social problems, particularly when they have spent their redundancy money.

We should like far more generous provisions for dock workers who will be made redundant. The problem needs to be tackled now. Only 9,400 registered dock workers remain in the ports industry. In 1983 there were 14,631, and since the inception of the scheme the number of registered dock workers has declined from more than 80,000.

What a farce is that old parrot cry that dockers have jobs for life. The redundancy provisions that the Government have set out do not meet the dockers' real needs.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

5.15 pm

Mr. Hughes: I would rather not give way. I have heard enough from the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) in the past two years to last me a lifetime.

Dockers are justified in their belief that they are being badly treated. As late as 20 March this year, the Government suggested that they had no proposals to legislate in respect of the dock labour scheme. Shortly afterwards, like a bombshell, they pushed a Bill through Committee with all the finesse of an ancient steamroller.

Throughout the Committee stage Labour Members tried to persuade the Government to pause and think again about what should replace the dock labour scheme. We recognise that the scheme may be a little out of date and need amendment, but we feel that there is a need for a national framework. The Government were not prepared to see reason. I note that they appear to be doing so in respect of lawyers and I feel that they are on their way to doing so in respect of doctors.

In those circumstances, bearing in mind the redundancy provisions that we are discussing, is it any wonder that, when the dockers eventually held a ballot, they voted by no less than three to one for industrial action?

Even at this late stage I urge the Government to make more generous redundancy provisions. As my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West pointed out, employers are doing very nicely, thank you. In any case, the Government are paying half the redundancy money. If the Government were prepared to be more generous and accept new clause 1, they might well avert a very damaging strike. We know the parlous nature of Britain's balance of payments at present. We know what happened today when interest rates rose by a major stroke. It is obvious that Britain is in serious economic difficulty and if there is a dock strike it will certainly be made much worse.

Mr. Boswell: I invite my hon. Friends to resist new clause 1. It is appropriate for me to speak in the debate precisely because I represent an inland midlands constituency which is almost as far away from the docks as it is possible to go. I hope to remind the House that it is very much in the interests of all parts of Britain and British industry that the Bill is passed substantially unamended.

We all have an interest in an effective, efficient and low-cost docks industry. I refer to my own experience, as for many years I have lived in my constituency as a practising farmer. Many right hon. and hon. Members will not be aware that Britain has moved from a traditional grain-importing role to a major grain-exporting role. We are now the fifth largest grain-exporting power in the world. That represents an amazing change, and to some extent it has come about in spite of the existing structure of our docks industry. I have had experience of sending grain on lorries from the midlands to all the major scheme ports, and to non-scheme ports, and it is clear that what we are discussing affects us all, whether or not we represent dockland constituencies.

There is the somewhat endearing myth, that the Labour party still likes to peddle, that no Conservative Member has any experience, direct or indirect, in any of those matters over which Labour Members claim to exercise great moral concern. I do not make a great deal of it, but it is relevant to mention that my wife's grandfather was a docker in one of the scheme ports in South Wales—*[Interruption.]* He worked hard in that job for 30 years and I have great respect for him. I have worked for most of my life among manual workers, although not in the docks.

I also have knowledge through my family—and in another context, to which I shall come—of the impact of redundancy on people, and I do not belittle the effect of that impact. It is sad, dramatic and shocking when a person is declared redundant. The issue is what we do about it—how we finance it and reach the right balance—and the proposals in the Bill represent the right balance.

There are several crushing objections to the proposed new clause, one of which has been rehearsed. I refer to the situation when somebody takes the money—compensation of up to £132,000—walks out of the door, walks round the docks, comes back in through the door, takes fresh employment and starts again as if nothing has happened. As the Opposition proposal is drafted, it is totally unworkable and out of the question.

Next, we must consider the wider question of the equity of what we are trying to do in these matters. Is it equitable that somebody should be able to receive compensation of that magnitude and then return to dock work, working alongside someone who has carried on working without receiving any compensation?

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Is it not equally inequitable for the managing director of a company in the City of London to take £250,000 or £300,000 in compensation because his company has been taken over, and then for him the following day to go to work for perhaps a completely different company? If the hon. Gentleman says that that is inequitable, he must accept that a great many people in the City would be out of work tomorrow.

Mr. Boswell: Many people in the City have lost their jobs recently, and not all of them have found other jobs. At least the hon. Gentleman accepts the important point—I fear that many of his hon. Friends have failed to accept it—that there are considerations of equity in these issues and that we must relate them to the economic situation of the industry. We must have in mind the dock worker who leaves and returns to dock work compared with the man who carries on working and does not receive compensation.

Next, compare the case of somebody who leaves under Labour's proposals with somebody who took severance pay under the previous proposals. Is it fair that one should receive such a large additional amount, having carried on in employment for only a short time?

There is also the wider question of equity in relation to other industries. Farming, for example, is not doing particularly well just now. The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) will recall what happened to milk quotas and how many farmers left the industry. Nor should we overlook the issues affecting farm workers at that time. Many of us who have been active in agriculture would be pleased to take upwards of £100,000 to get out of the industry. We must therefore look right across the board when setting levels. After all, it is easy to be generous with someone else's money—particularly public money.

I referred to an interest that I had in redundancy issues. There is a proposal from the Plessey company affecting the town of Towcester in my constituency, which has a population of upwards of 6,000. The company has declared its intention to close some of its manufacturing facilities—without prejudice to whatever might happen in any takeover bid—and has said that 375 jobs will go. Although there may be some redeployment, it seems that there are likely to be about 300 redundancies.

Those people—whether or not they return to work and irrespective of their situation—would look askance at the scale of the compensation payments which the hon. Member for Oldham, West has suggested. As with so

[Mr. Boswell]

many Socialists, he is being fair to his friends but is disregarding all those whom it does not suit him to consider at the time.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West and his friends, inside and outside Parliament, in the unions and elsewhere, have connived at and supported a situation by which the dock labour scheme has continued to work to the disadvantage of the nation, to increase the costs of British industry and to threaten the position of the scheme ports. The hon. Gentleman is cast in the role of Samson. Not having brought the structure down by the direct method, he now awaits the conclusion of the scheme so that he can bring the whole lot crashing down around him. Redundancy payments on the scale he proposes would be the best way of achieving the destruction of the scheme ports which he claims to support.

This debate, as it should be, is about redundancy, but it is possible to over-emphasise the redundancy issue—to strain it beyond equity and prudence—for we must remember that there is work to be done in the docks. That work should be done in scheme ports released from the present clamping and confining scheme——

Mr. Ted Leadbitter (Hartlepool) *rose*——

Mr. Boswell: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not give way. I am about to conclude my remarks.

They should be released from the confines of the scheme and be free to get on with their job of serving the nation's business.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): I am pleased to have this opportunity——

Mr. Ernie Ross: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I appreciate that it is usual for the Chair to call to speak an hon. Member from one side of the House followed by an hon. Member from the other side. I am wondering whether you consider it fair, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to call, following the hon. Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell), who is a supporter of the Bill, the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), a member of the SLD, who also supports the Bill. Should not the hon. Member for Gordon be considered to be on the Government side from the point of view of debating the proposed new clause?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I appreciate the point that the hon. Member has made and, having made it, I trust that he will not push his luck.

Mr. Bruce: I feel sure that those remarks of the hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) will come home to haunt him on other occasions.

I support the Bill, although I find it extraordinary that it should have taken the Government 10 years to introduce it. Indeed, in the last few months they have still been actively defending the scheme. It is now a subject on which they have permitted their Back Benchers to let rip. The scheme must be phased out in such a way that it is quick and clean. As well as removing the restrictive practice, we must be fair to those who remain in the scheme at the end, and that is the nub of the debate on the new clause.

The points of equity that have been raised are important, and I assure Labour Members that I appreciate that many of them are sponsored by the Transport and General Workers Union and have dock workers, whom they wish to protect, in their constituencies. I do not dispute their sincerity in doing that, but they must also remember that there are many working people in their constituencies who feel that the scheme has gone on for too long and that they have been disadvantaged as a result of it. In those circumstances, there is a danger that they will alienate their supporters.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Will the hon. Gentleman tell me which of his constituents, apart from employers, have said that the dock labour scheme has gone on too long? Why are his constituents disadvantaged?

Mr. Bruce: In a sense, I am grateful for that intervention. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the conflict that arose within the scheme meant that we nearly lost our fish market for good. If the hon. Gentleman is suggesting that that would not have been a disaster for Aberdeen and its port as well as for his constituents and mine, I do not know what would be.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman has not answered the question. He said that his constituents feel that the scheme has gone on for too long and that they are being disadvantaged by it. If I am fortunate enough to catch your eye later, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall respond in detail on the issue of the fish market. Which of his constituents, apart from employers, have said that the scheme has gone on too long and that they are disadvantaged? None of them is covered by Aberdeen harbour board.

5.30 pm

Mr. Bruce: Obviously, the hon. Gentleman does not regard employers as valid constituents. I do. Employers have told me that they think the scheme has gone on too long, and I think that those employers represent an important part of the constituency. They employ people, including some of my constituents. Their inability to expand employment in circumstances in which Aberdeen, as a scheme port, is disadvantaged adversely affects the interests of my constituents.

I am not quarrelling with the right of the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) to take a different view. I respect him for his view. However, as constituency Members of Parliament, we are elected to make our own judgments as to what we believe, in the light of local knowledge and local circumstances, is in the best interests of our constituents and our community. As I have said, the phasing out of the scheme is desirable for the port of Aberdeen and for ancillary employment in and around the area.

Obviously, I am speaking not only as a constituency Member. However, I have the greatest knowledge about the area I represent. We have seen the development of ports competing with Aberdeen. That is true in other parts of the country such as Montrose and Peterhead. I want the ports to expand. There is room for Aberdeen, Montrose and Peterhead to develop their business. I should like to see the day, soon, when they will be able to compete on a fair and equal footing.

Having said that, and with due deference to the hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross), the point which is relevant to the debate on the new clause is that it is important to complete this process fairly, justly and

honourably. I think that the Government have recognised the need to do that and have proposed a scheme which, at least on the face of it, seems to be reasonable. It provides for a maximum of £35,000 and an estimated total of about £25 million. Obviously, that depends on how many people are made redundant and how many are redeployed.

An important and relevant point needs to be made and it supports the basic reasoning behind the new clause moved by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). Both sides of the House admit that the average age of the remaining registered dockers is relatively high. It may be true that some of the dockers who are paid compensation will be re-employed the next day, but it is also true that some may never work again. The House should ensure that the scheme provides justice for those people. After all, they have stayed in a scheme that has given them continuity and security over a considerable period of time.

The thrust of the new clause, which tots up redundancy payments according to length of service and, by implication, the age of the individual concerned, gets the balance right. The hon. Member for Oldham, West said that the new clause is not perfect. Indeed, it is flawed. However, the Government would do well, given that they have taken 10 years to introduce legislation to abolish the scheme, to say that the settlement of the matter should be done fairly. After all, they introduced the Bill on the same day as they introduced a White Paper, they forced the Bill into Committee and then guillotined it and they have tabled no amendments of their own. Therefore, it is not unreasonable for them to ensure that the process is carried out in a way that minimises bitterness and maximises equity to all concerned and ensures that the transition is achieved without an extremely damaging dock strike.

I believe—I hope that I am right—that whatever utterances are made in the House, nobody wants a dock strike and nobody believes that such a strike would be desirable for the British economy or good for the ports or the workers. It would be helpful if the Government would say that, in the light of that, given that this is a final settlement and that they have taken so long to bring it about, they would tilt the balance of the scheme to ensure that those who have worked in the industry for a long time and have little prospect of being re-employed have a more generous settlement than is proposed now. However, as I have said, the general thrust of the Government's proposals are not unreasonable.

In those circumstances, the Government could have responded with a little more grace to the principle behind the new clause. It would help to ensure that the Bill leaves the House with my support—I do not qualify that—and with the feeling that the Government have shown some sensitivity and have tried to ensure that confrontation is removed. It would also help to achieve fairness and justice while removing a debilitating and restrictive practice that has existed for too long in circumstances that compensate those affected and liberate the scheme ports to compete fairly with other ports in the country.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The hon. Member for Gordon, (Mr. Bruce) suffers from the fact that he was not a member of the Committee. His hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) was a member of the Committee but he rarely paid a visit to it so he was not able to report what was going on. The hon. Member for Gordon may be interested to know that in Committee, the Labour party moved an amendment to increase the compensation to about £70,000. In the short time of two or three weeks since then, the Opposition have upped the ante by another £60,000. At the rate we are going, if the Bill is not on the statute book quickly, the Labour party will be prepared to offer £1 million by the end of the summer. The hon. Member for Gordon should remember that the Government are making an offer to dock workers which is considerably in excess of what has been offered to them in the past. I shall come back to the figures of the severance opportunities available under the Labour Government.

It is important to place on record the fact that the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) has admitted, during interventions in the speech of my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, that the new clause does not make sense and does not bear out the Opposition's intention. The hon. Member for Oldham, West has been in the House since 1970 and it is no good for him to claim that he does not have the resources or that he did not understand. He has admitted that the drafting is defective, but is still going ahead with it and intending to vote for it. He cannot then complain when my right hon. Friend the Minister points out that the new clause is defective. It would ensure that everybody made redundant or who chooses to leave the dock labour scheme for any reason would be entitled to up to £130,000 in a pay-off. Clearly, that is nonsense. People leave their jobs every day of the week and they are not able to collect £130,000 from the taxpayer or their employer. That is the purpose of the new clause, and I am surprised at the hon. Member for Oldham, West, having discovered and admitted that it is stupid and that he has made a mistake, being willing to press on with the debate and to press the new clause to a Division.

If law making is about anything, it must be about making sensible laws. The Opposition have been caught out and have been slipshod in their drafting, but it surprises me that they insist on continuing.

It is important to look at the issue of jobs for life. The hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) referred to that before leaving the Chamber. The simple fact is that the scheme did provide a job for life. It is no use pointing to the fact that the number of dockers in the scheme has diminished. It has diminished only as a result of voluntary redundancy. No docker who wishes to remain in the scheme has been forced to leave. That has been the problem. Those who like a cushy life and enjoy bobbing off to be a taxi driver or those who enjoy ghosting or want to sit in a portakabin at Grangemouth watching a colour television set to overcome the boredom that might result, have stayed within the scheme. That is why the average age of dockers in the scheme has increased over the years and that is why the scheme is described as giving jobs for life. Unless dockers choose to leave the scheme, they are in the scheme and on the gravy train for as long as they want.

Now Labour Members suggest that the amount of money that dockers receive should be increased considerably over the amount proposed by the Government. What is interesting is that when Labour Members had the power to determine those matters, they were not that generous. In 1975, the maximum severance payment was £5,250. Since January 1987, it has been £25,000, which is an increase of 376 per cent. in 12 years, mainly under a Conservative Government. In special circumstances, it may be necessary for employers to pay up

[Mr. Nicholas Bennett]

to £35,000. Already under this Government, severance payments have been increased considerably and the Bill proposes to raise the limit to £35,000. When the Opposition had it in their power to decide the limit, they put it at £5,250, so how can they consider that the Government are being ungenerous in putting the figure up to £35,000?

It is interesting that the hon. Member for Gordon, in the usual Liberal tradition, split the difference and said we should give a bit more money. When the Lib-Lab pact was in existence for two years, there was no increase. The then Government kept the maximum severance payment at the same level. That contrasts with the Government's proposals in the Bill.

It ill behoves dockers in the scheme to complain about receiving £35,000 and to say that it is not a good pay-off when one considers the productivity and industrial relations record of the dock labour scheme. Since 1967, more than 4 million working days have been lost because of disputes in scheme ports. Since 1967, there have been 3,569 disputes in scheme ports. The number of days lost per year by dockers in scheme ports in 1988 was 10,663, which is 1,105 days lost per 1,000 employees, compared with 164 for all industries and services. The strike record for registered dock workers is more than five times as bad as that for the rest of industry. Yet the Opposition are saying that, after the dockers have had a lifetime of bobbing off and ghosting, after an appalling strike and industrial relations record and after a time when the Labour Government themselves were prepared to pay only £5,000, compared with this Government's offer of £35,000, we should up the ante, first to £70,000 and, three weeks later, to a suggested £130,000.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): I apologise for coming in late and hearing only the end of my hon. Friend's speech. The record is not bad everywhere. In Southampton, it has improved greatly over the past few years since the leaders of the dockers in Southampton took advantage of the very generous severance payments to which my hon. Friend referred, and ceased to be dockers in Southampton. They were therefore not eligible for re-employment as dockers anywhere else, so they took jobs on Merseyside, where they are now employed as industrial relations advisers. I can imagine nothing more guaranteed to ensure that Southampton has the edge over Liverpool when it comes to getting business henceforth.

Mr. Bennett: Everywhere in the country has the edge over Liverpool when it comes to strike records and industrial relations. It is interesting——

Mr. Loyden: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bennett: No. As a former dock worker, the hon. Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) knows about the strike record in Liverpool better than anyone else does. He has been an agitator in Liverpool docks and the reason that Liverpool is such an appalling——

Mr. Birmingham: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it not unparliamentary for one hon. Member in his conceited ignorance to call another hon. Member an agitator, as has just happened?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have not heard anything unparliamentary.

Mr. Bennett: I am surprised that the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Birmingham) believes that the term "agitator" is an insult in the Labour party. I always thought that it was an accolade there and guaranteed the reselection of Labour Members. We all know about the industrial relations record of Liverpool and the reason why Speke has gone down the plughole. We know about the appalling strike record in the car industry and the docks. I do not want lectures from the hon. Member for Garston about that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) spoke about Southampton. In the past two or three weeks, negotiations have been taking place in Southampton while the ballot has been carried out. Mr. Harryman, the Transport and General Workers Union shop steward there, has been censured by his union for trying to come to a local agreement about what happens at Southampton after the scheme comes to an end. It is sensible for a trade union official to recognise that the scheme is coming to an end, by the will of Parliament, and to get round the table to talk with the employers about how the port's future can be assured.

5.45 pm

Mr. Ernie Ross: I was a member of the Committee on the Bill. We have, no doubt, four or five hours ahead of us when we shall hear contributions from Conservative Members which will reflect their comments in Committee. The ministerial team has changed yet again because it was so weak, disjointed and hopeless that it has been necessary to draft in Ministers on an almost daily basis. They are incompetent and cannot handle their brief. The Chairman of the Committee had to lecture the Under-Secretary of State for Employment, the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) because he was not doing his job.

We should therefore not be surprised about what we have seen in this debate. This debate is a continuation of the double act that the Tories have been running throughout the Bill. The straight man leads off, then the clowns come on behind. The clown who has just spoken, the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) was a member of the Committee. He has been joined here by other clowns who have been on other Bills, while he clowned around on this Bill.

Another clown is the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown), who stands up and says, "I am a friend of the dockers and I am fighting for the dock industry." Last night, this clown was so concerned about the dockers that he moved the Third Reading of the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill formally and did not say another word. That is the extent of his concern about the docks and what has happened to them. It is just one more example of how the Conservatives have attempted to steamroller legislation on to the statute book.

The hon. Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) made a point that needs to be dealt with immediately. He said that, under new clause 1, dockers could take a bonus and then immediately take a post somewhere else. That is also true under the Government's proposals. Under the Bill, there is nothing to stop a registered docker taking redundancy and then taking employment as a docker down the road or even with his previous employer. Let me put that on the record. The only difference between our proposal and the

Government's is that, because we have a little bit more experience of work than the clowns have, we understand some of the problems.

The Under-Secretary of State for Employment should ensure that people are trained properly and that they have jobs to look forward to, rather than the dole queue. I am disappointed that he did not deal with some of the points I raised. He knows that the Select Committee on Employment has identified the over-50s as a special category, yet neither he, the Secretary of State for Employment nor the Minister of State dealt with those comments in Committee. I went through the Select Committee's comments in Committee and they are relevant to this debate. The Select Committee referred to life expectancy, the fact that an increasingly large part of the population is made up of the elderly and the nature of work. It also pointed out that there are people who discriminate against the elderly.

It is worth remembering who is discriminating against who, because the fat cats sitting on the Government Front Bench all earn more in a single year than they are proposing to pay to the dockers whom they will make redundant and send to the labour exchanges——

Mr. Michael Brown *rose*——

Mr. Ross: Sit down.

Each of those Ministers earns more in a single year than they are proposing to give to redundant dockers, but there is no way in which we shall allow them to get away with that without at least attempting to increase the sum——

Mr. Bermingham *rose*——

Mr. Ross: I should like to give way to my hon. Friend but there is not much time and we have a guillotine. I hope that we can have one more comment from the Minister in answer to some of the points that were not answered in Committee, because I should like to hear some answers tonight.

We are expecting the Government to say a little more. Once they have given the generous handout of £35,000, what will happen to the dockers? Does it mean that they will be on the dole for the rest of their lives, because if it does, I advise the Government that £35,000 does not go very far and that we shall not let them get away with it. We want more information.

The hon. Member for Daventry also said that there was unfairness. He is right—there is an unfairness. If my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) had caught your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he would have identified the unfairness that exists right now. That lot on the Conservative Benches have been conspiring with dock employers to ensure that people such as the Aberdeen fish lumpers are leaving employment now under much worse conditions than those that will apply when the Bill receives Royal Assent. There is a conspiracy among Conservative Members and a lack of concern about those people who were convinced that they should take redundancy. Because of the difference made by one day, two people who work together in Aberdeen and who have applied for redundancy will get different terms. Any worker who did not know about the Government's plans and who applied for redundancy under the old terms will not be allowed to withdraw his application so that he can take advantage of the new scheme.

The peroration of the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) was about the only peroration that we have heard from his party because his hon. Friends were absolutely silent throughout the Committee stage. He reminded me, and I am sure my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North, of a fish person gutting a cod because of the way in which he said, "Let's be quick and clean and get rid of it." We are talking about human beings. We do not want to hear about a quick, clean end to the scheme, because we know that there will be problems long after its abolition. The hon. Member for Gordon got his just and appropriate reward in the treatment given to him by the hon. Member for Pembroke, who was the resident clown on the Committee.

If there was one thing that differentiated the Opposition and the Government sides of the Committee, it was that at least we tried. It may very well be that the wording of this new clause is not correct, but if it is not, would it not have made much more sense for the Minister to say, "I accept the intention of the new clause and if it is withdrawn, I will introduce an amendment or a new clause in another place to improve on the redundancy terms that are on offer at present so that some of the problems that the Opposition have identified can be dealt with"?

Unless we hear tonight that the Government will do something to ensure that the so-called generous payment that the Government are giving to the 46·7-year-old dockers who will leave the industry and who may never work again is supplemented by some training programme or some other provision to ensure that the redundancy payment is not all that they will receive from this Government or from any other Government for the rest of their lives, we shall pursue the new clause to a vote. It is clear that the Government do not care. We have a responsibility to speak for the dockers who will be made redundant.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) clearly identified, because of the intentions of those people who are at present constrained by the dock labour scheme, 2,000 dockers are now facing the sack. As soon as the Bill is given the Royal Assent, those 2,000 people will be left to the labour exchanges. We shall fight for as long and as hard as we possibly can, both here and in the other place, to ensure that those people get the maximum reward for the effort that they have put in to make our docks so successful.

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Peter Bottomley): The speech of the hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) was the most appalling insult to his hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). I have heard that on the Committee the hon. Member for Newham, North-West was one of the more entertaining Labour Members. To say that my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) is funnier or more peculiar than the hon. Member for Newham, North-West is an insult. I hope that those Labour Members will sort themselves out, because that sort of disagreement brings the Labour party into disrepute.

The hon. Member for Dundee, West also referred to the fact that 650 registered dockers per year over the next three years might take severance and be made redundant. Since 1983—over the past five or six years, which is the sort of period that the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) would use—840 registered dockers per year have been taking severance. Therefore, our proposals will mean

[Mr. Peter Bottomley]

a reduction in the numbers leaving the industry—or rather, leaving the registered docks work side of the industry.

Mr. Robert Hughes *rose*——

Mr. Bottomley: When I was a Minister at the Department of Employment, I remember the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) personally trying to resolve some of the disputes that were then threatening the future of Aberdeen. I pay tribute to him for that before giving way to him.

Mr. Hughes: After that, I am sorry to have to ask this question, but I must still put it to the Minister. What is the position of the fish market porters in Aberdeen who have no employer at the moment because, as was pointed out in Committee, the fish landing company went out of existence on 24 April? Are those people who are still working on a temporary licence with Aberdeen harbour board entitled to £35,000, or are they being pegged back to £25,000?

Mr. Bottomley: As I have been away from this subject for some time, I shall make sure that the hon. Gentleman gets an answer to his question, although I do not think that it will affect his vote on the new clause. I shall see whether an answer can be given to him during our subsequent debates this evening, because he has raised a serious point that deserves an answer.

We are considering a ghost new clause and I suspect that, by the time we come to vote on it, no one will actually vote for it, with the possible exceptions of the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) and his hon. Friends the Members for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) and for Dundee, West. Indeed, the hon. Member for Oldham, West, who moved the new clause, acknowledged that it does not do what he had hoped it would do——

Mr. Meacher: I did not say that.

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Member for Oldham, West also acknowledged that by tabling amendment No. 3, which would get rid of existing clause 5, many of the protections that British dock workers would want to have would be swept away. I ask Opposition Members to consider what was said by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Employment, who dealt both with the serious points and with the new clause that was tabled semi-seriously by the hon. Member for Oldham, West.

The proposal in the new clause is that a registered dock worker with 20 years' service, who leaves the industry for any reason whatsoever, should receive £66,000. We are dealing with a suggestion that a registered dock worker who leaves the industry for any reason after 30 years' service should get £96,000 and a registered dock worker with 40 years' service should get £126,000. That is the consequence of the simple arithmetic of the new clause.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke pointed out, when one considers the £5,000 that was available when the Labour party was last in government and the £25,000 and the other figures on offer now, one must realise that there has been a significant increase.

Mr. Bermingham *rose*——

Mr. Bottomley: It would probably be better if I did not give way to the hon. Gentleman, although I acknowledge that he has been present for most of the debate. I am not sure that there is time for me to give way to him, but if I run out of things to say before six o'clock—in two minutes' time—perhaps I shall give way to him.

My hon. Friends the Members for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown), for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) and for Pembroke have treated the debate seriously. We want to see thriving ports that will compete equally. The proposals in clause 5 are that the ports should not compete equally for three years between the time of Royal Assent and the date on which the transitional arrangements come to an end, because the scheme ports will still have taxpayer contributions towards redundancies. That is the kind of competitive advantage that will die away at the end of the three years. It is right that there should be transitional arrangements in moving from the dock labour scheme to the post-dock labour scheme position. That is the argument for looking at the distortion that we now face.

Some hon. Members asked whether those in the docks industry would be treated worse than those in the mining industry. Let me give some examples. A mineworker aged 27 with 11 years' service will receive a payment of £6,648. A docker in those circumstances—although, of course, there are probably no dockers that young with that length of service—would receive a payment of £27,000 if made redundant in the first 18 months after Royal Assent, or £16,000 if made redundant in the second 18-month period. Further, a miner aged 32 with 16 years' service will receive £17,468; a similar docker with similar service would receive the maximum payments of £35,000 or £20,000. It is important that we remember that the comparisons suggest that the transitional redundancy arrangements following Royal Assent are reasonably fair.

I recognise the point that was made by the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), who made a reasonably constructed speech although he did not make the case for the severely increased sums which are the aim of the new clause so inadequately expressed by the Labour party. At least there is agreement throughout the House, between the Labour party, the Social and Liberal Democratic party and the Conservative party, about the way in which the new clause was drafted. Its arithmetic goes far, too far, and when taken with amendment No. 3, its consequences are totally wrong. The House knows that the new clause is unacceptable. On some points, it acts to the disadvantage of former registered dock workers. No other worker is entitled to such generous terms. The clause has no logic, merit or friends. I urge the House to reject it.

Mr. Bermingham: The Minister would not answer a simple question. If one is 55, has 10 years working life left and is getting a maximum of £35,000——

It being Six o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the Order [8 May] and the Resolution this day, to put forthwith the Question already proposed from the Chair.*

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:——

The House divided: Ayes 184 Noes 258.

Division No. 212] **[6 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Allen, Graham	Armstrong, Hilary
Anderson, Donald	Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy

Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Vaz, Keith
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes, and
Mr. Nigel Griffiths.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine

Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
McCrindle, Robert
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory and Mr. John Taylor.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 2

Dissolution of National Dock Labour Board

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 2, line 10, at end insert

'but no such order shall be made until a body has been established which will make provision for the training and welfare of dock workers (formerly within the Scheme) and port medical facilities'.

The amendment seeks to establish a body which will take over the training and medical functions of the National Dock Labour Board when it is abolished under the Bill.

The Government have repeatedly refused to elaborate on the arrangements that will follow the abolition of the board. Indeed, it is the issue of what will follow the abolition of the board and the dock labour scheme that is at the heart of the dispute between the National Association of Port Employers and the Transport and General Workers Union. The union is concerned about the threat of casualisation and wishes to secure a collective agreement that covers job security. The union has also expressed its wish to secure arrangements—again involving the union—which would cover the training and the medical facilities provided by the board. Those were among the issues raised by the general secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union at the union's meeting with the port employers on 18 April.

It is as well to understand that, under the agreement, we are not seeking to perpetuate the dock labour scheme. It is not a device to replace the scheme with a new scheme, because the kernel of the dock labour scheme is the monopoly employment aspect, which is the element of the scheme that requires that only registered employers can be responsible for dock work at our ports and that only registered dockers can carry out the work. That monopoly will go with the Bill and the amendment will not reinstate it. That is not to say that we do not share the union's concerns about the threat of casualisation—we certainly do. It must be said that the employers' record post-Devlin, when they gave certain undertakings in relation to casual work that were not sustained, fully justifies the suspicions of the union and of the individual registered dockers.

6.15 pm

In the amendment we are dealing with the provision of a body to provide for training after the abolition of the board and to maintain the medical centres which are already operated by the National Dock Labour Board. It is as well to acknowledge the value of the existing training arrangements. There are two training bases, one at Liverpool and one at Tilbury, each with a chief instructor and, I believe, about six training instructors. Those instructors must be mobile, because they cover a substantial area of the country. We have always argued that the quality of training provided by the NDLB is high and that that is a resource which should not be dissipated and lost.

We were not at all reassured by the Government's statements in Committee. The Under-Secretary, at about 11 o'clock at night, when dealing with the existing facilities, said:

> "We must be clear about what training is available in the scheme ports. In 1987, there were 21 instructors and some £500,000 a year was spent on training; this year there are 14 mobile instructors, working within the scheme ports, and there are no longer training centres. How much training does that amount to? In 1987, a total of 1,498 training weeks were given, and that provided—on average—less than half a week per trainee."

Of course, those training centres have long since ceased to exist.

The Under-Secretary at a later stage said:

> "Employers will need to ensure that their employees are properly trained. If they are not, the work will not get done."

The Under-Secretary further said:

"Employers will be unable to run their businesses as successfully by operating with untrained people.

Therefore, I do not apologise for saying that after the scheme is repealed, it will be the employers' responsibility to ensure that proper training takes place."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 2 May 1989; c. 213.]

That is the guts of the issue. The Government have repeatedly refused to give any indication of what arrangements will exist, if any, at national level following the abolition of the dock labour board. We believe that it would be very much against the interests of the industry if this national facility was dissipated, split up between the employers, or simply wiped out, no doubt through redundancy.

We ask the Minister to tell us precisely where the Government stand on the issue. Is it really their intention to destroy that national training facility? I am not suggesting that the body we are seeking to establish would have responsibility only for training in the scheme ports. Of course, the logic of the Bill is that the distinction between the scheme and non-scheme ports for all practical purposes will no longer exist. I should have thought that there would be a case for building on that national training facility and making it available to all the ports.

Some of the non-scheme ports, particularly the smaller ones, already make use of the NDLB training facilities. I admit that that accounts for only a very small proportion of the training provided by the NDLB. Nevertheless, it is significant that some of the non-scheme ports consider it to be an advantage to use the training facilities provided by the NDLB.

The amendment is a most constructive proposal. Instead of destroying a training facility and the experience of the training organisation—and that is what is really important—the Government should be prepared to accept the principle of a new national facility and organisation to take over the responsibility for training in scheme and also non-scheme ports.

Even this Government have accepted the principle that they have a role to play in training. It is common ground between the Labour party and the Government that this country's record on training falls a long way short of that of many of our competitors—and certainly short of that of many countries in the European Community. It should be a matter of concern for the Government, the Opposition, employers, trade unions and local authorities to try to improve the quality of training for the unemployed and, in this context, to improve the training for employed people to whom the vast bulk of the training to which I am referring is directed.

In the context of the Government's training policies as outlined in their document "Employment for the 1990s", the establishment of the Training Agency and arrangements for the training and enterprise councils, the Government should accept the principle that the public sector should play a part in trying to ensure that training takes place. The state should act as an enabler, or catalyst, in that respect.

It is indisputable that a national training scheme would benefit efficiency and health and safety in industry. We have had a great deal of discussion already in Committee about health and safety. We are all well aware that separate regulations apply to health and safety which cover scheme and non-scheme ports.

Undoubtedly docks are dangerous places. An important part of training is to ensure that dockers can operate the sophisticated and expensive equipment in the docks in a way which is safe for them and for their workmates.

It cannot be right to wipe out this training facility, which is such an asset to the industry. The same applies, although perhaps with less force, to the medical centres. I accept that there is scope for some rationalisation and for different provision. In some instances the medical facilities are some way from the ports and some of the centres have not been utilised of late to the extent that they were used in the past. However, the principle is still valid. The medical facilities should not be wiped out or handed over to the employers. They should be maintained and operated in a way that will benefit dockers and the industry generally.

It is remarkable that not even the staff in the training and medical facilities have any idea what is in store for them. Will the training facilities be wiped out? Will the staff be made compulsorily redundant? Is that the Government's intention? We have just had a debate about the compensation arrangements which might prevail for registered dockers. What about the compensation arrangements for training staff and all the other people involved with the national dock labour scheme?

The Government have said that we should not simply be concerned about compensation arrangements for registered dockers, but that we should also be concerned about compensation for other staff involved in the scheme. I hope that the Under-Secretary of State for Employment will tell us precisely what arrangements will apply for people involved in the training function of the NDLB. Many of those people have substantial commitments. We might argue that, because they must be mobile—some have moved from one part of the country to another and taken on large mortgages to act as training instructors—therefore they are as much in need of substantial compensation if they are to lose their jobs as any other group of workers.

We are not advocating redundancies. The talents of those people should be deployed within the framework of a new organisation for the benefit of the port industry. There is no disagreement between the Opposition and the Government with regard to efficiency, productivity and using new investment most effectively. Training is an essential element of all that. Against a background of the Government's intransigence since the publication of the White Paper, it would be sensible and an excellent development if the Government gave some sign that they were prepared to make some provision to follow the national dock labour scheme and maintain the training functions, medical and welfare facilities provided by the NDLB.

We have in mind a body which would involve the trade unions. We favour joint determination along the lines which exist in the NDLB, where the employers and the union are equally represented. We believe that the best can be obtained from training and from all the other functions if there is maximum representation from the work force working fully with employer representatives. That is the great strength of the present NDLB facilities. They have the support of the employers and the trade union, because the trade union is directly involved in the organisation which is ultimately responsible for the training facility, the NDLB.

We strongly advocate that there should be a national body to take over the training and medical functions and

[Mr. Gavin Strang]

that that national body, whatever its details, should include equal participation of the employers and the union. It is in the interests of the docks that training should involve the maximum participation of the trade union.

There can be no dispute about the importance which trade unions attach to training. Most trade unions have separate training departments and are involved in providing training facilities to help their members obtain employment or, in other cases, to retrain and become more employable. The main responsibility lies with industry and with the Government. The trade unions have an excellent record on training and we want that to be encouraged. We should maintain the arrangements whereby there is co-determination and joint control of the training arrangements and medical facilities.

When we read about these issues in the British press, we might almost believe that the national dock labour scheme was unique to Britain and that it was an eccentric development. That is not the case. Many other advanced countries have found it necessary to have a scheme similar to the national dock labour scheme. France, Italy and Spain have schemes. They are not necessarily identical to our schemes, but it is amazing how many of those schemes include the principle of the register. They control employment in the docks with the aim of preventing casual labour and all that goes with it, including insecurity and exploitation.

We are not advocating something impractical or unreasonable, but simply seeking to make the best of the position that will exist post the enactment of the scheme. We, and the trade union, accept that the legislation will be enacted, and the debate is about the arrangements that will follow the national dock labour scheme. There must be national arrangements as well as local ones.

This evening, we want an end to stalling about what is to replace the national dock labour scheme. We want an end to the nonsense that is talked about everything being broken up and the issues being decided by individual ports. There is no way that some of the smaller ports, either within or without the scheme, will be able to run proper training schemes.

6.30 pm

The Government have an obligation to ensure that there is a national training scheme, which will be used not only by the major ports and employers, as at present, but will be available to the smaller ports and employers, which have no chance of operating their own training schemes. It would be unreasonable to leave their training facilities to the whim of the larger employers, with whom they are in competition.

Even under the terms of the Government's own approach to this matter and to maintaining and encouraging competition in the industry, there is an overwhelming need for a national training facility. The amendment is aimed to achieve that and I hope that the Government will see fit to accept the argument in principle.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Patrick Nicholls): In the next few minutes I shall attempt to answer the substantial points made by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang). With the leave of the House, I shall attempt to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, later in the debate to sum up and address hon. Members' contributions.

The purpose of the Bill is to bring employment arrangements in scheme ports within the general legal framework which has evolved under successive Governments since the scheme's inception. Those developments include the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, which placed specific obligations on employers to make adequate provision for health, safety and welfare. The Act also provided for proper participation by trade unions, at national and local level, in ensuring adequate arrangements.

There are now also a range of training structures which industries may choose to participate in according to their own assessment of needs. Within that framework. It is clearly for employers and employees in the industry to decide what suits them best, as is the case in any other industry.

By contrast, the amendment would impose on former scheme ports a special national structure covering welfare, training and medical facilities. No case has been made for that structure, which does not exist in any other industry, either in Committee or today. The proposition which should be made is that what has to be done is special, not only to this industry, but to ports which were formerly within the scheme.

Mr. Strang: I made it clear that we believe that it would make sense for that national body to provide a training facility for all ports. However, the nature of the Bill is such that we can table an amendment that covers only ports within the scheme. If any such body were established, it should be extended to have responsibility for training throughout the industry as a whole.

Mr. Nicholls: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for clarifying that matter. He worked on the supposition, which I do not accept, that it is only within some sort of overall national framework that the considerations with which he is concerned could be properly addressed.

That type of structure is unnecessary and will inhibit port employers' acceptance of full responsibility for their own training, health and welfare provision. It would also extend, quite unnecessarily, the transitional period, during which the board is under a duty to wind up its affairs, and the cost of an extension would obviously have to be borne by the taxpayer.

I do not understand the reluctance of the Opposition and the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East to accept the normal health, safety and welfare provisions that already apply to non scheme-ports, and their belief that they are inapplicable to scheme ports. The structures that already apply in non-scheme ports are particularly comprehensive. The abolition of the scheme will not change the basis of health and safety provision which applies to all ports.

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 places an obligation to make proper health, safety and welfare provision on individual employers generally, and not on the board—certainly not on any other body established to take its place.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): If what the Minister says about the provision of such regulations in non-scheme ports is true, will he assist me on the re-emergence of casual dock work in my constituency of Port Glasgow? Will he instuct his officials to inspect

casual dock work in the port of Port Glasgow to protect my casually employed constituents vis-a-vis their rights and regulations? Will he intervene in that way?

Mr. Nicholls: I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern about casualism. A fear of casualism has run throughout this debate. It featured strongly in Committee. From what I have seen, I have no doubt that that almost inherited fear of the evils of casualism, as it existed at the turn of the century and thereafter, which runs through——

Mr. Robert Hughes: It still exists.

Mr. Nicholls: I shall deal with the point raised by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East, and if the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) wants to make an intervention other than from the sedentary position, I shall oblige him.

It is clear that the fear of casualism gravely concerns many dockers who protest against the abolition of this scheme.

Often, Minister have to make forecasts about what will happen in the future if their views are correct. This case is different: we do not have to make some great leap into the dark because we do not know what will happen about casualism when the scheme is abolished because a port structure outside the scheme already exists in this country. The casualism rate there is no more than 6 per cent. Hon. Members may say that, even at 6 per cent., that is a bad business.

I am bound to say to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East—if I am incorrect I shall give way at once—that I know of no industrial action organised by the Transport and General Workers Union in non-scheme ports to protest at the casualism rate. Today's modern port industry has extremely valuable, expensive and sophisticated equipment that could not possibly be run on a casual basis, and well over 90 per cent. of employers who operate in scheme ports have made it clear that there will be no return to casual systems of work. Those factors mean that, for once, a Minister does not have to look into his crystal ball but can talk about what is actually happening in non-scheme ports. That should be a substantial reassurance, although I suspect that he will not think it is, to the hon. Gentleman.

Dr. Godman: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way a second time. I asked for his assistance in a matter concerning casual dock work, which began again in Port Glasgow before Christmas. Young unemployed men are being paid £2·50 per hour to work as casual dockers. I do not ask much from this Government, especially for my country of Scotland, and all I ask of the Minister and his colleagues is to request his officials to inspect the practice to assure me that my constituents, who have taken up the work because they are unemployed, are protected by the regulations of which he spoke about five minutes ago.

Mr. Nicholls: It may be that my memory is defective. The hon. Gentleman refers to practices that started before Christmas, and it is now summer. I cannot recall the hon. Gentleman writing to me about it. If he is telling me that scheme ports are now faced with the use of non-registered dockers, which, as the law presently stands, would be in breach of the criminal law, obviously such matters must be looked at.

However, perhaps the hon. Gentleman is making a different point: that events in his constituency show that casualism is about to take off. I accept that his is a genuine fear, but there is no evidence to support it. If it were realistic, it would be remarkable, to put it at its lowest, that the Transport and General Workers Union has not been protesting.

Dr. Godman *rose*——

Mr. Nicholls: The hon. Gentleman is taking up his own time and that of his hon. Friends. I said that I would give way to the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North, but I see that he is now shaking his head. It would probably be provocative of me to say that I had satisfied an Opposition Member, and I suspect that it would also be thoroughly untrue.

The Dock Regulations 1988, made under the 1974 Act, provide comprehensive, up-to-date and detailed provision specifically for dock work. Such detailed provision is unusual for a specific industry. It was proposed by the Health and Safety Commission, which, as I am sure the House does not need to be reminded, is a tripartite body including trade union representatives. The regulations cover welfare provision—for example, sanitary facilities and protective clothing—which the board currently supervises under the Docks and Harbours Act 1966. In some respects, notably in connection with protective clothing, they are more comprehensive than the earlier provisions.

The board's medical provision, which predates that of the National Health Service, makes special arrangements for registered dock workers which to a large extent now duplicate existing services. The present provision consists of 20 small medical centres serving 18 ports. As the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East has reminded us, they provide treatment both related and unrelated to the needs of the workplace. Since 1982, all employers have been under an obligation to make adequate provision for first aid, consistent with the risks and needs of the industry in which they operate and in accordance with first aid regulations made under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act.

Mr. Loyden: As the Minister will know—the point was raised a number times in Committee—the docks industry has particular problems connected with both safety and the provision of medical services: for instance, the distance from the dock of the nearest hospital. Past provision has taken into account the peculiar nature of the industry, and its virtual isolation from life in the city. Requirements have been established in response to real needs. I hope that the Minister is not forgetting that.

Mr. Nicholls: I am not forgetting it at all, but, although I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's evident concern, he makes the mistake of thinking that such problems are unique. He ignores the fact that non-scheme ports often operate with the same coastal facilities as scheme ports. They have grown up because of the need for unrestricted ports. The hon. Gentleman assumes that there is no pattern from which we can learn, and that it might be in the interests of employers not to make appropriate arrangements with the work force when the scheme is finally abolished. Employers in non-scheme ports have

[Mr. Nicholls]

had to make arrangements appropriate to individual ports and work forces, and there is no reason to believe that the same will not happen in former scheme ports.

Clause 2 gives the board the opportunity to dispose of its assets, including its medical centres, in such a way as to encourage continued provision to meet the future needs of the industry and its legal requirements. It provides for local needs to be matched with local medical provision for all dock workers.

It must not be assumed that the establishment of a single body is the best way in which to meet the industry's training needs. It is not up to me to pass judgment on what arrangements are appropriate for each port, but the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East seemed to think that a national structure would be the only option, and I do not think that that case has been made.

Training must respond to the needs of individual firms, and it is up to employers to make arrangements for it, whether they do so individually or collectively. The work being done in a modern, capital-intensive port requires a highly skilled work force, and employers therefore have every incentive to make proper training arrangements.

6.45 pm

The abolition of the scheme's restrictions on the deployment of dock workers means that investment in training will produce an even greater return. Non-scheme ports manage to train to meet their skill needs without the imposition of a national body. In 1988, Felixstowe, which has its own training school, spent about £775,000 on training—rather more than the National Dock Labour Board spent on behalf of all the scheme ports put together. Many other non-scheme ports, notably those run by Sealink, have full-time training officers. The board's training activities now amount to a mobile force of about 20 training instructors, without any training centres.

The provision in clause 2 for the disposal of the board's assets provides every opportunity for the industry to take over such useful provision as exists. There is no reason to believe, judging by the performance of non-scheme ports, that former scheme ports will not take training extremely seriously.

The amendment gives no suggestion of where the funding of a replacement body would come from. Is it to come from a levy on the industry, once again placing a burden on employers, who would then have no control over the necessary allocation of resources? Or are financial arrangements of the transitional period to continue so that the new body is funded by sums voted by Parliament and paid by the taxpayer? Whatever the answer, the proposal is clearly unnecessary and unreasonable.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): A point that the Minister seems to miss is that discipline is provided by the existence of the scheme ports. What worries us is that, with the removal of the national training scheme provided by the scheme ports, that discipline will go. The Minister does not appreciate the significance of training in the docks or in any other industry. He describes training costs as a burden on the employer, but they are not a burden; they are part of the investment that any respectable and self-seeking employer should be making. We want to ensure that the best employers follow the best practices.

Mr. Nicholls: It is thoroughly in keeping with the demonology of the Labour party to assume, as the hon. Gentleman has in his usual sincere and witty manner, that the only way in which employers can be obliged to train is through the use of a bit of discipline—a word that trips off the hon. Gentleman's tongue. In less formal surroundings, he would probably say that what employers need is a touch of the lash. That is what I think he has in mind.

It is curious that the hon. Gentleman cannot accept for a moment that naked self-interest, if nothing else, would make employers train. The hon. Gentleman obviously prefers the idea of a touch of the lash in connection with naked self-interest. The idea that employers would be prepared to commit millions of pounds' worth of equipment to a casual worker—if I may refer to a point made by his hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman)—or to commit it to someone with no proper training is absolute nonsense. The hon. Gentleman need not take it from me; he can look at the record. I had to remind the House a few moments ago that more training is provided by one non-scheme port—Felixstowe—than by all the non-scheme ports. That is the best assurance that the hon. Gentleman could have that, in a modern port industry, employers desperately need trained staff.

The Bill provides for the board to wind itself up in a way that will give port employers and authorities every incentive to take over useful training and welfare facilities. The statutory requirements for health, safety and welfare which apply to all ports are comprehensive, but if there is a need for development it should be within the framework of general health and safety provisions. After abolition, scheme ports will have every incentive to make proper provision for their skill needs. There is no reason to assume that a national body would help the industry meet its training needs more effectively.

I refer finally to the point made by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East about possible redundancies of board staff who are not registered dock workers and who cannot look forward to the generous compensation scheme outlined in the previous debate. It would be wholly inappropriate for either the hon. Gentleman or myself to speculate on the level of redundancies, if any. However, I take his point that, logically, there could be redundancies. I understand that the board is considering proposals to enhance the voluntary severance payments that otherwise will be made on a contractual basis. Discussions on that aspect will continue.

I cannot accept that there is a case for the type of national body that the Opposition seek. I ask Opposition Members to accept not only my words—though I am certain to do so on future occasions—but to look at the pattern of behaviour in non-scheme ports. That pattern, even more than my words and those of other Ministers, gives the lie to the Opposition's worst fears.

Mr. Loyden: The Government have failed to remove our doubts about how seriously they approach training matters. The point was made more than once in Committee that, in only two decades, the industry's practices and cargo handling techniques have been revolutionised, so that the modern docks industry bears no resemblance to that which existed before the war, shortly after the war, and even in the early 1960s. That transformation took place under the wing, and with the direct assistance, of the National Dock Labour Board. It

was responsible for providing the training that transformed dockers from men who wore hooks in their belts and pushed hand bogeys on the dock estate to skilled workers who handle equipment having a customs value of between £250,000 and £750,000 per piece.

That training embraced the operation of everything from the forklift truck to the gantry crane, and all the other mechanical operations, which are different from those used in any other industry and probably unique. A tugmaster loading a ro-ro vessel, for example, is worth watching. It is a demanding task that dock workers have been trained to carry out to great effect, and it is to their credit that they have been able to adapt.

Conservative Members have referred to the number of dock labour disputes. I remind the House that the record number of 427 disputes, of which 410 were official, was set before the establishment of the national dock labour scheme. Unofficial strikes were caused by the conditions prevailing in the industry before the scheme came into existence. It brought order where chaos existed. There has been a move away from traditional cargo handling methods to hi-tech operations such as containerisation, palletisation, ro-ro and bulk cargo handling. They have all been mastered by dock workers as a consequence of the good training provided by the National Dock Labour Board.

I put to the Minister the example of the small firm—the sweetheart of the Tory party, which it views as a cherished friend—employing 60 registered dock workers. How will such a company provide adequate training? There will be no legislation, other than that of a general nature that the Minister outlined, requiring employers to provide proper training. We are concerned about the quality of training that will follow in the wake of the scheme's abolition.

My mind is open, but I remain to be convinced that we have nothing to fear and that when the transitional period ends, the void that follows will be immediately filled by training schemes of the quality that the industry previously enjoyed. Neither am I convinced that the services needed by the industry will be retained. It is a dangerous industry in which to work. In Committee, I reported the death only a few weeks previously of a registered dock worker in the port of Liverpool; his mate was taken to hospital seriously injured after an attempt to save his comrade after a load had broken from its swing and buried the docker under a weight of timber.

The dock industry presents many such hazards, which require specific medical provision. National Health Service facilities may be as far away as five miles. Before the present Government came to power, there was in existence almost on the dock road in Liverpool the Royal hospital, but that is now gone. The distance now between the docks and the nearest hospital is measured in miles rather than yards.

The Minister must accept that we are not weaving a fantasy about the docks industry. During debates on the national dock labour scheme, Conservative Members showed in the most naked way that they know little or nothing about the industry. That is the great danger. They are not prepared to move their minds away from the briefs that they are given and to listen to informed comment, take it on board, and act upon it. Certainly there is no evidence that the Minister has given proper thought and consideration to the points made both in Committee and on the Floor of the House.

I hope that even at this late stage the Minister will be able to persuade us that we are all doubting Thomases and that he has the best interests of dock workers in mind.

Mr. David Davis: The nub of the case made by my hon. Friend the Minister is that the evidence from non-scheme ports is that a special scheme of Government intervention in training would not be advantageous. Throughout the Committee stage and today, there have been either explicit or implicit claims of superiority for the training provided under the dock labour scheme. Ironically, there were claims also of a lack of training as a way of justifying ghosting, but I put that matter to one side.

The facts do not support either general or specific claims of superiority. The statistics show that in 1987, which is the last year for which comparative figures are available, about 33 per cent. of scheme employees underwent scheme training lasting an average of three days. In the nearest equivalent industry, transport and commercial, 40 per cent. of employees underwent 10 days of training per employee—roughly four times as much training.

7 pm

We have been accused of using the example of Felixstowe ad nauseam, but there was a good article on that port in the *Sunday Times* on 16 April this year from which I want to quote one extract. A young worker called Mark Green, who has just started work at Felixstowe, said:

> "I may not seem to have much of a job now, but the training schemes at the port are great . . . You can work your way up and win whatever responsibility you want."

He went on to speak about how he wanted to become a driver of one of the major cranes.

We have been accused, with some substance, of using Felixstowe as an argument. However, as my hon. Friend the Minister said, there is more training going on there than in the rest of the scheme ports put together. Some members of the Committee—I am glad to say that this has not happened today—focused their attack on what they called cowboy operators. Nobody defined that term. We were left to guess whether it described a pioneering spirit of enterprise or something rather less flattering. I suspect that the latter is the case. They were put forward as an explanation of how some of the smaller ports obtained business at the expense of the larger scheme ports. The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), who unfortunately is not with us today, attributed the loss of trade from scheme ports to non-scheme ports to the cowboy operators—the low-cost operators—and he made specific allegations about training.

I felt that it was incumbent on me to check the facts. Some of the work was done for us in Committee by my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport. He checked one of the smaller port operators, a company called Trent Wharfage. He described how that private operator took on unskilled personnel and trained them to operate major pieces of port equipment, such as those described by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden), either by in-house training or through contract training outside.

That did not seem to be enough evidence, so I telephoned small port employers in the Humber area. The market share of Humber traffic of those smaller ports grew from 15 per cent. to 21 per cent. at the expense of scheme ports in just five years. They did that against the odds.

[Mr. David Davis]

Conditions were difficult. They had difficult rivers and locations on small, poor roads, so their success was the result of something other than geographic location.

I called two small ports at Selby and Howden to get an idea of what they did on training. I gave no warning that I intended to call but in one case a training manager was in the general manager's office when I rang. It says something that a small operation employing 30 to 40 people has a training manager.

I was told a number of things. First, the ports were trade unionised and had TGWU representation, with proper contract terms. I asked about safety and skill training and, specifically, about training in the use of cranes, vehicles, forklifts and so on. It became apparent that they had schemes, in-house and contract, with training boards outside in the construction and road transport industries for each of those areas.

Those ports managers were spontaneously aware of the new docks regulations. They knew that several years of training was required for the use of heavy cranes. They knew that the code of practice required forklift driver certification. That was not the response of cowboy operators, in the sense that that term was used by Opposition Members.

The point that came across clearly was more a matter of common sense, which the hon. Member for Garston will understand. It was not in the interests of such ports to allow untrained men to use highly expensive and heavy equipment of the type commonly bought today—the sort of equipment that the hon. Gentleman described.

I was told that a 90-tonne crane cost £500,000. For a man to use that crane he has to be sent away for two weeks' intensive training at a cost of £500, plus his salary. Damage can be done by the untrained use of such equipment. No one in his right mind would skimp £500 and risk £500,000. I am putting entirely on one side the sort of accidents that could occur from misuse, such as the hon. Gentleman described. No one with any sense of responsibility, or even self-interest, would not train such operators. I shall not waste time now, but I could give further examples, such as the £125,000 forklift truck.

There are three components of a training decision in the docks industry. The first, rightly, is safety. Any responsible manager would put that at the top of his priorities, but even if he did not, health and safety at work regulations and the specific docks regulations of 1988 which came into effect on 1 January this year would ensure safety. Therefore, there is already a safety net. On skills, the economic argument that I have just explained is ovrwhelming from the point of view of the individual employer, whether enormous like Felixstowe or tiny link Howden.

Finally, there is the need to have the money available. I agree with the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). People do not need to be forced to do something that is in their own interests, but they need money for investment.

Safety, skils and money are the three components of a training decision. The national dock labour scheme does nothing to add to the regulations on safety. It does nothing to enhance the importance of skills, because it reduces the productivity of the equipment and it positively undermines prosperity. Therefore, it is not tenable to say that the scheme in any way helps training in Britain.

Mr. Gordon Oakes (Halton): My hon. Friends the Members for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) and for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) were simply saying that we should not throw out the baby with the bath water. That is all that the amendment is about. It is not a wrecking amendment or one that tries to continue the dock labour scheme by some other means. It merely asks that the Government, in the hiatus that they have created by rushing the Bill through the House, tell the House what will happen with regard to training and medical care.

I am proud to say that I am sponsored by the TGWU, of which I have been a member for some 40 years. I do not have any docks of any significance in my constituency. I have a few dock workers in Runcorn and I may have a few who work in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Garston; but, like every other hon. Member, I live on an island and docks are important to us all because any difficulty with the docks or the dock workers can create a complete stranglehold on our economy.

We are going into 1992 and we are talking about training for dock workers. I was appalled to hear the Minister ask whether the burden of training should be on the employer or on the taxpayer. Other industries—for example, ICI—do not talk about the burden of training. Training is an important investment.

The hon. Member for Boothferry (Mr. Davis) talked about crane drivers and heavy equipment. He was right to say that no industry would let loose an unskilled hand on £500,000 worth of equipment, but I am not talking about that. I am talking about training for the ordinary, unskilled individual who needs to be trained just as much as the crane driver, because without it he could be involved in an accident or create infinite damage simply through ignorance.

I envisage an increase in casualisation, which currently stands at only 6 per cent. because there is a dock labour scheme. Without it, casualisation would increase considerably. Unskilled people will be glad to have a job and will be willing to do anything. They will abandon the safety conditions and all the rules because they desperately want a job. They will not press for safety rules or for adequate training. That has already happened with the YTS, especially in the building industry. We are an island nation wholly dependent upon the docks.

The Minister's complacent attitude amazes me because we are approaching 1992 and a Europe in which Germany, France, Italy, Spain and even Greece passionately believe in the importance of proper training—not just for highly skilled workers but for all workers. In Germany, someone cannot be even a shop assistant until he has received proper training. That is right, because such people do a skilled job. A docker does a dangerous job. When I take my car on a ferry when I am travelling abroad, I am amazed by the skilled jobs being carried out by dock workers. They put quarts into pint pots. No unskilled person could do that.

I fear that the Bill will mean a dilution of training standards. The National Dock Labour Board currently sets training standards. The Minister said that it does not do enough, which may be true, but the Government should insist that it does more. If Felixstowe is so much better without the dock labour scheme, I hope that the

Government, in the hiatus that they are creating, will insist that all other ports are brought up to Felixstowe's standard. Instead, I fear that the position in most ports will become considerably worse under this Bill, which has been rushed through the House, at the insistence of the port employers, almost by sleight of hand. The amendment simply asks the Government to tell us what they intend to do with training in the interim period. We do not want them to throw out the baby with the bath water.

Clause 3 is being discussed with this proposed amendment to clause 2 under the guillotine procedure, although the connection between the two clauses is difficult to understand. Clause 3 is a gauleiter clause; it provides that, if there is any disagreement between the Secretary of State and the members of the board, the Secretary of State can sack them and appoint another person to carry out their duties. If that person then does not carry out those duties to his satisfaction, he can also be sacked. Why appoint that other person? Why does not the Secretary of State say that he will do the job, in accordance with his wishes and diktats? It is a gauleiter clause, because any person appointed under it will have to do precisely what the Secretary of State says or be sacked.

This country will be greatly affected in 1992 by its complete lack of interest in training and the attitude that training is a burden. Training is not a burden; it is an investment, and all good industries regard it as such. It chills me to hear the Minister refer to training as a burden, whether on the taxpayer or industry.

Mr. Nicholls: I said that, if the National Dock Labour Board imposed a levy during a transitional period it would be a burden. That is one reason why we think our proposed scheme is right. The money spent by an employer on training is very much an investment, which is why I cited the example of Felixstowe. That might be a semantic point, but it is crucial. I said that a levy would be a burden, not that investment in training would be a burden.

Mr. Oakes: The House needs to know exactly what will happen during the transitional period. We do not know what will happen and the Minister will not tell us.

7.15 pm

Dr. Godman: A system of levy is not unknown to other maritime industries—for example, every stone of fish landed at a British port by a United Kingdom registered fishing vessel is subject to levy. That levy is used towards the costs of running the industry and the costs of training fishermen.

Mr. Oakes: I know nothing about the fishing industry, but I accept what my hon. Friend has said. Indeed, it seems an eminently sensible thing to do. It is unfortunate that many industries do not invest in training. Because other European countries invest in training, they will be in a better position than Britain in the mid-1990s.

Mr. Loyden: I am puzzled by the Minister's remark about a levy being a burden. I am sure that my right hon. Friend is aware, even if the Minister is not, that the levy pays for training. Therefore, it follows that if the levy is a burden, so is training.

Mr. Oakes: My hon. Friend has hit on a crucial point. The Minister appears to think that spending money on training is wrong, yet the rest of Europe thinks it right. Europe is right and Britain is wrong. The Minister may say that many of our major industries show capitalism at work, but it is good sense to invest money to obtain the best safety record and the best efficiency from the work force. Even a kid of 17 or 18 should be trained, for his own safety, for that of his workmates and for the efficiency of the industry in which he works. The Bill creates a hiatus. The Government do not know what will happen about training.

This is not a wrecking amendment. It is a sensible amendment. I ask the Minister, please, at least to consider it so that in another place the idea of providing proper training in the docks industry can be invesigated further by means of a Government amendment.

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): I listened carefully to what the right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) said about training but I do not know whether he listened to the Minister when he referred to training and prayed in aid the port of Felixstowe, where large sums are being spent on training. The right hon. Gentleman almost seemed to imply that the only ports that do any training are scheme ports, and that the non-scheme ports do no training whatsoever. That is not the case. The Minister said that Felixstowe spends a great deal of money on training.

The right hon. Gentleman asked us to consider what would happen in a port that recruited large numbers of so-called unskilled persons.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jack: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will allow me to develop this point because it is crucial to the argument of the right hon. Member for Halton.

The right hon. Gentleman told us to beware of those ports that might recruit unskilled labour. However, I pray in aid an article in the *Financial Times* of 28 March by Jimmy Burns. It is headed:

"Dockers fear tide turning against closed shop."

I read the article with interest. It refers to Felixstowe, where the Transport and General Workers Union has a single union agreement. I shall say a word or two later about the training role of trade unions. The article says that Felixstowe's recruitment

"is predominantly local, among men with no experience in dock work."

Felixstowe was the first port in the United Kingdom to handle more than 1 million TEUs, which are 20ft equivalent container units, in a single year. That port has built its success on the use of unskilled labour which had no previous experience of dock work.

I have visited Felixstowe and seen the port in action. It is a quite remarkable place to visit. Its rate of expansion is very rapid. When I visited Felixstowe, the port was expanding so rapidly that, as soon as the tarmac was laid, containers were put on to it. The right hon. Gentleman did not say that the growth of Felixstowe had led to an unacceptably high level of accidents or that all the progress there had been achieved without any form of training.

Mr. Oakes *rose*——

Mr. Jack: Does the right hon. Gentleman wish to intervene?

Mr. Oakes: Yes. I am not attacking the port of Felixstowe. All I am asking the Government is, if the training at the port of Felixstowe is so good, why create a

[Mr. Oakes]

hiatus, which the Bill does in the Government's rush to get it through? Why do they not accept the amendment and bring every port up to the standard at Felixstowe?

Mr. Jack: I am glad that the right hon. Gentleman has clarified his position and said that the training procedures at Felixstowe are excellent. I do not think that under the new arrangements the port employers will say, "Now that we are non-scheme ports, we shall stop providing any training until some future date." It does not add up; it is impractical. Felixstowe shows how effective it is to devise training that suits local needs. Felixstowe is a general cargo and container port. Smaller vessels also call at Felixstowe, for which a specific type of training is required. Felixstowe has got round that problem.

I am now prepared to give way to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks).

Mr. Tony Banks: I am grateful to the hon. Member for giving way. Will he go a little further than Felixstowe and say what standard of training is provided in some of the other non-scheme ports? We keep hearing about Felixstowe, but what about some of the others?

Mr. Jack: I have every reason to believe that the other non-scheme ports also provide a high level of training. Not too long ago I visited the port of Dover. I asked those who operate the ferries what new training requirements had been introduced after the Zeebrugge disaster. I was most impressed by the high levels of training and checking that had been introduced to counteract some of the previous discrepancies.

Mr. Banks: But it was a bit late.

Mr. Jack: The Opposition have not suggested that the levels of training that are available in the non-scheme ports are poor, that they do not meet the needs of those ports and that they engender bad practice. If the right hon. Gentleman wants the House to adopt the amendment, that is the kind of argument that I would have expected him to use, but he has not done so.

Training is not just about the mechanics of operating machines. Training is also about attitudes of mind. The amendment suggests that the scheme ports training scheme should be extended to the non-scheme ports, but it says nothing about the types of training that ought to be provided. The Opposition seem to believe that people are more concerned about which button to push, or which lever to pull, or which crane to operate and the correct safety procedures for doing so, but training involves far more than that. Training encompasses an attitude of mind.

The training at Felixstowe encompasses an attitude of mind and the ability to be flexible. The lack of demarcation practices at that port has helped to make it the success it is. Paragraph 1.6 of the White Paper says:

"Well-motivated and productive workers are a key element in the success of any business."

I see no reference to that aspect of training in the amendment. Paragraph 1.7 says that the dock labour scheme

"sustains attitudes and practices in dock work which run counter to the needs of an efficient and successful ports industry, strong enough to face growing competitive pressures."

If that is the result of the training that is provided in the scheme ports, I wonder how effective it would be in terms of the attitude of mind that it would export to the non-scheme ports. To command the respect of the House, the amendment ought to have fleshed out in more detail the kinds of training that would be appropriate to the new docks industry. All it suggests is that what we have now should be laid on top of what will be provided. It smacks of a typically Socialist solution.

The notion that the larger non-scheme ports could act as a training agency for the smaller ports surrounding them would be completely ruled out by the amendment. Liverpool could serve as a centre of excellence for training in other ports. The amendment, as drafted, does not enable us to discuss the training opportunities that might be possible under the new arrangements.

The right hon. Member for Halton said that this is not a wrecking amendment, but I have a nasty suspicion at the back of my mind that if the House approved the amendment—which I shall certainly not support—there would be no guarantee about the timetable that the new body would follow. I foresee prolonged discussions, endless meetings, committees being set up and training courses reviewed and rejected while the reform of the ports industry, which we hanker after, waits in the wings. The amendment says that we should not press on with training until the new training body is in place, but the amendment provides no timetable for the establishment of that body. It is wrong to ask us to agree to a totally open-ended commitment.

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): As my hon. Friend probably knows, I was born in Felixstowe and lived close to the docks for much of my life. Does he agree that Felixstowe has demonstrated that it does not need external help to provide trade? The second part of the amendment refers to the welfare of the work force. Does my hon. Friend agree that Felixstowe has shown clearly by the small number of industrial disputes and the tremendously high wages paid to the dockers that it can maintain a high level of welfare care for its employees, without any external influence? My hon. Friend may be aware that a substantial percentage of the workers at Felixstowe send their children to public schools. That may not be palatable to the Opposition Benches, but it shows the benefit of a prosperous port.

7.30 pm

Mr. Jack: I thank my hon. Friend for his helpful intervention. I agree with all that he said. He reflects on paragraph 2.16 of the White Paper, which points to the benefits of a good health and safety policy. Before I became a Member, I was in the produce pre-packing industry.

Mr. Tony Banks: The what?

Mr. Jack: Some hon. Members may have heard of apples and lettuces; for the benefit of those who have not, we supplied supermarkets with fresh fruit and vegetables.

One aspect for which I was responsible was dealing with the trade unions on training and safety. I had great respect for the contribution that the trade unions made to our safety policies which were born out of the needs of our business. Produce pre-packing is not an industry with an overall training board. We were happy to work within the parameters set by the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act

1974. We produced safety and training statements and we worked with the trade unions. We drew on their knowledge to create the right package for our business.

That arrangement appears to be mirrored in the port of Felixstowe. If it can work well in that port, could it not work equally well in other ports? Surely Opposition Members can see an enhanced role for the trade unions that they represent. Trade unions have an important role to play and it will not be taken away from them. It has been suggested that, if we do not agree to the amendment, training will cease as soon as the Bill becomes law. I do not think that anyone who has tried to run a modern, efficient ports industry will cease training. I do not see some of the drawbacks to which Opposition Members have referred. I think that people realise the enormous benefits that result from training.

The amendment is too open-ended. As my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State said, it says nothing about funding. It does not go into any detail about the welfare schemes that we might expect. Perhaps we should explore that in more detail. As to the medical aspects, the amendment ignores the exciting and interesting opportunities whereby local health authorities offer employers various forms of occupational medicine and assessment of difficulties associated with particular jobs. If a national scheme was imposed on the industry, local initiatives might well be lost to ports and to dockers. A nationally imposed superstructure is not always the best way to meet the local needs of the ports industry that we all hope to see when the Bill becomes an Act.

Mr. Robert Hughes: I shall be brief, because time is short. Much has been made of the fact that the Bill was produced suddenly and the way in which it is being bounced through the House. Undoubtedly it has been a long time in gestation. The decision to abolish the National Dock Labour Board must have been taken some time ago or the glossy White Paper and the Bill could not have been produced so quickly. It is clear that the Government were hypnotised by their obsession to do away with the dock labour scheme and that they did not think about what would happen after the scheme was abolished.

That is particularly galling in relation to training and medical and welfare facilities. I am astonished at the suggestion that everything should be done locally. Government supporters suggest that there is no room for an overall scheme. The docks industry is diverse. The same type of work is not done in each port, whether scheme or non-scheme port, but there is a broad overall pattern and all ports require the same level of competence and the same welfare and medical facilities.

ICI is a progressive, national employer, as is Marks and Spencer. If such companies, with businesses all over the country, were told that they should not have an overall training scheme but that they should leave training to local managers in Aberdeen, Felixstowe or wherever, they would think that that was ridiculous. Those companies use their size and capacity to develop training schemes and welfare facilities to benefit all their employees. All we are suggesting in the amendment is that there should be a scheme that takes the best and makes it available all over the country.

I have never before heard Ministers pay such plaudits to a Labour Government. Every Conservative Member quoted the Health and Safety at Work etc. 1974 Act. Its significance was that it imposed conditions on every employer; an employer does not have the right to opt out. The significant point about the date, 1974, is that it was a long time after the beginning of the industrial revolution. In 1974 it became necessary to compel employers to take proper account of health and safety at work. The problem is that the inspectorate has not been kept up to strength to make sure that the Act is enforced.

My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) asked a specific question of the Minister about something in his constituency. What did the Minister say? He told him that he should have raised the matter earlier. My hon. Friend did; he has been raising it for some time. The Minister did not say, as I would have expected, "I am disappointed to hear that. Tell me straight away the name of the company, and where it operates, and I will ensure that my inspectors are there tomorrow. If it is not providing proper conditions, action will be taken against it under the Act." We did not hear that from the Minister. He just said that it was up to employers to do what they liked.

The Government do not want just to destroy the dock labour scheme; they want to make sure that the industry is fragmented. Every time that we debate the issue, we hear tales about the new jobs that will be created. The jobs that have been lost disappeared not because of the scheme but because of changes in conditions. The Minister does not seem to understand that the catalyst that he is producing will lead to a deterioration in conditions in the industry. If the ports are to compete and to produce more jobs, what advantages will there be in individual ports having day-to-day negotiations with their employees? Will the ports decide to cut wages? Presumably the Government will say that that is not the intention of the scheme, although some of us suspect that it may be. The only room to cut costs will be in matters such as training, health, welfare and safety. In the scandal that will follow, I fear that conditions will be driven down and that training will go out of the window.

The Government's ethos is that the market should decide. They have introduced all sorts of schemes such as enterprise zones and areas where planning considerations do not apply in order to attract jobs. The Government's attack on unemployment is not to create conditions and enthusiasm for investment, but to change the circumstances and drive down costs to ensure that the employees pay the price.

The amendment is significant. I certainly hope that the Government will think again and realise the advantage of an overall training scheme where new employees can learn from good employees and good employees can be used to change unsatisfactory conditions. The amendment is evidently worth supporting. I shall vote for it; I hope that the Government will change their mind and see some sense, even at this late stage.

Mr. Tony Banks: I shall speak briefly on amendments Nos. 1 and 2. I shall speak about amendment No. 2 first because my right hon. Friend the Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) referred to clause 3 as the gauleiter clause. When we examined the Bill in Committee, we decided that it was the Al Capone clause because when it refers to dismissing the members of the board one at a time it means getting rid of them all at one go. We saw shades of the St. Valentine's day massacre as the Secretary of State, who obviously fitted Al Capone to a T, would wipe out everyone in one

[Mr. Tony Banks]

go. When we went down the gangway, we could see close similarities with many Chicago-type gangsters facing us on the Conservative Benches. One immediately recognised the Government Whip as Frank Nitty, the enforcer, and in view of the size of the Minister of State, Department of Employment, he is obviously Legs Diamond. Who else could the Minister for Public Transport be than Baby Face Nelson? That is the humorous side, but it is a serious matter.

It is quite clear that in the interim period, members of the board will be given instructions and offers that they can only refuse and then Al Capone—the Secretary of State—will move in and get rid of them all at once, no doubt consulting the list of the stooges and lickspittles in his Department to make sure that the nominee who replaces them is "one of ours", as that is the Prime Minister's intention.

Clause 3(4) states that the Secretary of State will decide

"The terms of service and remuneration of any such person".

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that we are discussing amendment No. 1; he is talking to amendment No. 2, which we have not yet reached.

Mr. Banks: I thought that we were to dismiss the amendments by 8 o'clock, so if I did not make my remarks now, I did not see where I could get them in, except perhaps on Third Reading. I listened carefully to what you said, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not withdraw my remarks, although they appear to have been wholly out of order.

This is a serious matter and appears to give inordinate power to the Secretary of State, which in Committee and in the House we find quite unacceptable.

I shall move on briefly to training. The Government are getting rid of the scheme, so it is up to the Government to prove beyond reasonable doubt that training will not suffer. The 1987 dock labour scheme report reveals the extent of training nationally. I said that the non-scheme ports needed the discipline of a national training scheme because, frankly, I feel that when the national scheme is abolished, not the best but the worst practices will emerge in the non-scheme ports.

My evidence is based on what is happening in industry throughout the country. Training standards and the amount of money that is spent on training in Britain are generally abysmal. The evidence is all there and the Minister is arguing against the facts. On behalf of those who work within scheme and non-scheme ports, we have an absolute right to ask what safeguards the Minister plans to introduce.

If we are wrong, no great damage will have been done, but if the Minister is wrong there will be enormous damage. That is why it is incumbent on the Minister to provide much firmer assurances than he has so far, because it is his responsibility. He is responsible for removing the national scheme, so he must say what will happen if he is wrong, and how he intends to avoid that.

7.45 pm

One reason why national training schemes are in order is that they make sure that the better employers—and there are many of them—do not find that the money they invest in training workers is acting as a subsidy to other employers who poach their employees. It becomes relatively easy for those other employers to say, "As we have saved on training, we can offer a little over the odds to attract the skilled workers that that employer has trained." That is why a national training scheme that exists for the scheme ports would be in the interests of the entire industry, especially the best employers. It would ensure that the practices of the best employers apply right across the board. As the Minister knows, if we had the opportunity, we should like a national scheme that also covered non-scheme ports. National training schemes seem to be the answer to the poor standards of training that exist in the ports and in British industry.

I refer the Minister to a recent MSC-NEDO report that concluded that British companies rarely consider training a main component of their corporate strategy and do not treat training as a boardroom issue. West German employers spend three times more than British firms on training. The Minister must realise that there is a correlation between the high levels of skill and training in competitive countries such as West Germany and their economic success which is far greater than we are currently enjoying. The Minister must realise that those comparisons exist in international comparable statistics and within the different practices between good and poor employers in Britain.

It is up to the Minister, since he is throwing something away, to tell us what he will do if it turns out that we are right and he is wrong. If we are wrong, no great damage will be caused, but if he is wrong, a great deal of damage will be inflicted on the ports industry.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): I shall be brief so that the Minister can reply to the debate.

Earlier, a Conservative Member expressed concern about the timetabling which the amendment would apply and was concerned that it might create delays, as it would take some time to negotiate the body referred to in the amendment. I am surprised that any Conservative Member should dare to mention timetabling as, apart from wartime, it is difficult to recall any Bill being rushed through the House of Commons with the haste that the Dock Work Bill has been rushed through in the past few weeks. That haste is demonstrated by the lack of consideration in the Bill and by the Government to the implications of abolishing the National Dock Labour Board without making adequate provision for alternative training arrangements.

The hon. Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) said that he was opposed to any national scheme. I assume that his opposition is based on the fact that national schemes set down minimum requirements from which employers cannot escape. He would much prefer local arrangements to be in place because they allow employers to get away with as much as they can without living up to the national standards which would be applied by a national training body.

Mr. Jack: The hon. Gentleman cannot get away with that kind of criticism. We have been talking about some of the most effective, efficient and profitable ports in the United Kingdom, such as Felixstowe, that have done extremely well by generating their own training programmes. They are not trying to get away with anything. Training has been an integral part of their business.

Mr. McAllion: It seems that Conservative members rest their entire case on the example of Felixstowe. That is not the only port in Britain. Many other ports, and particularly small ones, will quickly get away from national minimum requirements.

Mr. David Davis *rose*——

Mr. McAllion: I will not give way again because I am anxious to give the Minister a few minutes in which to reply. The Government have imposed the guillotine. If, in addition, Conservative Members try to intervene, so giving us even less time in which to make the points that we must make, we shall be doubly penalised.

The hon. Member for Fylde said that training was an attitude of mind. He must accept that the trust placed in employers to deliver that training is also an attitude of mind. Unfortunately, we have experience of employers in many areas of the economy not delivering on training, health and safety and, as a result, making the lives of workers a misery. That is why we oppose the Bill and are trying to amend it so as to make it slightly more progressive and considerate of workers.

In his earlier remarks, the Minister claimed that he did not say that training was a burden; or that, if he said it, he meant to refer only to the levy. I remind him that the Government have abolished industrial training boards and closed down skill centres and are selling them off for huge profits. That suggests that it is not only the levy that concerns them. Having abolished industrial training boards and closed down skill centres, we question their whole approach to national training requirements. That is why my hon. Friends and I are anxious to amend the Bill.

The Minister tried to paint a picture which would ease the consciences of those who would rather look the other way while the Government attacked the existing protection of workers in the docks industry. He said, for example, that dock work was too sophisticated for employers even to risk neglecting training or the health and safety conditions of their employees. That was so, he said, because money spent in those areas represented essential investment if we were to be successful in European markets after 1992.

I think the Minister was trying to say that the efficient utilisation of new methods—containerisation, ro-ro, new grain-handling procedures and so on—required employers, in their own self-interest, to protect their work forces. We must judge the validity of that argument as best we can. If employers are so concerned about training and health and safety in the ports, why should it be intolerable to expect them to contribute to a levy for a national body to secure acceptable arrangements for training and health and safety standards?

The Minister suggested that that would inhibit the acceptance by employers of their responsibilities in the matter. If this House had taken that attitude in the 19th century, we would not have had the factories legislation and we should still have 10-year-olds working an 18-hour day in the satanic mills. That would have been the case had we left it to employers and expected them to be responsible. It is the responsibility of Parliament to ensure that employers accept their responsibilities, and that is why the Bill should be amended in the way that we suggest.

The Minister then argued that there already existed general health and safety legislation and national training schemes which employers could use for their work forces. I do not know whether the Minister was referring to the youth training scheme or the employment training scheme, or both. If he had such schemes in mind, why should he consider them sufficient to meet the sophisticated requirements of the ports that, he said, were necessary at Felixstowe and elsewhere? I assure the hon. Gentleman that Felixstowe does not consider such national schemes to be sufficient. That is why, as we have been told time and again, Felixstowe has invested £570,000 in one year to implement its training requirements.

In other words, if what exists is not good enough for Felixstowe, why should it be good enough for all the other ports in this country? What is the Minister doing to ensure that all those other ports meet the standards set by Felixstowe and that they invest in the training schemes that are required?

The Minister said at one stage that the Government wanted arrangements that were appropriate to a particular port and work force. That must mean that there will be different arrangements in different ports. In huge ports which make large investments, there may be adequate training schemes, but in smaller ports which have only small sums to invest in training and in health and safety standards, different standards will apply. That will mean that the lives of the men who work in those smaller ports could be at risk, all because this measure is being forced through Parliament in such haste that we are unable to give all the issues sufficient attention.

The Minister said that it was not in the interest of port employers to use unskilled labour, although we then heard from Conservative Members that that had been done in Felixstowe for many years. If what the Minister said is true, why is there still 6 per cent. casualism in non-registered ports? What about the position of Port Glasgow, where, we have been told, unemployed workers are being paid £2·50 an hour to work in the docks? We must have answers to those questions.

Such developments have not spread more widely in the non-registered ports because of the existence of the national dock labour scheme, and the national agreements in the non-registered ports have been based on that scheme. In other words, take away the dock labour scheme and there can be an attack on the national agreements that the Transport and General Workers Union has negotiated in the other ports. The result will be differing conditions in the various ports throughout the country. Those working in small ports will find their lives at risk. That is what the Government have in mind, and that is why we must amend the Bill.

Mr. Nicholls: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the few minutes available to me I will do my best to answer the more salient points that were made in the debate.

Although he will not thank me for saying so, the hon. Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) summed up what the debate has been about and why the amendment cannot be accepted when he described in his opening remarks the transformation that there has been in training. He described his experience over the years, in the light of his time in the docks, and pointed out that there had been almost a revolution in the way in which the docks operate. He spoke of the skills that dockers now had and the equipment they were being called on to operate. He painted a picture of a modern industry in which it would be impossible for casualism to operate.

[Mr. Nicholls]

That theme has run through all the contributions that have been made by Opposition Members throughout the debate. It works on the supposition that one can turn one's face away from the developments that have taken place and say that the lessons of the 1920s, and perhaps even of the 1820s, show that if casualism and a lack of training existed before, the same could happen again today. The hon. Member for Garston knows better than most that that is not a sustainable attitude to take.

In a sense, the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) made the same mistake. He said that the scheme ports had in some way kept up standards in the non-scheme ports and that, in some way, if the scheme ports were swept away, standards would automatically sink. I appreciate the sincerity with which such a course may be advocated, but it is a manifest absurdity masquerading as a self-evident truth. A prosperous ports industry has grown up, not so much because of the changing patterns of technology, but because non-scheme ports have developed precisely because of the existence of scheme ports, often on the same estuaries and even on the same parts of the coast.

For every scheme port one will find a non-scheme port which was once insignificant, if not virtually non-existent. The presence of the scheme ports has produced those ports, and they throw the scheme ports into a certain light. The idea that in some way a declining sector of the industry has been able by its own inadequacies to bring on the non-scheme ports—the idea that in some way the practice of non-scheme ports is maintaining standards—is a complete absurdity. While I appreciate the sincerity with which the argument is adduced, I could not accept it.

The right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) said —this theme was echoed by several of his hon. Friends —that it was a question of throwing out the baby with the bath water. My hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack), in an excellent speech, pointed out that that was a Socialist attitude to life. I accept that Labour Members have a number of crosses to bear, one of them being their addiction to Socialism, but is nonsense to assume that, if things were not laid down in some impossible, bureaucratic, 1950s-type collectivist framework, they would not work.

Although the right hon. Member for Halton spoke about the baby and the bath water, he should accept that the baby of which we are talking is a pattern of training in non-scheme ports which—I make no apology for repeating the point—in relation to just one port, Felixstowe, shows that more is being spent on training than in all the non-scheme ports put together. Therefore, the idea that all training will cease as soon as the Bill is passed is nonsense.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) helped me by remembering that I am a lawyer. He said that he wanted to be convinced beyond all reasonable doubt. For any judge summing up before a jury, that means not that one might think of fantastic reasons why something might be right or wrong but simply that one should be sure on the evidence that the decision one reaches is correct. Those are the words a judge would use in summing up before a jury. If the hon. Member for Newham, North-West looks at what really happens and at the pattern of training as well as the decline that there has been——

It being eight o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the order [8 May] and the resolution this day, to put forthwith the Question already proposed from the Chair.*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 175, Noes 225.

Division No. 213] **[8.00 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon

O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray (Ogmore)
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie (Dundee W)
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew (Oxford E)
Smith, J. P. (Vale of Glam)
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Matthew (Truro)
Vaz, Keith
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew (Angus E)
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. (Carm'then)
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David (Bolton SE)

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Tom (Hazel Grove)
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset N)
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert (Harrogate)
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas (Pembroke)
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A (Brighton K'pto'n)
Bowden, Gerald (Dulwich)
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael (Brigg & Cl'ts)
Bruce, Ian (Dorset South)
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, (Luton N)
Carlisle, Kenneth (Lincoln)
Carrington, Matthew
Cartiss, Michael
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan (Plym'th S'n)
Clark, Dr Michael (Rochford)
Clarke, Rt Hon K. (Rushcliffe)
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony (Wyre F'rest)
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. (Stamf'd & Spald'g)
Davis, David (Boothferry)
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Field, Barry (Isle of Wight)
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Greenway, John (Ryedale)
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter (Portsmouth N)
Grist, Ian
Hamilton, Hon Archie (Epsom)
Hamilton, Neil (Tatton)
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. (B'ham H'll Gr')
Hargreaves, Ken (Hyndburn)
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen (Wolv' NE)
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan (Strat'd-on-A)
Hughes, Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hunt, David (Wirral W)
Hunt, John (Ravensbourne)
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym (Cardiff N)
Jones, Robert B (Herts W)
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger (B'ham N'thfield)
Knight, Greg (Derby North)
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John (Pendle)
Lester, Jim (Broxtowe)
Lightbown, David
McCrindle, Robert
Maclean, David
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M (N'hampton S)
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris (Bath)
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David (Waveney)
Powell, William (Corby)
Price, Sir David
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. (Norfolk SW)
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Smyth, Rev Martin (Belfast S)
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim (Dorset W)
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy (Sherwood)
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M (Solihull)
Taylor, Teddy (S'end E)
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. (Calder Valley)
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Townend, John (Bridlington)
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill (T'side North)
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George (Acton)

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tom Sackville and
Mr. Michael Fallon.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I apologise sincerely to the Minister and the House for delaying this debate. I want to ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, whether it is consistent with the rules of the House on relevance to retain on the Order Paper the midnight debate on car emissions. In the debate, the Government are apparently seeking the advice of the House on what should be done about the directive, in view of the last-minute amendment by the European Parliament. Like many other hon. Members, I have studied the papers, and an amendment has been tabled. However, at 4 pm today, we learned that this morning in Brussels, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment outlined in specific detail the position of

[Mr. Teddy Taylor]

Her Majesty's Government in advance of the meeting of the Council on 9 June. That opinion is now part of the formal procedures in Brussels and there is no way in which any opinion or any decision of the House at midnight tonight can have an effect.

How can it make sense for the House to sit for one and a half hours at midnight to discuss what should be done on an issue when action has already been taken this morning? Should not this anomaly at least be reported to the Select Committee on Procedure? I appreciate the problems, but it seems nonsense for the House to debate at midnight a decision that has already been made.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): It is a matter over which neither I nor Mr. Speaker has any control. Doubtless the hon. Gentleman will seek to make his point in the course of the debate, when the Minister may take account of it and respond accordingly.

Order for Third Reading read.

8.13 pm

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Norman Fowler): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

We have had a long debate in Committee on the details of the Bill. What became even clearer during that debate is that the dock labour scheme suffers from a range of fundamental defects. It is a complete anomaly in the labour conditions of today, it has added to the costs of the ports covered by the scheme and has hindered their competitive position, and it has led to undoubted and unquestioned restrictive practices. But what it has not achieved has been more trade for scheme ports and, above all, more employment in scheme ports.

The position remains that the dock labour scheme creates a statutory monopoly for dock work in 40 of the major ports of this country. That means that only employers and dockers who are registered with one of the local dock boards can carry out dock work in ports covered by the scheme. That monopoly is enforced by criminal penalties—a maximum penalty of up to three months' imprisonment. It is an entirely wrong use of the criminal law to limit employment opportunities in this country.

The country has suffered not only through lost employment opportunities, but through the costs the scheme has imposed. The results of the trans-shipment survey carried out by the Department of Transport, published earlier this month, show just how much the scheme places its ports at a competitive disadvantage, with ports such as Tilbury and Southampton charging almost 30 and 40 per cent. more respectively than non-scheme Felixstowe for handling similar container cargo.

The scheme has meant extra costs for the consumer, industry and the taxpayer, who has so far paid out over £770 million in financial subsidy and through the costs of the voluntary severance scheme because it has been the only way of reducing surpluses of dock workers. As the debate in Committee made clear, restrictive practices have remained widespread, while at each scheme port, there have been complex sets of rules about what is and what is not dock work. What has the scheme achieved? It has certainly not achieved a secure career for the registered dock workers themselves. Equally, it has not achieved good industrial relations in our ports.

Doubtless the authors of the dock labour scheme thought that in creating a statutory monopoly for dock work and ending the abuse of casual working they would bring about a significant improvement of industrial relations in the docks. By no measure has that been the case. There have been major strikes in every decade since the scheme began in 1947. The number of days lost as a result of strikes by registered dock workers in the scheme ports, according to the National Dock Labour Board's own figures, is still three times the national average. Between 1985 and 1987, the scheme ports lost something like 528 man days for every 1,000 employees compared with a total of 183 lost for every 1,000 in the rest of industry. In the 20 years between 1967 and 1987, there were over 3,500 strikes involving registered dock workers which resulted in 4 million working days being lost in scheme ports. That is a rate of over three disputes per week.

Mr. Sydney Bidwell (Ealing, Southall): I am sure that the Secretary of State will agree that the Government themselves acknowledge that in some of the scheme ports, there has been enormous efficiency and a successful drive for improvement. If the Government had intended to abolish the scheme all along, why did they not say so in their election manifesto? They have, in effect, led many dock workers up the garden path and have provoked a conflict in which we may well have a national dock strike, with all the perils to the economy that that could bring. Why was the abolition of the scheme not included in the manifesto?

Mr. Fowler: We have never made any secret of the fact that we have been looking at barriers to employment. If the hon. Gentleman wants to swap stories about what is or is not in an election manifesto, I must point out that he will find that the 1976 legislation, which was introduced by the last Labour Government, was not set out in their election manifesto. [HON. MEMBERS: "That is not true."] It is true.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): The right hon. Gentleman had better check his facts before he misleads the House about our legislation. He misleads the House badly enough about his own legislation, so he should not mislead it about ours as well. Of course that legislation was set out in our manifesto. That is one of the reasons why it was introduced in the House.

Mr. Fowler: I shall check what the right hon. Gentleman says.

Mr. Wareing: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Fowler: I want to reply to the right hon. Gentleman first. Over the years, a number of offers have been made by employers and a suggestion was certainly put forward by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment when he was Secretary of State for Transport. On every occasion when it was suggested that negotiations on the national dock labour scheme should take place, the reply was the same from Mr. Connolly of the Transport and General Workers Union—that there was no point in having negotiations on either ending or

amending the scheme because that would be met by immediate strike action. That is the position that we have had to face.

Mr. Wareing: The Secretary of State has answered, to his own satisfaction, the question about the absence from the Conservative manifesto of any commitment to abolish the dock labour scheme. However, he will recall that on 19 January the Prime Minister said that she had no plans to abolish the national dock labour scheme. That was reiterated by the right hon. Gentleman himself when answering one of his hon. Friends on 20 March, 17 days before the publication of the White Paper on this subject. Can the Secretary of State say on precisely what date he gave instructions to his civil servants to draft a White Paper to abolish the scheme?

Mr. Fowler: No, we would not do that. I remember clearly the occasion that the hon. Gentleman refers to. One of my hon. Friends asked me a question. It was on a statement on another matter—[HON. MEMBERS: "Wriggle, wriggle."] I am not wriggling at all because my hon. Friend rightly made a contribution and I said at that time that I had nothing to add to any statements that had been made before. We then had a statement on the Floor of the House and brought out the White Paper. What the hon. Gentleman and the Opposition really object to is that there was no leaking of the proposals beforehand. They cannot get used to the fact that the proposals were not leaked in advance and that they did not have the opportunity of leaking them or of publishing the White Paper in advance of the debate on this subject as they did with the Health Service White Paper.

What has been typical of this debate and of everything that took place in Committee is that Opposition Members will use any argument that is extraneous to the detail of the dock labour scheme. As we sat through hour after hour in Committee, virtually no Opposition Member, with the exception of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden), rose to defend the detail of the dock labour scheme. That has been the most significant feature of the whole debate.

Doubtless the authors of the scheme thought that there would be not only an improvement in industrial relations but a better position in relation to jobs and employment in the docks for registered dock workers. However, when one considers the impact of the scheme, one realises that jobs have gone and that the new recruitment of young people has been severely limited. Thousands of registered dock workes have volunteered to leave the industry. Just after the war, there were 82,000 registered dock workers; today there are 9,400.

Clearly, there is an inevitability about some of the reductions, but I ask the House to compare that position with the position of those working in ports that are outside the scheme. By definition, the non-scheme ports were of no consequence in cargo handling in 1947 when the scheme was drawn up. That is why they were left out of the scheme. Yet in the intervening years, ports outside the scheme have come to account for half our trade in value and 30 per cent. of our trade in volume. Employment of dock workers has now risen to 4,000 and nearly one in three of all dockers now work in non-scheme ports. Investment in ports such as Felixstowe and Dover dwarfs any investment in scheme ports. The record of the non-scheme ports, gives the lie to some of the charges that have been made about the abolition of the present dock labour scheme.

In spite of all that, the only pledge made by the Opposition Front Bench in Committee was that they would reintroduce a new statutory dock scheme if they were elected and that they would extend it to new occupations such as warehousing. They intend to spread such a scheme to half a mile from the waterfront. That was the effect of one of the amendments that they tabled. In addition, they wish, want and are pledged to extend the scheme to every port in the country, including the ports that are not covered by the dock labour scheme now. If I can make a prediction, I believe that that will prove to be one of the biggest and most unpopular millstones that even the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) has placed around the neck of his party. Not content with reintroducing——

Mr. Foot: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The right hon. Gentleman seems to be enlarging his speech in this Third Reading debate to discuss matters that are not in the Bill. Will we all have a full chance to answer that part of the right hon. Gentleman's case, along with our answers to the rest of his case, when he gets round to defending the Bill itself?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I remind the House that the Third Reading of a Bill should be restricted to what is in the Bill, but I have heard nothing so far from the Secretary of State that goes outside that.

Mr. Fowler: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That intervention shows the acute sensitivity of the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot). Indeed, no hon. Member should be more sensitive about the dock work than the right hon. Gentleman. His record is one of the most appalling of any Secretary of State in the 50 years of this scheme.

Mr. Foot: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way, although I could, of course, raise this as a point of order. Whatever else may be said about what I have said in the past, such comments are certainly not in order on the Third Reading of this Bill. Will the right hon. Gentleman eventually come round to discussing his own Bill?

Mr. Fowler: Most certainly I will, but not before I have left this point. Again I point out to the House the acute sensitivity of the right hon. Gentleman. We look forward to a political debate outside the House on this matter—

Mr. Tony Banks: Any time, sunshine.

Mr. Fowler: In fact, I suspect that we look forward to that debate rather more than the hon. Friends of the hon. Member for Oldham, West.

Throughout the debate, one point has come over. The defenders of the present dock labour scheme are fighting yesterday's battles; they are defending the scheme as if we had the conditions of the 1930s and 1940s. Although I very much respect the position of the hon. Member for Garston and his experience, I do not believe that he is correct in seeking to fight the Bill as if the conditions of today are those that applied straight after the second world war. We can all agree that the scheme was introduced to prevent casualism and that none of us wants to see the conditions of 50 years ago return in this country. But there is

[Mr. Fowler]

absolutely no reason to believe that there will be such a return. There is every reason to believe that there will be no return to casualism.

Let us consider the experience of non-scheme ports. The advance of the ports outside the scheme has not been achieved by either low pay or casualism. Dockers are well paid and the enormous changes in the way ships are unloaded—with new technology and containerisation—have transformed the nature of dock work and virtually eliminated the scope for casual work. Dock work is now highly skilled, specialist work which requires the use of sophisticated machinery. It requires a permanent and well-trained work force. The days when large numbers of unskilled labourers assembled waiting to see whether there was work for them have gone for good—and everyone is glad of that.

To underline that point, the employers in the present scheme ports have given an assurance that, after abolition, there will be no return to casual employment. That assurance is crucial. We have a dock labour scheme to prevent casualism. Port companies employing more than 90 per cent. of registered dock workers have given an undertaking that there will be no return to the casual system of working. It is not just a matter of the pledge or the assurance that they are giving, and practice in non-scheme ports already shows that that is a bogus argument. Several members of the Committee appreciated that point only too well.

Mr. Robert Hughes: If the employers are so certain about their pledges, why will they not meet representatives of the Transport and General Workers Union and start negotiations on the conditions that will follow the scheme? Where they can reach a national agreement to have no casual labour, that would be the most constructive thing to do. I hope that the Minister will do his best to make employers get down to negotiations. That is the way to make progress.

Mr. Fowler: Precisely that offer—not the offer that the hon. Gentleman wants, but the offer of talks—has most certainly been given by the employers. The employers are saying that negotiations and talks should take place at the local level, not at the national level. That is a sensible position to be in. The National Association of Port Employers does not run the ports. The port employers are the local ports. Of course, not all of them own only one port. For example, Associated British Ports owns several ports. Therefore, negotiations should take place at the local level. The Transport and General Workers Union should examine why it will not join in such negotiations and is instructing its members to boycott them.

I recognise that the debate takes place when there is the threat of industrial action on the abolition of the scheme. I believe such action would be entirely unjustified and totally against the interests of the dockers. The only result would be to drive more trade from the scheme ports, and therefore to put at risk jobs in the ports. It cannot be in anyone's interest for there to be a strike, particularly when clear assurances have been given that there will be no return to casual working; when clear offers have been made by port employers throughout the country to discuss future arrangements in individual ports; when generous compensation has been offered in the case of any docker—such dockers are very much the minority—who becomes redundant; and, above all, when the end of the scheme is a major step to achieving a modern ports industry—a ports industry with a future. That is in the interests of everyone working in the ports.

That goal has received wide support outside the House. It has certainly received support from the industry, which stands to gain from a more competitive ports industry. It has received support from organisations such as chambers of commerce, whose members in port areas know how the scheme's restrictions have blighted business and investment. It has received support from potential investors in port areas, in warehousing and in road haulage who, to date, have held back for fear of incurring the scheme's unique straitjacket of restrictions. Port users and port investors are persuaded of the need for the scheme's abolition simply because the case against it is so overwhelming. They have nothing to gain from strikes but everything to gain from the improved performance of our ports industry, which the ending of this scheme will bring about.

The reason we want to end this scheme is to create a better future for those living in and around dock areas. We want to ensure that investment in port areas is not discouraged and that new job-creating investment in storage, manufacturing and transport can take place. At present, the scheme damages not only the ports but the prospects of the communities around those ports. Above all, we want to achieve a better future for our ports. We want the present scheme ports to be able to compete better with ports outside the scheme and continental ports that have taken too much of our trade in the past. Our aim is that British ports can take tomorrow's opportunities in the new position created by the single European market.

We should be clear: unless ports succeed in competing, no dock labour scheme—past, present or future—will prevent the decline of those ports. That is the lesson of the scheme over the past 30 or 40 years. There is no reason why our ports should not succeed, but they will not succeed if they are held back by all the restrictions of the present dock labour scheme. For that reason, we want to see the scheme go. It has far outlived any purpose that it might have had.

The Bill is of fundamental importance for the future of our ports industry. More than that, it will remove a major barrier to the expansion of business and employment in this country. I ask the support of the House for the abolition of the dock labour scheme.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Perhaps it will assist the House if I amplify the point that I made in response to the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot). I remind the House that the Bill abolishes a scheme, and, for that reason, it is in order to debate what is to be abolished, and why it is to be abolished.

8.38 pm

Mr. Meacher: As my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) pointedly said, we have just listened to a lot of bluster and a good deal of abuse, but rather little about the Bill and the arguments in Committee. As we have learnt, the Secretary of State prefers to operate in that manner. It is extraordinary that he can say that nobody has defended the scheme. I can only suppose that he so infrequently attended the Committee's proceedings that he is unaware that my hon.

Friends and I, in exhaustive detail, rejected many of the Tory attacks on the scheme as incorrect, misplaced and downright wrong-headed. I shall certainly, yet again, rebut several Tory charges tonight.

We are coming to the end of the proceedings on the Bill. The most significant point that needs to be made at this stage is that the proceedings have been a farce. No other Bill in modern times has had such a history as this one. A White Paper was introduced on one day without consultation—the Secretary of State did not seem to understand the significance of that point—and the Bill was published the next day. The Second Reading was rushed through on the first permitted day thereafter. The Committee proceedings were started—unusually—only eight days later. After an indecently short interval of only 29 hours for an eight-clause Bill, the Committee proceedings were abruptly guillotined, and a 4 am sitting was needed even to reach 29 hours. The Report and Third Reading stages are now being dealt with a mere six days after the completion of the Committee proceedings.

It is clear, and it has never been denied by Ministers, that the main reason for this precipitate pell-mell rush is that Ministers want the Bill on the statute book on the first day possible so that the port employers, who are at present prevented by law from taking on non-registered dock workers, will at the first possible moment be able to bring in workers from outside as blackleg labour to break a strike, if that is what occurs.

Mr. David Davis: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: I will give way in a moment, but I want to finish this point.

Frankly, the handling of the Bill has been a shameful abuse of the House. The Government have been far more concerned to secure the option of strike breaking, if it is needed, than they have ever been bothered seriously to debate the merits of the Bill.

Mr. David Davis: Are not the hon. Gentleman's complaints somewhat undermined by his own statement, I believe in the initial stages of the Committee, that this is a single-clause Bill with seven contingent clauses? We were discussing, in effect, one clause for all that time.

Mr. Meacher: If in the correct sense it is a single-clause Bill—it is a single issue Bill—and if we had very nearly completed the debate on that clause by the time that the guillotine was imposed, why did the Government impose the guillotine? If there were no other major issues left in the Bill, why did they impose the guillotine?

We know that the Government did that because they were determined from the very first day—months ago—that they would have the Bill passed by about the end of June or the first week of July so that, if industrial action took place, the Government could allow employers to bring in blackleg labour. The Government had no interest in any serious discussion of the Bill in Parliament.

Apart from the concertina-ed timetable, the Committee stage has been a farce, because the Government have clearly been determined from the outset not to accept a single amendment. I have never been involved in a Bill to which an amendment, however minor, was not seriously considered. Indeed, much of the time they have given the impression that they were not even listening. We have been largely engaging in a dialogue of the deaf. The Ministers have simply been going through the motions and paying no serious attention to the Opposition's arguments.

None of the central contentions that we made on Second Reading and in Committee has received an answer, convincing or otherwise, from the Government. We never had any response to our central argument. Everything that the Secretary of State has said tonight shows that he was not listening. We never had any answer to the central argument that most European countries, and indeed many non-European countries, operate dock labour schemes, which, through a variety of structures, all provide for the direct involvement of a trade union and dock workers in matters of recruitment, training, welfare, medical services and redundancy. We have never had an answer to the obvious question: if the Netherlands, Germany and Belgium can have successful and efficient dock systems, why cannot we? There is complete silence; we have never had an answer to that question. If those countries can run successful systems with dock labour schemes, why cannot we?

We made the essential point that competitor countries regard their ports as part of the basic national infrastructure. Their ports receive heavy Government subsidies. The Department of Transport estimates that port costs for conventional deep-sea freight are typically 60 to 100 per cent. higher in the United Kingdom than at continental ports. That is because, as the British port authorities have estimated, port subsidies in the rest of the EEC amount to about £200 million a year. That is why British ports are not as competitive as they could be. It has nothing to do with the dock labour scheme.

However, when we pointed that out to Ministers, all they would say was that they were seeking to get agreement through the EEC to reduce port subsidies. They ignored the effective point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) in Committee that, when the issue is nuclear weapons, this Thatcherite Government demand to negotiate from strength but, when it comes to port subsidies, they are content to negotiate from a position of weakness. Their real concern is not to cut port subsidies, but to hammer the British dock worker. If only we had a Government who valued and trained their work force in the docks instead of regarding them as the enemy within.

Mr. Tim Janman (Thurrock): If I hear the hon. Gentleman correctly, he is trying to make the point that the existence of the dock labour scheme and its abolition are completely irrelevant to international competitiveness, vis-a-vis the docks' competitors in Europe. If that is so, why is it that, in the short time since the Government announced their intention to abolish the scheme, one major timber importer, who is currently importing timber from the far east into Europe via Rotterdam, has already contacted the chief executive of the port of Tilbury to say that he will be interested, once the scheme has gone, in bringing those imports into Europe through Tilbury rather than through Rotterdam?

Mr. Meacher: After the results of the county council elections, it is clear that the hon. Gentleman will certainly be leaving us next time, so we are always glad to hear his valedictory. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman could explain why Tilbury has done so exceedingly well while being a scheme port. Tilbury has been extremely successful. It is

[Mr. Meacher]

well managed, it has an excellent dock work force, its profits have substantially increased over previous years and its productivity has increased as fast as anywhere. I doubt whether ships are turned round faster anywhere in Europe than they are at Tilbury, and that is while there is still a dock labour scheme.

We never had an answer to our key contention: if the dock labour scheme so inhibits efficiency and modernisation, why is it that productivity in scheme ports has been every bit as high as that of any non-scheme port? In 1965, scheme ports handled 261 million tonnes, with 65,000 registered dock workers. In 1986, they handled 308 million tonnes, with 10,400 dock workers, that is a 730 per cent. increase in productivity in terms of volume per worker in 20 years. We would be glad if the Secretary of State could tell us of any other industry that could match an increase in productivity of 730 per cent. in 20 years.

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman is simply taking credit for the job losses in the scheme ports. He has raised the question of productivity and Tilbury, but will he now explain to the House why the Department of Transport's survey, which was published only this month, shows that Tilbury and Southampton are charging nearly 30 and 40 per cent. more respectively than non-scheme Felixstowe for handling the same container cargo?

Mr. Meacher: Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman should ask the management, because, if that is a management policy, it is certainly consistent with a great deal of success at Tilbury. Tilbury has probably been the most successful port in our country, despite the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman), who represents either it or an adjoining constituency, running it down. If it is its management's decision to price at that level, it has not prevented that port's considerable success and rising profits.

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman should remind us how much public money has gone to the Port of London Authority, and therefore to Tilbury, over the years. He is making a point about Tilbury, so will he remind us of that position?

Mr. Meacher: The right hon. Gentleman was the Minister responsible for providing that money. I take it that he is not asking whether it can be justified. He did it, and we are perfectly well aware why he did it. London and Liverpool were in peculiarly difficult circumstances. The right hon. Gentleman, when he was a Minister responsible for transport in 1980, came to the House with a Bill significantly to increase subsidies, partly to take account of difficult trading conditions and partly to bring about redundancies with proper compensation. When this happens in the private sector, the right hon. Gentleman gives us a lesson about successive productivity. When it happens in the public sector, we are told that it is all a matter of redundancies. This must apply both ways. There have been considerable reductions in the number of dock workers as a result of voluntary severance, and there has been a huge increase in productivity.

Despite our exchanges across the Dispatch Box, the Secretary of State has not answered my central question: which other industry has matched the productivity of the scheme ports? He cannot answer that question.

Mr. Fowler: Of course I can. The non-scheme ports have far exceeded the productivity of scheme ports. That is a matter of fact.

Mr. Meacher: That is the point that I was coming to, and it is not true. That is precisely the kind of answer that we have received from Ministers throughout the Committee stage and it demonstrates my point. Ministers simply do not listen. They do not provide evidence or arguments. They simply make assertions and when we check the facts we discover that those assertions are not justified.

In 1987, the last year for which complete figures are available, each scheme-port docker moved on average 13,346 tonnes of cargo, while each non-scheme port docker moved on average 13,655 tonnes, almost exactly the same amount. That minuscule difference has occurred despite the fact that non-scheme ports enjoy the huge advantage of geographically strategic locations on the east coast so that they can benefit fully from the switch in Britain's trade over the past 15 years to trade with the EEC. The Minister's arguments, statements or flourishes are simply not true. They cannot be validated.

Mr. Ernie Ross: The Secretary of State is trying to claim that more valuable cargoes came through specific ports. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) will consider the fact that, historically, certain cargoes came through certain ports. For example, Dundee was a jute centre. Jute is not as valuable an import as advanced technological imports such as computers or video recorders. The Secretary of State's case does not stand up. He obviously does not accept that Tilbury has been a successful port.

Mr. Meacher: My hon. Friend has provided a convincing answer to a point which the Secretary of State was trying to make from a sedentary position. No doubt my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) will develop his point if he catches your eye later, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Secretary of State should accept that Tilbury has been one of the most successful ports. It is remarkable that, because it is a scheme port, the Secretary of State will not say that it has been such a profound success.

Mr. David Davis: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Janman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way now?

Mr. Meacher: No, I will not give way. I have given way to both hon. Members and I will not give way to them again.

Mr. Fowler *rose*——

Mr. Meacher: I think that the Secretary of State is abusing his position. He has already intervened three times.

We have not received an answer to our central contention that the abolition of the dock labour scheme will lead to the return of casualisation and a general worsening of the terms and conditions of dock workers. The Secretary of State repeated tonight what the Government have said endlessly throughout the Committee stage, that 90 per cent. of employers have issued a press release with a wonderful rhetorical flourish

claiming that there would be no return to casual labour. That was about as convincing as Chamberlain waving a piece of paper and saying, "Peace in our time."

The Secretary of State must be deaf or obtuse. He is not responding to our arguments. In Devlin 2 in 1970, the employers made the same promise that they have made today. Within 18 months of that statement, after the collapse of two companies, the employers jerked back into life the temporary unattached register—in other words, they reintroduced casualisation.

The Government have not responded to the fact that we pointed out that Mr. Peter de Savary, who is one of the big port employers, has made public his intention to use casual labour for his new terminal on the Isle of Grain. The Secretary of State may screw up his face because this is a bit embarrassing. Mr. de Savary has said that, and if Mr. de Savary has said it, I for one believe him. We have had no ministerial reply or comment on that observation.

There has also been a deafening silence from Ministers on another point. In an industry in which traffic constantly fluctuates, the employers' obvious objective is to reduce to a core labour force and employ the remainder on a casual basis. It is absolutely manifest that that is what they intend to do. Ministers and the Secretary of State have simply said that casualisation hardly exists in non-scheme ports. Not even that is correct, because it exists at a level of about 6 per cent.

The Secretary of State argued again tonight that the same conditions will apply after the abolition of the scheme. However, that ignores the crucial point which we continue to make—that the dock labour scheme provides a marker for proper standards. Once the scheme has disappeared and as new cowboy operators enter the industry, commercial market pressures will drive down standards in the absence of a statutory framework. We have had no reply to that argument. The port industry will be the latest in a long line of industries in which Government deregulation of the labour market has led to a levelling down of standards, not a levelling up. There is already pertinent evidence that that will happen.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: What about the buses?

Mr. Meacher: The resident buffoon from the Committee, who I see has been let out for the day, has made a very unwise comparison with the buses. The experience with the buses illustrates well the kind of thing that is likely to happen in the dock industry. It has experienced a worsening of standards and labour conditions and a reduction in routes.

Mr. Bennett: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: No. The hon. Gentleman has made his point and I have replied to him.

Two weeks ago, Mr. Nicholas Finney, the director of the port employers, called for

"the integration and assimilation of registered dock workers into the rest of the port employers' work forces."

What lies behind those weasel words is revealed by the port employers' current treatment of their workers who are not protected by the scheme. Therefore, proposals relating to non-registered workers at Swansea, recently put forward by the Associated British Ports, call for a reduction in engineering staff from 68 to 16, a cut of more than three quarters. Those staff are to be replaced by contractors. That is the latest in a long line of job cuts made by ABP since its privatisation six or seven years ago.

That shows that, with the dock labour scheme gone, registered dock workers will be, to use Mr. Finney's words, assimilated and integrated right out of their jobs, with casualisation no doubt disguised as contracting out. The port employers have refused to respond to any of those concerns. Indeed, they have taken the opportunity to scrap existing national negotiating machinery that has been in place since 1920—27 years before the introduction of the dock labour scheme. Nothing could make the employers' intentions clearer.

We do not need to make predictions. I have already drawn attention to a new contract of employment. Again, the Secretary of State has completely ignored the evidence. I shall be glad to pass the contract on to him. It is dated 27 April, three weeks after the abolition of this scheme was announced and two months before it could be abolished. It is a contract from one port employer, Mersey Container Terminals Ltd. Contrary to the smooth assurances that we have heard again tonight about the easy transition to local collective bargaining, the contract makes it clear that there will be no collective bargaining, national or local, and that any dock worker who does not sign an individualised contract of employment, drawn up by the employer on a take-it-or-leave-it basis, will simply be sacked.

That is the position facing dock workers. So much for the Government's assurances. Like the employers' assurances about casualisation, they are simply not worth the paper they are written on.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): The hon. Gentleman can either plead his case because of casualisation or tell the House, as he has just done, that those employees are being asked to sign a contract of employment. A contract of employment is designed so that an employee has a stated term of contract employment. Therefore, that cannot be casualisation.

Mr. Meacher: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman, who has just joined the debates today, seems to understand so little and totally misunderstands the point that I was making. I can give him only the arguments, not the ability to comprehend them. All I was saying was that there is a contract of employment which an employee can either sign or not sign, but if he did not he would be sacked. That is not exactly the local collective bargaining which the Secretary of State said would be the basis on which the ports industry would be run from now on.

The Bill is fundamentally about the essence of the Government's opposition to the scheme and their objection to joint decision making and their hostility to the 50:50 employer-trade union representation on the dock labour boards. They repudiate any limits to management's so-called rights to manage absolutely, and tell workers what they are to do. These themes run throughout their critique of the scheme. In that respect, the dock labour scheme is perhaps the nearest we have in this country to industrial democracy and worker participation. That is why the Government hate it so much. The Government call it blocking; we call it co-operation.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley) *rose*——

Mr. Meacher: No, I shall not give way.

It is an instance of workers taking responsibility, and that is why it is anathema to the Government.

Mr. Riddick *rose*——

Mr. Meacher: No, I shall not give way. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be able to make a speech later, but I am now drawing to a close.

For several years, in cahoots with the employers, the Government have planned and plotted the destruction of the scheme. It is becoming clearer by the day why they finally pulled the trigger six weeks ago. Ministers have never denied the scenario first made public by the Channel 4 programme "Dispatches" on 12 October last year. It was then stated that abolition would be saved for what was called a "political rainy day".

I am sure that the Secretary of State will not like this because it is the truth which he has been trying to conceal from the nation ever since the announcement was made. The programme presenter continued:

"Tory MPs and industry sources have suggested to Dispatches that should the Government get into serious difficulties, for example over the balance of payments, then they would use the repeal of the scheme to rally their supporters and public opinion against the unions."

It was a cynical picture of industrial provocation for political ends, but that is exactly what has happened.

It is ironic that, on the very day set by the Government for the completion of the Bill's passage through the House, the bungling and mismanagement of the Government's economic policies have forced up interest rates to 14 per cent., which will wrench up the retail prices index another notch, exacerbate the price-wage spiral and, eventually, worsen mortgage misery still further.

If there is a fitting epitaph for this despicable, politically motivated little Bill, surely that is it. The Bill is as contemptible as the Chancellor's arrogance in the face of his own manifest failing—but, thank God, it will not be long before we are called on to reverse the destructiveness of both.

9.4 pm

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): I rise with great pleasure to support the Third Reading of the Bill, whose enactment will be an important milestone for the once great port of Hull. I am privileged to represent the hinterland in the eastern suburbs of that port, and I have been fighting for the abolition of the dock labour scheme for many years—as chairman of the finance committee of the county borough of Hull, as leader of Humberside county council and as Member of Parliament for part of the area.

When I was a boy, Hull was the third port of the greatest empire that the world has ever seen. Today it is not even in the top 10. Why? It is not because of lack of investment; there has been plenty of that. Nor is it because of lack of opportunity: as the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) has said, ports on the east coast have had their opportunities. There was enormous scope for expansion when we joined the Common Market, and it was inevitable that trade would move progressively from the Atlantic, the old Commonwealth and Liverpool to Hull and the Common Market. Hull was the gateway to the continent for the industrial heartland of Yorkshire and —with the opening of the M62—Lancashire. It should have had everything going for it: it should have become the Europort of Britain, but it did not.

Which ports benefited? Felixstowe benefited. When I was a boy Felixstowe was a creek with an old wharf, in the middle of nowhere and with no communications. Why did Felixstowe get the trade? Because it was not a national dock labour scheme port and had excellent industrial relations. As a result, by 1987 it was working no less than 2·5 times as much tonnage as Hull, and last year its tonnage increased by another 24 per cent.

It was not only Felixstowe that took Hull's trade. Hull has lost trade to dozens of private wharves that have sprung up along the Humber, the Ouse and the Trent. Today those private wharves work more tonnage than the once great port of Hull. It is a tragedy that from the pier in Hull the ships can be seen sailing past on their way to the private wharves. All that capital investment has gone to waste, and all those expensive facilities are unused.

Why has the scheme had such a devastating effect on ports such as Hull? [HON. MEMBERS: "It has not."] It has. It cannot be denied that Hull has declined from being the third port to not being even in the top 10 and that has happened principally because of the monopoly power of the trade unions. The Transport and General Workers Union has abused that power, and the effect on trade has been devastating. Let me give three examples.

Hull invested in a new container terminal, which is now lying idle because we could not reach an agreement with the dockers on reasonable levels of pay. There are three gantry cranes in the terminal. A similar gantry crane in Grimsby is manned by 12 dockers, but they man it only when there is a ship in. When there is not, they are put on to other work. I dare say that in Felixstowe or Rotterdam the manning would be much lower. But Hull, with three cranes, does not man them with 36 men; the union insisted on 66. What is worse, it insisted on 66 men not only when there is shipping but when there is not. The horror story does not end there. Even more diabolical is the fact that the union demanded tea breaks, lunch breaks, and permanent overtime for those 66 men—up to 6.30 pm every night even when there is no shipping. Who has heard of an industry where the workers are paid overtime for doing no work whatsoever?

Opposition Members do not like listening to the facts. They do not like hearing what happens in the north of England and about why many of its industrial areas are being driven into the ground. I hope that when the Bill is passed, decent manning levels will be achieved and that Hull's container terminal will be reopened.

At Christmas, North Sea Ferries wanted to bring in its last ferry on Christmas eve, unload it, and leave it in port until after the Christmas holiday. The dockers demanded payment not only for Christmas eve but for Christmas day, Boxing day and the bank holiday.

Mr. Wareing: Just as the hon. Gentleman does.

Mr. Townend: To put a little icing on the cake, the dockers also wanted a day off in lieu. The consequence was that that the ferry did not dock there at all.

The practice of welting is still prevalent in Hull, whereby one half to two thirds of a gang work and the rest disappear off to the golf course, to run little businesses, or to drive taxis. That proves that manning levels are ridiculously high, which is why trade has been driven away by exorbitant costs and why there is no discipline in the work place or in industry generally. What other industry would allow workers who are supposed to be on the job to disappear?

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): The House of Commons does.

Mr. Tony Banks: Yes, so that Conservative Members can moonlight in the City.

Mr. Townend: Are the hon. Lady and the hon. Gentleman speaking for themselves or for their hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell)?

Not satisfied with its grip on the scheme ports over the years, the Transport and General Workers Union encouraged the last Labour Government to extend the scheme. Tonight, we heard that if Labour were by any chance re-elected they would extend it to inland ports, depots and containers. Thankfully, their re-election is most unlikely.

One of the scheme's most despicable aspects is the power it gives registered dockers to steal other men's jobs by having tasks classified as registered dock work. In Hull, they succeeded in doing so in respect of the coopers and then tried to take over a local warehousing and groupage depot in Springfield way. Because the employers would not give way, the dockers forced the closure of that depot and many non-dockers lost their jobs. The same has been done in respect of riggers. North Sea Ferries was forced to allocate some riggers' jobs to dock workers. One rigging company in Hull that is not registered to employ registered dock workers, whose proprietor lives in my constituency, has for several years been prevented from recruiting more staff.

It is not only Hull but the whole country that suffers. Millions of pounds of investment has been wasted, and millions of pounds of additional investment has been put into non-scheme ports to bypass scheme ports. Before the scheme, British ports—particularly the London docks—served as the entrepreneur of the world. Goods came here from all over the globe and were transhipped to Europe. All that trade has been lost to Rotterdam because of the scheme ports' appalling reputation for overmanning and high costs. That has cost our balance of payments billions of pounds, and we cannot afford that to happen any longer.

The national dock labour scheme increases the cost both of importing and of exporting. It is a tax on every consumer in the country and a tax on British industrial exports.

Mr. Wareing: As the hon. Gentleman did not serve on the Committee, he would not have heard my point concerning Rotterdam. Does the hon. Gentleman realise that it has a dock labour scheme? Does he realise also that 15 per cent. of the dock workers there are idle at any one time? My evidence for that is the comments of the personnel director of the port employers of Rotterdam.

Mr. Townend: When I was in local government I went to Rotterdam to see what was done there and what I saw was amazing. There was no overmanning there. It did not have 66 men on three cranes when it should have had 12. It has a scheme, but it is nothing like ours. When I went there it had not had a strike for 15 years.

The scheme is a tax on exports and imports that we can no longer afford and the Government's decision to abolish it was right. My only criticism is that the Government have left the abolition of one of the last pieces of the Socialist corporate state far too long. However, there is an old saying, "Better late than never".

If there is a dock strike it will do untold damage to the scheme ports, but it will do even greater damage to the dockers themselves. If they strike after the Bill has gone through they will be liable to be dismissed and they will lose the equivalent of £35,000 each. I have far more confidence in the common sense of the British docker, particularly the Yorkshire docker, than Opposition Members.

Mr. Ernie Ross: The hon. Gentleman has made an important point. We were not allowed many hours to discuss the Bill in Committee, but we spent a lot of the time that we were allowed trying to get the Government Back Benchers to speak. However, they were effectively silenced by the Secretary of State. He was so shocked by the performance of his Ministers that he was not going to let his Back Benchers speak. The hon. Gentleman has just said that it is the deliberate intention to get the abolition of the scheme on the statute book so that, if the dockers go on strike, they will be sacked and lose all their entitlements. Will the hon. Gentleman repeat that, because we have been anxiously asking the Secretary of State whether that was his intention.

Mr. Townend: I did not say that that was the purpose of the Bill. I said that, if the dockers went on strike, they should be careful because they would put themselves in that position, and that is a fact. It is a good job that I was not a member of the Committee which considered the Bill, because if I had been I could not have sat through its proceedings without refuting some of the rubbish that I have heard tonight.

No one can get away from the fact that the port of Hull has withered on the vine because of the national dock labour scheme. Not only dockers' jobs have been lost, but jobs in all the ancillary industries. That has been a major factor in the decline as an industrial centre of the area that I represent.

Once we are given the freedom to compete on equal terms with Felixstowe and the wharves, I am convinced that management and men in the docks will get together, win back the trade and rebuild the prosperity of our once great city and that vine will flourish once more.

9.17 pm

Mr. Wareing: By some standards we have had a long debate on the Bill, but, as I have pointed out time and again, it was undoubtedly planned some time ago, not with any idea of improving the British economy but rather as one of the articles of faith that the Government decided that they had to keep with their crackpot friends in the Adam Smith Institute. That is the source of the Bill.

It has been argued that the scheme ports have been inefficient in comparison with the non-scheme ports. Much has been made of the fact that over the past 30 or 40 years the pattern of trade with Britain has altered considerably, moving away from the Atlantic, which was the source of the prosperity of ports such as Liverpool and Glasgow, to Europe. There was bound to be a pull to ports in the south-east of Britain and that is the real factor behind the growth of Felixstowe. To some extent Felixstowe is to the Secretary of State for Employment what Luton Town is to the Minister for Sport; it is held up as a symbol that we should all copy——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Wareing: My speech is hardly under way. If Conservative Members restrain themselves I shall allow them to intervene later.

[Mr. Wareing]

The port employers are undoubtedly prejudiced against the trade union movement being allowed a voice in determining the conditions of work in the docks. As I told the Committee, Mr. Keith Beckton—the personnel director of Tees and Hartlepool port authority—said that the port had not recruited since 1977 and would not do so until the scheme was abolished. That is why the average age of a registered dock worker increased from 42 in 1973 to 47 in 1988. The port employers are the managers; it is no use blaming the workers. The port employers organise the dock system, and on the whole this country has had rather poor management.

The non-scheme ports have gained from location and, to some extent, from discrimination by Government and employers. The Government have no plans to restructure the port industry. They claim that the £4·6 million cost of the national dock labour scheme is a burden on the industry. If the Government were really interested in the burdens on our ports, they would be concerned about other matters such as the £28 million a year that the ports have to pay for lighthouse dues. Britain is the only country in the European Community that expects its port employers to pay lighthouse dues. It is also the only country that insists that port employers pay for the various navigational aids.

The House should refuse the Bill a Third Reading because the Government have not done their homework; they have been concerned only with exercising their prejudice against the dock labour scheme and the trade union movement. They refer to the competitiveness of Rotterdam and Hamburg, but they should visit those ports, as I have visited Rotterdam, to find out why they are so successful. The Dutch ports, including Rotterdam, and many other European ports are municipally owned. The port of Rotterdam and its wharves are owned by Rotterdam city council. All the dredging is therefore the responsibility of that local authority. The navigational aids—incidentally, Rotterdam is 30 miles inland—are under the control of the local authority with financial assistance from the Dutch Government.

That is the difference. The other EEC countries regard ports as part of the essential transport infrastructure and believe that there must be planning. However, planning is anathema to the Government. That is why they do not do their homework. If they did their homework, they might find that their ideological prejudices led to inconvenient answers. That is why we have been presented with a tinpot Bill instead of a measure that takes into account what is happening elsewhere in the EEC.

I have spoken to Mr. Jansen, the assistant director of the Rotterdam port employers' association. He told me that the port employed 9,634 dock workers in 1987—about the total number of registered dock workers in this country. Just over 7,000 of those dock workers were directly employed, but that number did not allow the port of Rotterdam to operate efficiently.

How, therefore, does the port manage to operate efficiently? It has what is called an employed labour pool, and 2,200, or 35 per cent., of Rotterdam dock workers are drawn from that pool. That assistant director of the Rotterdam port employers' association said to me, "You must realise, Mr. Wareing, that the trade of a port fluctuates, so there has to be a surplus of labour. Each Dutch port employer accepts that there needs to be a 7 per cent. surplus of labour." Therefore, 15 per cent. of the dock labour force in the port of Rotterdam is idle.

What happens to those workers? The port employers do not make them redundant. They say that they will need trained dock workers in the future. The Dutch Government finance the training of the employed labour pool to the tune of 55 per cent. of the cost; the rest is met by the port employers. That does not happen only in Rotterdam.

The Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls), is not with us now, but he told us earlier that a training levy would be a burden. We disputed that statement. We said that we regarded training as an investment. The Minister, however, said that he regarded the levy as a burden. My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) then pointed out that the levy is the means whereby training can be given. If the absent Minister were here, I would tell him that in Hamburg 15 per cent. of the dock workers are drawn from a labour pool that is similar to the one in Rotterdam. The port users have to pay a levy for those who remain idle. The levy is a contribution towards their training and retraining. That ensures an efficient and competitive work force in Hamburg.

Those two examples could be repeated many times over. The other members of the European Economic Community pay light dues and all the other levies. The Belgian Government have paid 70 per cent. of the cost of a new container terminal. They are not fussing. They do not have trivial prejudices. They are getting to the heart of the matter.

Mr. Janman: Instead of going round Europe talking to the management of foreign ports, may I suggest that the hon. Gentleman talks to the management of some of the British scheme ports, particularly Tilbury? If he does, he will learn that one of its biggest problems is the refusal of a number of people who work in that port to be retrained because they know that they have jobs for life. There is no incentive for them to accept retraining. Abolition of the scheme will lead to Tilbury improving its skill profile and its work force.

Mr. Wareing: I am interested not only in Tilbury but in all the ports in the United Kingdom. I am not satisfied that the Government are sufficiently interested to ensure that there will be proper training. It is no use saying that people in the non-scheme ports receive training. Felixstowe has been mentioned. There may not be cowboy employers now, but they may exist as a result of the Bill. What will the Government do about them?

The Secretary of State talked about casualisation. He believes the port employers who say that there will not be casualisation. There is 6 per cent. now, but he argues that it will not go much beyond 6 per cent. Perhaps he thinks that there is an inevitable minimum figure. Let us suppose that he is wrong, although I know that Ministers in the Thatcherite Government always go by the Alexander Solzhenitsyn maxim of, "We never make mistakes." Let us suppose that on this occasion they have made a mistake. Can the Secretary of State say what he will do if he is wrong?

If casualisation rises to 10, 12 or 20 per cent., what action will the Secretary of State take? I am willing to give way if he wants to answer. Obviously he has not got an

answer. Either he does not care or he does not know. He has no answer to the question because no one knows the answer. We do not know what the percentage of casualisation will be. Certainly the Minister does not know. We do not know whether we can trust what the port employers have told us. The Secretary of State has the opportunity to tell the House precisely what he will do if our worst fears are realised.

If we allow chaos to develop in the docks because there is no planning, no scheme and no attempt to finance the expenditure that port employers are compelled to make, more and more of our trade will go to the continent. It is happening already. Ministers talk about Felixstowe but it is small beer in comparison with Rotterdam and Hamburg.

In 1986 over 3 million tonnes of British exports to places outside the European Community went not through Felixstowe, Liverpool, Southampton or Hull, but through Rotterdam. One would have expected that exports to the United States would go through the ports on the west coast of Britain, but 341,000 tonnes went through Rotterdam. Over 4 million tonnes of exports to far eastern countries from Iraq to Japan went through Rotterdam. When we find that 1,899,100 tonnes of imports from the United States came not through Liverpool, Southampton or Felixstowe but through Rotterdam we realise what is happening.

It is no use the Secretary of State nodding his head to show that he knows all this. His Bill is a mouse compared with the tremendous efforts and vision that are needed if our ports are to be competitive with those in the rest of the European Community.

9.34 pm

Mr. Tim Janman (Thurrock): Throughout the Second Reading debate, in Committee and on Report we have heard a great deal of speculation about the consequences of abolishing the scheme and about the opportunities for job creation and employment in the port industries.

Initially, I wish to update the House on what has taken place in Tilbury between the Second Reading debate and the Third Reading debate tonight. I should like to introduce into the debate some facts and observations, in contrast to the theories that have been put forward by the Opposition. Already, at Tilbury one major operator has shown a great deal of interest in developing a 50-acre site roll-on/roll-off cargo handling facility at Tilbury for commercial vehicles. That operator identified his interest only after the abolition of the scheme had been announced.

On Second Reading, I related the problem of a fruit cold store that an operator wished to set up in Tilbury. That enterprise and initiative was scuppered because of the 19th-century, Luddite attitude of a small number of shop stewards who insisted that, while the potential employers' drivers were driving the fruit from the store out and around the United Kingdom, registered dockers would stand and watch them loading it. I am pleased to tell the House that, as a result of the scheme being abolished, the entrepreneur who wanted to initiate that cold fruit store development has returned to Tilbury and is once again interested in pursuing that venture.

I shall repeat for emphasis my remarks to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) about a major timber importer who previously would not come to Tilbury or any other scheme port in the United Kingdom, but is now interested in moving from Rotterdam to Tilbury to import timber from the far east into Britain.

I have given three specific examples from the past few weeks that are a clear measure of the great opportunities for Tilbury as a result of the abolition. In addition, many other companies are eager to initiate discussions with the management of the port to consider new ventures that can be started there. A conservative estimate is that over the next 12 to 18 months, after the scheme has been abolished, between 200 and 300 new jobs will be created because companies are satisfying the needs of their customers.

Inevitably, in the short term there will be a number of redundancies in the port of Tilbury, where there is a surplus of at least 100 registered dockers. However, in 12 to 18 months 100 non-jobs will be eliminated and 200 to 300 real jobs will be created as a result of people meeting customers' needs in a free enterprise environment. That is a huge gain in the number of real jobs being created and a net gain in total jobs in the next 12 to 18 months. Throughout my 18 months in the House, that is exactly what I have said would happen, if the Government bit the bullet and abolished this appalling impediment to employment and job creation.

s I said, there will be a number of redundancies at Tilbury but their terms will be very generous. When the redundancies have been made, the port will be in a very strong position to take advantage of the opportunities that will descend upon it, and the management of the port will be able to improve the skill and age profile of its work force.

One of the biggest problems in improving the skills of the existing work force is that many of them—this is understandable particularly with the age profile that exists —are not interested in learning new tricks. There is no reason why they should put in the effort to learn them, because, irrespective of whether they volunteer or co-operate with management to learn new tricks, under the auspices of the scheme they have jobs for life. Hence, particularly among some of the more elderly employees in Tilbury, there is a resistance to retraining and, therefore, a resistance to enabling management to move with the times in terms of technology and so on. [HON. MEMBERS: "Order."] Do I gather that an Opposition Member wishes to intervene?

Mr. Robert Hughes: Order.

Mr. Janman: What is the problem?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Has something gone wrong?

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): On a point or order, Mr. Speaker. I understood that the Chair, not Opposition Members, kept order in the House. Labour Members become more clown-like as the days go by.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman) please continue his speech?

Mr. Janman: I move from the question of employment to the subject of——

Mr. Robert Hughes: Order.

Mr. Janman: Does the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) wish to intervene? If not, perhaps he will remain silent.

Mr. Ray Hughes: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) was making a legitimate point of order, in that the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman) was speaking not from his place but in the aisle or alleyway between the Government Benches.

Mr. Speaker: It was not a point of order raised with me. Perhaps the hon. Member for Thurrock will now continue with his speech.

Mr. Janman: It is clear that the Labour party has moved into the alleyway of politics.

I come to a more recent event appertaining to the Bill, and that is the ballot that has been held as a result of the Government deciding to abolish the scheme. In the ballot, 67 per cent. of those entitled to vote voted for strike action, but 33 per cent.—one third of those entitled to vote—said no to strike action, or certainly did not say yes; they abstained on the question.

Why are Ron Todd and the Transport and General Workers Union refusing to give a breakdown of the figures port by port to the management of the individual ports? What do they have to hide? The answer is that, with a ratio such as I described, a number of ports did not vote to endorse strike action.

Even if the courts decide, or have decided—I am somewhat out of date on the recent legal decision—that the wording of the ballot paper gave a legal endorsement for a strike, for those individual ports without a majority vote for strike action within those ports, or within the employer organisations across them, there would be no legal criterion for strike action. *[Interruption.]* One cannot have a national ballot and say that one is in dispute with one's employer, or claim that a particular set of dockers are in dispute with their employer, if the majority of dockers working for that employer have voted against strike action.

Unless the TGWU is willing to give the figures, at least on an employer-by-employer, if not on a port-by-port, basis, one cannot with any certainty have a national strike and assume that in all instances there is majority support for strike action on an employer-by-employer basis. It is conceivable that those in many ports have said no to any suggestion that they are in dispute with their employer.

In fact, as we know, there is no dispute with any employer. The ballot, the charade through which the trade union movement is going, is totally political. Indeed, I quote a Mr. Kevin Hussey, a shop steward in the port of Tilbury:

> "Of course you've got to defy the anti-trade union laws. This is a political strike. We've explained that to Todd. Todd knows that, but in fact whether we like it or not, they've as one paper put it, body swerved round it. But sooner or later we are going to be tied up with it."

In other words, there are individuals working in some of our ports who, come what may, will try to initiate politically motivated strike action which is destined to harm the interests of the ports, the economy and the dockers they are supposed to represent.

Why does the Labour party support strike action to keep a scheme that they would not bring back if, God forbid, it forms the next Government? Why does it support strike action that would impede job creation? *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Oldham, West has said consistently that, if strike action were taken, his party would have no choice but to support it.

Why does the Labour party support strike action that will undermine the viability of 40 British ports? Why has it supported strike action to keep a scheme when, if anybody, with the exception of the hon. Member for Oldham, West, suggested applying it to any other major industry, they would be laughed out of court? People would not laugh the hon. Member for Oldham, West out of court, because they do not take his utterances seriously. It is interesting that in Committee he said:

> "I would expect a future Labour Government to extend those rights to other industries."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 27 April 1989; c. 67.]

The hon. Gentleman says that at a time when even the Soviet Union is beginning to understand that a Stalinist and planned approach to the economy and to industries within it is not an intelligent, forward-looking or sensible way to approach the running of one's economy or to catalyse wealth or wealth creation.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West, even in the new revisionist period of the Labour party, is saying that we should take what everybody with an iota of common sense agrees has been bad for the docks and impose it upon other industries. He has not said which industries or how many, but he would like to impose it across the British economy. That is the implication of his remarks.

The futile posturing of the Opposition is not worthy of a party that is supposed to be preparing for government. It will only encourage dockers to strike which will harm prospects for our ports, the country and most importantly for the dockers themselves. My message to my dockers is to keep working and help the port of Tilbury grasp its new opportunities and go from strength to strength. In doing that, they will have my full backing and I am sure they will have the full support of my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Government Front Bench.

9.43 pm

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): The hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman) spoke with the authentic voice of the Tory Back-Bench backwoods engine which is driving the Government to this extraordinary path. The carefully contrived early-day motions and the student japes over the years have been determined to pick a fight with Britain's dockers and finally to bring them down. The ideological cave dwellers, of whom the hon. Member for Thurrock is a splendid example, are doing this country a gross disservice. All the dissembling in the world from the Ministers about the reasons behind the legislation and the extraordinary way it has been introduced will not hide the truth from the country.

The Secretary of State affected to be greatly surprised that Opposition Members dwelt on the extraordinary and irregular way in which the issue has been brought before the House. I cannot believe that the Government are genuine in their puzzlement at that. The Bill was not mentioned in their manifesto or the Queen's Speech. A matter of months ago the Prime Minister said that the Government had no plans to introduce such a measure and only a few weeks before the White Paper was introduced, the Minister said that there were no plans to abolish the scheme. That was followed by a White Paper and, the next day, by the publication of the Bill. Either there was a lightning conversion by the Government to the Bill, or they were deceiving the House when they gave their answers on the previous occasions, solemn and otherwise, that I have mentioned. If the Government do not

understand why that is important to parliamentary democracy and to those who care about it, they are not fit to be a Government.

The Bill has been brought before us with unseemly haste and there has been an unseemly performance by Back Bench Conservative Members in the hours that I have spent listening to the debate today. They have carried out giggling, sneaky, public schoolboy japes, they have run around on the Back Benches whispering points to each other and have raced off to the Library to photocopy pieces of literature to pass among themselves.

Mr. Riddick: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Galloway: I will give way in a moment.

Conservative Back Bench Members have an unseemly and shabby desire to rubbish and eventually smash a section of the British work force that has served this country well. I represent many dockers because part of the port of Glasgow is in my constituency. In the past few weeks, I have spent much time in the company of dockers and their families. There are few less pleasant sights than to see well-upholstered, sleek and wealthy Conservative Members insulting a body of men who work hard for a living and who have done so for many centuries.

Mr. Riddick: It is a little rich for the hon. Gentleman to talk about the supposed misbehaviour of Conservative Members. Only 10 minutes ago, he and many of his hon. Friends were making a mountain out of a molehill about the fact that my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman) was simply wandering along the aisle. Labour Members even raised a point of order about it.

Mr. Galloway: I shall not stoop to answer that intervention——

Mr. Riddick: It is true.

Mr. Galloway: It was, sadly, up to the hon. Gentleman's usual standard.

There are few less pleasant or edifying sights than people who would not last a day working in Britain's docks maligning and sneering at the dockers of this country, describing them as dodgers, bobbers, welters, work shy, strike-happy, lazy, good-for-nothing men. How many Conservative Members could exchange their lounge suits for a docker's jacket? How many of them could exchange their briefcases for a docker's hook? I see that the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) is giggling. He is one of the most unseemly examples of all, and his grandfather is turning in his grave at his performance.

How many Conservative Members could live on a docker's wage? Some Conservative Members have said that dockers are well paid. That is rich coming from Members of Parliament who earn two, three or four times what a docker earns. It is little short of disgusting for Conservative Members with three, four, five or 10 directorships to malign dockers as they have tonight and on previous occasions.

It is about time that those giggling public schoolboys got down from their ivory towers and went among dock workers and their families. There is a fear—perhaps the more civilised Conservative Members think it is an ill-founded fear—that the spectre of the old days is once again stalking the streets in our dock areas. Of course, Conservative Members may know nothing about those old days because that is not a part of our history that they care to study.

In the old days, men underwent the indignity of queueing to catch the foreman's eye to get a day's work and a day's wages. I am talking about the old days when dockers fought each other outside the docks, so desperate were they for a day's work; the old days when the gaffer could go into a hostelry near the docks and find the gantry lined with whiskies for him so that he never had to buy a drink. Those whiskies had been put there by dockers who were desperate to win the favour of the man who gave them their daily bread. I am talking about the old days when matchboxes containing half-crowns were passed to the gaffers by desperate dockers who were looking for a day's work.

The Minister says that the employers have given assurances that those old days will not recur, but it is not true that they have given such assurances. What is true is that they have press-released that they have no intention of returning to casualisation. If they really were intent on giving assurances, they would sit down with the dockers' trade union tomorrow and sign assurances to guarantee that there would be no return to casualisation or to those bad old days.

I genuinely believe that the Government are seriously out of kilter with the developing public mood of the country. People understand that the Government are deliberately seeking a fight with the dockers. People understand that the Government have saved this up for a political rainy day and that this is that political rainy day. The summer of industrial discontent is already well under way. In all the by-elections, all the opinion polls and all the objective tests of public opinion, the Government can be seen to be losing their way rapidly. That is why they have decided that this is the time to pick a fight with the dockers.

Some Conservative Members think that the dockers are a pushover. In the past few weeks I have spent some time taking the pulse of the determination of the dock workers in this country. If there is a dock strike—heaven knows, the dockers do not want it and the Labour party does not want it, not the brand new, policy review Labour party, although the Government and their backwoodsmen clearly do want it—the Government had better not rely on any lack of firmness or resolve on the part of the dockers to defend the rights that they have won over many decades of struggle.

Neither should the Government underestimate the public sympathy that the dockers will be able to muster, contrary to what happened in industrial disputes in previous years. The dockers are a relatively small group of hard-working and patriotic men who have a strong sense of the dignity of labour——

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: What about ghosting and bobbing?

Mr. Galloway: The hon. Gentleman refers to ghosting and bobbing, but he is particularly well-upholstered. I should like to see him on a quayside with a docker's hook in his hand because he would not last half a day, never mind a day.

Mr. Bennett *rose*——

Mr. Galloway: I am finishing my speech now, so I shall not give way.

[Mr. Galloway]

The dockers are a group of hard-working, patriotic men with a strong sense of community, whose work the public will quickly come to value—especially if there is an industrial dispute—and which they will evaluate rather more highly than they do the mob of Conservative Back Benchers and Ministers who think that they are doing a wonderful thing in dishing the dockers this evening.

9.58 pm

Mr. Bellingham: We have heard some colourful language and perhaps even some impressive rhetoric, but when the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) talks about cave dwellers, his is forgetting that the neolithic tendency is on his Benches, from which we have not heard a single word about expansion, about growth or about the enhanced prospects of many dockers in many ports. We have not heard a single word about some of the east coast ports, which are now scheme ports, but which will go from strength to strength. The neolithic tendency and the cave dwellers are to be found on the Opposition side of the Chamber. If there was a Martian in the Gallery who had had the chance to look at the facts of the case and to hear the speeches made by Conservative and by Opposition Members, that Martian would be dumbfounded and thunderstruck by the attitude of Opposition Members.

I agree with the hon. Member for Hillhead on one point, and that is that dockers are a noble band of people. I have the highest possible regard for the dockers in my constituency. However, many have said to me that, in their hearts, they knew that the scheme could not continue.

I will confine most of my remarks to my experiences in King's Lynn. King's Lynn was once one of the foremost ports in the land. In the 16th century, it was ranked No. 2 in the country. It has obviously gone well down the chart. In 1970, there were 130 registered dock workers in King's Lynn, and there are now only 52. Their average age is well over 50. I do not believe that there has been an appointment for nearly 25 years.

There is a tremendous amount of envy and resentment against registered dockers among other employees within the port community. Of course there is friendship, but their privileges are resented. When he came to my constituency, the Minister heard that management, middle management and many employees in the docks felt that the scheme had to go, and that, if King's Lynn is to compete against non-scheme ports in East Anglia and against Sutton Bridge, Fosdyke and a host of other non-scheme ports, it must have greater flexibility, move with the times, develop its hinterland, and go forwards rather than backwards.

Every time I have been to the docks, I have had it in the neck time and again about when the Government will do something about the scheme. In spite of the scheme and the fact that King's Lynn has not been able to retain its competitive edge in so many ways, it has continued to increase cargoes and tonnages. It has gone from strength to strength. I wonder what the future will hold for King's Lynn when the Bill is on the statute book.

During the past six months, there have been several beneficial announcements by the Government. The first was the electrification of the railway line from Cambridge to King's Lynn, with work commencing in August—a major investment in railways.

Mr. Bermingham: Before the hon. Gentleman concludes his remarks about King's Lynn dockers, will he assure me on one small point? Many dockers are aged 50-plus. Can he guarantee that they will receive other work in the port facilities at King's Lynn? Does he think that £35,000 maximum compensation for somebody aged 55 who may never work again is fair or adequate?

Mr. Bellingham: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising that point. The chances of any dockers in King's Lynn losing their jobs are slim. As the hon. Member for Hillhead pointed out, only two people in King's Lynn docks earn more than registered dockers. The average wages of those dockers are only a little less than what hon. Members earn. That is all very well, but the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) must understand ther resentment and envy that builds up. He must understand also that many dockers have savings. A docker came to me the other day and asked for assistance in a property development. He was developing three flats in King's Lynn. I wished him well. I noted that he had done well and saved money. Good luck to him. He also said that, in his heart of hearts, he knew that the scheme could not continue.

As I was saying, one of the beneficial points for King's Lynn was the Secretary of State for Transport's recent announcement of the electrificiation of the railway from Cambridge to King's Lynn. Only 10 days ago, there was an announcement of a massive boost to communications and building in East Anglia. For the first time, the Department of Transport has realised the need for two strategic dual carriageway links into Norfolk—the A47 and the A11. There will also be considerable dualling of the A17 and A10. If, at last, Norfolk is to be recognised as an expanding area that will retain its competitive edge and be able to compete after 1992, it must have good communications. It is a welcome feature that the docks and port in my constituency will benefit greatly from these improvements in communications.

The Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill is also welcome because, inter alia, it allows for £4 million to be spent on a new riverside berth in King's Lynn. One of the problems at King's Lynn at present is that it is an old dock and the main facilities are contained by sluice gates. It is restricted in the size and length of vessel that it can take. The new riverside berth will allow it to take much longer and bigger vessels, which obviously will allow it to compete more successfully. However, last night a number of Opposition Members—those on the payroll vote and in the pay of the National Union of Mineworkers—very sadly decided to do all they possibly could to sabotage that Bill, which will create a large number of jobs in Immingham, Port Talbot and King's Lynn.

Where are those same hon. Members tonight? We did not hear much last night about their consideration for or care about dockers and their jobs. All we heard was how they wanted to destroy a £40 million investment by Associated British Ports. Incidentally, ABP had to spend getting on for £500,000 in legal fees to surmount the archaic private Bill procedures in the House, and then, last night, 50-odd Opposition Members went out of their way to destroy that Bill. It was a shameful evening. It is

especially shameful because those same Opposition Members are not here tonight when we are discussing a Bill and the tabled amendments, which perhaps would have assisted dockers and given them more money. Those Opposition Members are nowhere to be seen. That shows the sheer hyprocrisy of some Opposition Members. The hon. Member for Hillhead talked about cave dwellers. Those Opposition Members who came to the House to try to destroy a Bill, which means investment and more opportunities for dockers, and especially dockers in my constituency, are the real cave dwellers.

I strongly believe that there are fortunes facing my constituency, because of the four key pillars that I have mentioned: railway electrification; improvements in roads, which give a massive boost to road communications, with millions of pounds being spent on roads to Norfolk; the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill, which means a massive new investment in King's Lynn; and, most crucially, this Bill, which will allow King's Lynn docks to move forward and to compete with the non-scheme ports. That is what people to whom I have been speaking have been asking for time and time again.

When Opposition Members talk in terms of bringing back some form of structure that will recreate a dock labour mark 2 scheme, all I can say is that, if they come to my constituency during the next election and peddle such views, they will be treated with complete contempt by all the people who will benefit from the Bill—those who will get jobs and increased prospects. If they come to my constituency to peddle such views, it will be a millstone around their necks that they will regret. That is why I support the Third Reading.

10.10 pm

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): Earlier this evening the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman) was telling us about the development at Tilbury. He told us that we should be concerned about the facts to do with Tilbury. He went on to tell us that, since the announcement of the Bill, a particular company had expressed an interest in investing.

Mr. Tony Banks: Arthur Daley Ltd.

Ms. Primarolo: Yes, Arthur Daley Ltd.

I have copies of the "Tilbury News", which is the port of Tilbury's official newsletter. They contain reports about Tilbury before the proposals for this legislation. Along with the employers, the Government have perpetuated many myths and misrepresentations about what was happening in our ports prior to the White Paper and this Bill. I want to add a few more facts about Tilbury to those which the hon. Member for Thurrock chose to give us.

The first Tilbury Port newsletter states that Tilbury's forest products facilities are being extended by an investment of £2·5 million for an expansion scheme which will bring the total investment in that port this year to £8 million. However, we have been told that scheme ports are starved of investment.

The newsletter refers to the growth in grain importation and refers to Tilbury's grain terminal. It states that Tilbury has improved its ranking in the 1987-88 marketing year for wheat exports from sixth to third position with an increased market share from 6·5 per cent. to 10·4 per cent. It managed that despite the decrease in tonnage due to the poor United Kingdom harvest. Immingham is also a market leader, with 24 per cent., followed closely by Southampton at 17·5 per cent. Those two ports have also increased their market share.

All three ports all are scheme ports. They are expanding and developing in investment and tonnage and they are improving their market positions in this country in competing with non-scheme ports. The newsletter also gives details of a new timber terminal at Newport in south Wales which is a multi-million-pound development.

The operations manager at Tilbury has said:

"We have some super truck drivers, excellent supervisory staff, plenty of people who work above and beyond the call of duty and, geographically, we couldn't be better placed. The potential is tremendous."

He was talking about dockers in the dock labour scheme. That does not develop the argument or prove the facts referred to by the hon. Member for Thurrock.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Primarolo: No, I will not give way. Many hon. Members want to speak and I am trying to make a reasonably short contribution. If the hon. Gentleman wants to speak, he must take his turn.

Turning to the dock labour scheme——

Mr. Bennett: Who wrote the hon. Lady's speech?

Ms. Primarolo: Actually, I am literate and I can write my own speeches.

This Bill has been hallmarked by confrontation and by the Government's undemocratic behaviour. The White Paper was followed immediately by this Bill. It is clear that there has been collusion between the National Association of Port Employers, which has been clear and single-minded in its campaign to abolish the dock labour scheme, and the Government. They have combined to achieve that end. The employers' campaign has been pursued with the clear objective of provoking a national dock strike. It has done that by ending the scheme's severence pay to dock workers, through a series of provocative violations of the scheme and preparing secret plans for breaking a national strike. They are preparing to use the courts to declare the strike illegal. I do not believe that the Government's move to abolish the national dock labour scheme can be separated from the employers' campaign.

The national dock labour scheme has been massively misrepresented in the media, by employers and by the Government. The employers have sought to project themselves as helpless victims with their hands tied behind their backs. The White Paper said that the scheme was an unfair monopoly. In fact, the scheme is run by a board on which employers and unions are equally represented and was established to defend workers against the blue-eyed system of casual labour. That was an honourable objective for such a scheme.

The scheme is accused of making jobs for life and rendering the employers weak and powerless. It is truly incredible that the Government expect us to believe that the port employers are meek, shaking in their shoes, powerless and unable to run their business. Consideration of reports on the development and expansion of our ports shows that not to be the case.

Dockers can be sacked for misconduct and not doing their jobs properly. In 15 years, the national work force within the scheme has reduced by 47,000. Dockers have a guaranteed minimum daily wage. What is wrong with that? Doctors do not stop being paid if they have no

[Ms. Primarolo]

patients to see one day. Jounalists do not stop getting paid if their story is not published one day. Hon. Members do not stop getting paid if they are not literally resident in this Chamber for the entire period of the debates.

Mr. Devlin *rose*——

Ms. Primarolo: No, as I have already explained, I shall not give way.

Most employees know that if they turn up for work they will get paid. Many hon. Members, particularly Conservative Members, are retained as parliamentary advisers for perhaps giving advice, and it ill behoves people to declare that others are not entitled to receive a daily minimum wage.

Much has been made of the standby agreements. Employers preferred that arrangement to providing proper training and job security for dockers. Now they use the very mechanism which they put into place to blame the unions for what they call the costly, restrictive practices.

Employers say that the scheme has driven port investment elsewhere. In fact, major investments have been announced for scheme ports such as Southampton, Bristol and London.

Bristol is a scheme port. I can give details of the investment agreed while the dock labour scheme was still unthreatened because it was not listed in the Queen's Speech. There has been a £25 million commitment for investment—not a promise or indication of interest, but a legal commitment—by Redland Plaster Board. There has been a £6 million investment by Carrefour Cement and a £5 million investment committed by a scrap metal dealer. The city council is committed to a £47 million programme of investment. Like many other scheme ports, Bristol is hardly starved of investment.

The growth of non-scheme ports on the east coast reflects, among other things, the shift in trade to Europe. The need to become competitive and ready for the single market agreement in 1992 is another reason given for abolishing the scheme. However, as has already been stated, many European ports have job security arrangements which are similar to the dock labour scheme. In addition, they have the advantage of being regarded as part of the basic national infrastructure and are receiving heavy Government subsidies. According to the House of Commons reference sheet, the European ports receive approximately £200 million a year in subsidy. That is hardly a small figure.

Employers are promising not to reintroduce casual labour, but in an industry in which traffic constantly fluctuates their clear objective is to reduce the labour force to a core and employ the remainder on a casual basis. That is the reason for all the fears and representations detailed by other speakers.

In an industry in which all the economic pressures are towards casualisation, the dock labour scheme is, quite properly, a guarantee of job security. It is portrayed as an anachronism from the 1940s, but it is a necessary defence for dock workers. Dock workers are highly skilled. Part of their job involves taking care not to get in the way of cargo as it is being moved around. *[Laughter.]* Hon. Members may laugh, but—like others who have spoken—I would not like to work on a dock. Skilled workers are needed to work with massive machinery and cope with moving large quantities of cargo if fatalities are to be prevented.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Artful dodgers.

Ms. Primarolo: It is not a question of artful dodgers; I am talking about serious employment practices.

Mr. Tony Banks: The hon. Gentleman is out of order. He is outside the Bar of the House.

Ms. Primarolo: We want people to work in safe environments. Why has this legislation suddenly been rushed through without consultation, making sweeping changes and challenging people's livelihoods and their very lives? I believe that it is a cynical attempt to divert public opinion from the Government's problems—the National Health Service review, the poll tax, the balance of payments crisis, ever-rising interest rates and the complex problems developing in the housing market. If the scheme needs amending, why has that not been negotiated between the employers and the unions? Why is it necessary to use such a sledgehammer to crack such a small nut?

The dock labour scheme is about employment rights, not about providing anachronistic protection for employers. It ill behoves any hon. Member to pass judgment and make hasty statements about circumstances of which they have no experience and no real knowledge. I ask them to look at what is going on in the scheme ports —to move away from the business interests that they seek to represent in the House, and to make a clear decision in favour of the dock industry's workers and its future.

10.23 pm

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): The special pleading by the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) was not very convincing. I have two interests in the debate. In the 1979 general election, I was the Conservative candidate for the Thurrock constituency, which I nursed for some three years, and during that time I got to know Tilbury docks and the Port of London Authority quite well; I am delighted that that constituency is now represented by my hon. Friend the present Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman).

I must tell the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) that his sense of trends is somewhat awry. In 1974 the Labour party had a 19,000 majority in Thurrock; by 1979 it had fallen to 6,000, and the 1983 Labour majority of 1,000 was turned into a Conservative majority of 1,000 in the last general election. Contrary to the hon. Gentleman's view, the trends suggest not only that my hon. Friend will not be defeated, but that he will increase his majority substantially.

The other reason for my interest in the debate is that I represent part of the heartland of England. My hon. Friend the Member for Solihull (Mr. Taylor) and I both have a considerable interest in ensuring that companies in our constituencies can export their goods and get them to market without added costs being imposed as a result of restrictive practices such as the dock labour scheme. So while there are not many dockers in north Oxfordshire, many of the people in that area depend on the competitive viability of docks and dock schemes for their own economic success.

I listened with interest to the speeches of Opposition Members, who were all heavy on rhetoric, but few of them

sought to defend the scheme. That is hardly surprising, because it is indefensible. It is riddled with anomalies and has no social justification in modern industrial relations. It has also destroyed jobs.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes), who was so juvenile and derisory about the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock and who is no longer in the Chamber, could have taken the opportunity presented by the debate to explain why the fish handling company in Aberdeen recently lost 100 jobs because it was no longer able to function as a result of the restrictions and restraints that the scheme imposed on it. It is scandalous and tragic that what was otherwise a viable company was forced into receivership by the straitjacket of the dock labour scheme.

The scheme increases costs, hinders our country's competitive position, and distorts trading relations. It has not created more trade or additional jobs but has proved to be a monstrous system of restrictive practices that produced no benefits, no improvements in industrial relations and no enhancement of job security. The scheme led to substantial industrial unrest, with hundreds of days lost in strikes over its period of operation. The scheme fails by any criteria. I defy any Opposition Member to prove that it has encouraged employment. All the evidence is that it destroyed jobs. It has not increased the prosperity of scheme ports. and I defy any Opposition Member to pretend that it has.

Mr. Loyden: The hon. Gentleman makes rash statements that are not borne out by the facts. Although Conservative Members jibe at the port of Liverpool, it operates the best and most successful freeport in the country. It also provides for trading by small businesses and has brought about the transformation of the docks by attracting building investment. It is no use the hon. Gentleman arguing that the scheme is a disincentive. If he will visit that port, he will convince himself otherwise.

Mr. Baldry: It is a pity that the hon. Gentleman was not present at last night's debate on inner cities so that he could have given that glowing testimonial to the freeport status in Liverpool. However, that success has nothing to do with the dock labour scheme but owes much to the Government's initiatives in promoting inner cities.When we next discuss inner cities I hope that the hon. Gentleman will take that opportunity to congratulate my right hon. and hon. Friends from the Department of Trade and Industry on their initiatives in promoting industry in Liverpool.

Contrary to the suggestion made by the hon. Member for Bristol, South all attempts to bring about changes to the dock labour scheme, or even to negotiate changes, have been frustrated by the Transport and General Workers Union and thwarted by individual dock labour boards, on which the trade unions effectively have a a veto.

The scheme has led to some of the worst restrictive practices in British industry. There has been ghosting, bobbing and massive overmanning. I hope that every Conservative candidate in the European Parliamentary elections will read the speech of the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). The hon. Gentleman presented the scheme as an example of industrial democracy and worker participation. If industrial democracy and worker participation, a la Vredeling, the fourth directive and other measures of which we hear from time to time from the European Commission, are now to be synonymous with the scheme, it is little wonder that there are many who are concerned to ensure that the social charter is kept in perspective and under control.

The scheme and the attendant restrictive practices have led to substantially increased costs, which amount to about 20 per cent. They have led to a loss of business from scheme ports to non-scheme ports and from British ports to ports elsewhere in Europe.

It is not surprising that the Bill is passing through the House. It is surprising only that it has taken so long for a Bill of this sort to appear before the House. When I was the parliamentary candidate for Thurrock, way back in 1979, I saw the constant haemorrhaging of work from the port of London to ports on the mainland of Europe.

The loss of business from the scheme ports is clearly evidenced by the rise of the non-scheme ports such as Felixstowe. I hope that every member of the Transport and General Workers Union and other unions in ports such as Felixstowe will have his attention drawn to the speech of the hon. Member for Oldham, West. Each Member must draw his own inference from it. I understood the hon. Gentleman to suggest that every worker who is not a docker in a scheme port is a blackleg worker. I hope that dockers in non-scheme ports will take that on board. It would seem that the Labour party is interested only in supporting an outdated scheme, whatever the cost.

The Labour party's only defence is that in taking that stance it is the only bulwark and defence against casualisation. It may not have noticed that the world has moved on considerably since the mid and late 1940s. Employers need a steady labour force. Has any Opposition Member suggested tonight that in non-scheme ports there is casualisation and that dockers are treated badly, or not well, by their employers? Of course not. Dock work is skilled work and employers need a skilled and steady labour force. They will wish to maintain that labour force and continue to train it after the end of the scheme. That is the attitude of employers in the present non-scheme ports.

The United Kingdom, along with every country in Europe, faces the challenge of 1992 and the single market. Over the past couple of weeks we have seen something of the supposedly new face of the Labour party. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) was rather more realistic about that when he seemed to suggest that that had rather more to do with packaging than with substance. The suggestion is that the Labour party now wishes Britain to take advantage of the opportunities that the single market of 1992 might present. How does it expect Britain to do so—our companies to prosper and our businesses to trade at a competitive advantage—if we continue to shackle ourselves by restrictive, outdated, anomalous and historic relics of a byegone age, such as the dock labour scheme? It will be an indictment of the Labour party that it has sought so resolutely to defend the indefensible.

The sooner the dock labour scheme is scrapped and all our ports are able to compete freely and properly, unshackled by the dock labour scheme, the better it will be for the heartland of England and for companies and firms in constituencies such as mine. We shall be able to maximise our competitive advantages and go forward. I hope that the Bill will become law as soon as possible.

10.34 pm

Mr. Tony Banks: The hon. Member for the well-known port of Banbury who has just spoken made a number of very inaccurate statements about the profitability of scheme ports. Like many other Conservative Members who have made similar statements—their only concern is to get rid of the dock labour scheme; they know very little about it, but it smacks of regulation and of anything else that prevents employers from doing what they will with their work force—he got his facts very badly wrong.

I remind the hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) that the largest employer in the scheme ports is Associated British Ports. It owns Ayr, Barrow, Barry, Cardiff, Fleetwood, Garston, Goole, Grimsby, Hull, Immingham, King's Lynn, Lowestoft, Newport, Plymouth, Port Talbot, Silloth, Southampton, Swansea, Troon and the non-scheme ports of Colchester and Teignmouth. Associated British Ports is a growing and profitable company. It was privatised through the sale of 51 per cent. of its shares in February 1983. It reported profits of no less than £38 million in 1987, with ports contributing £19 million to those profits compared with £26 million in 1986 —a 46 per cent. increase. In the first half of 1988, the company's profits rose by a further 59 per cent., to £21 million, the ports contributing £11 million.

The scheme ports have been doing so well that the chairman of Associated British Ports, Sir Keith Stuart, earned £97,000 in 1987, an increase of 23 per cent. on 1986. When there is talk about dockers earning large amounts of money, I should like to know how many dockers got a 23 per cent. increase in 1987 compared with 1986.

If the hon. Gentleman wants more evidence about the efficiency and profitability of the scheme ports, I suggest that he should listen not to me—he rarely does—but to what has been said by Ministers. An excellent reference paper, prepared by the Library, shows that, in the Consolidated Fund Bill debate on 10 March 1988, the Under-Secretary of State said:

> "Despite the constraints, many scheme ports are profitable and, as I have already suggested, the industry has adjusted and responded successfully to enormous technological changes over the years, and that could not have been achieved without effective management."—[*Official Report*, 10 March 1988; Vol. 129, c. 599.]

Where, therefore, is the argument about managers not being able to manage? The facts are all here. We argue from the facts. Conservative Members argue from the depths of their ignorance and prejudice against the scheme. The political decision to abolish the dock labour scheme was sudden and traumatic. It was certainly taken without consultation and it was outside the normal parliamentary procedure.

If the scheme is so bad, why has it survived for 40 years? Conservative Members say that the Opposition are not prepared to defend it. We have defended it all the way through. We defended it in Committee where we made quite plain the benefits that it brought to the industry, employers and dockers in terms of standards of welfare, training and pay and conditions generally. That is why Conservative Members dislike the scheme so much. It does a lot of good for dockers and the industry generally, so they want all forms of regulation to be abolished. That is their political objective. Why are they not honest and straightforward about it? Why do they not say, "That's why we don't like the scheme"? Instead of that, they denigrate it all the time.

Not one word was said in Committee by any Minister about anything in the dock labour scheme being decent, despite the fact that it has survived for 40 years, including 10 years of Conservative Government since 1979. If the scheme was so bad, why did the Government do nothing about it before this? They had plenty of opportunities to do so. They did not say in their election manifestos of 1979, 1983 and 1987 that they intended to do away with the scheme. Of course they did not. Now we have this unseemly rush to get the Bill through and get the scheme abolished. It is deliberate and provocative. That is all I can say about Government action.

I know what has been going on. I keep my eyes and ears open around this place. I have seen the lunchtime crowds standing by the Members' entrance, waiting for taxis. I have heard the exchanges—"Where are you going? I am going to such and such a place." I know that the employers have been laying on some very fancy, expensive lunches. The hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman) is not here at the moment, but I said it to him enough times in Committee for him to know what I will say. He has been very much in the van, making sure that people were feted with good food and excellent wine by the employers.

Mr. Bennett *rose*——

Mr. Banks: I will not give way because the Government have guillotined the Bill. Nothing that the hon. Gentleman says could frighten or intimidate me, as he knows. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman says that he wants to assist me, rather like the rope supporting a hanging man. I can do without that assistance.

Mr. Bennett: I have a list.

Mr. Banks: He has a list. No doubt he has a list of all the people who were going off for lunch——

Mr. Bennett: It is a list of Labour Members.

Mr. Banks: In Committee, the hon. Gentleman produced a letter allegedly written by Ron Todd, so I will not trust his list any more than I trusted some of the so-called facts that he put before the Committee.

Mr. Bennett: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think that the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) should be given an opportunity to defend himself, because he was one of the recipients of these lunches.

Mr. Banks: If that was a point or order, it can be dealt with by my hon. Friend when he speaks. *[Interruption.]* No. He is thinking deeply and hoping that, through a process of political osmosis, the information will seep through the Bench into his brain. No doubt he will be able to deal with the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) when he makes his contribution.

We know that the Government want a strike. We have said so all along. When this came up originally, we shouted out that the Government wanted a strike, that they needed a strike and that they were engineering a strike. We said that we did not want a strike. When my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) said during his contribution that we do not want a strike, the hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) shouted, "We do." We challenged him at that very moment but he did not withdraw the comment, and he has not done so since.

There has been a conspiracy between the employers and a conspiracy between the Government and the employers.

Messenger boys have been sent backwards and forwards until the employers were able to put the steel into No. 10 by saying, "Yes, we are all ready to go, right hon. Lady." That is what happened. Conservative Members know that to be fact. They want a strike for a variety of economic and social reasons.

The economy is in tatters and it would be useful to the statistics-gathering of the Government if they could write out the amount of imports that are flooding into the country, causing such an enormous balance of payments deficit on manufactured goods. It would take a while for that statistic to even itself out when the dispute ended. That is why they want a dispute. They want to use it in a Machiavellian way to divert the attention of the population. They desperately need a strike.

If the Government force the dockers into a strike, I can assure the Secretary of State that we will be standing with the dockers because we know that a strike is wanted not by the dockers or by the unions, but only by the Government. If the Government force a strike on the dockers, we will stand shoulder to shoulder with them.

At various times in Committee and during the latter stages of the Bill, Ministers have said that plenty of assurances have been given by employers that there will be no return to casualisation. Frankly, we do not believe that. I would rather accept a steak and kidney pie from Dr. Crippen than an assurance from the Secretary of State. If the Secretary of State believes that he is telling the truth, let him sit down with the union and the employers and give the union those assurances in writing. That is a reasonable suggestion, because, as I have said, the Secretary of State needs to prove beyond reasonable doubt that the jobs that he promised will be generated when the scheme is abolished and that there will be no casualisation. Those assurances need to be translated into something which we can get hold of and to which we can hold the Secretary of State if they are not realised.

Having watched the way in which the conspiracy has worked and the way in which a cowboy charter for cowboy employers carried by a cowboy Government has rapidly moved towards the statute book, if there is a strike, I know that all my colleagues will stand proudly, shoulder to shoulder with the dockers in a strike which the dockers did not seek and do not want, and which the Government clearly want.

10.46 pm

Mr. David Davis: Having listened to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), I am reminded of the legend of the day before the battle of Waterloo when the Duke of Wellington had to deal with a trooper who had been caught looting, an offence which carried a capital punishment. When he spoke to the trooper, the trooper put up such a good defence that the Duke of Wellington said, "This man knows how to defend the indefensible", and he made him a sergeant.

Today, the Labour party has been trying to defend the indefensible and the hon. Member for Newham, North-West might just aspire to becoming a lance-corporal.

Mr. Tony Banks: I should be so lucky, dearie.

Mr. Davis: The hon. Gentleman should be so lucky.

The issues raised on Second Reading, in Committee and today, on Report, are singular in the extent to which they have not been addressed by the Labour party; we talk about disgraceful practices in the docks and we receive no response. We talk about bobbing and welting and all we get is bobbing and weaving from the Opposition; we talk about ghosting and we get gobbledegook; we talk about discipline and we get disingenuousness. The Opposition have not addressed the issues that we raised. They have put themselves in such a difficult position that they have contradicted themselves on the same day. Today they talked themselves into a corner on training. They talked about the dock labour scheme as a bastion of good training, yet not so long ago the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) was saying that lack of training had caused ghosting. There have been similar inconsistencies throughout their arguments.

It is not quite true that the Opposition entirely ignored the argument. To some extent they tried to imply that bad practices in the docks were rare, yet they never seriously addressed that argument because in one afternoon I was able to find 27 examples of bad practice in seven ports. They have not addressed the impact of that bad practice on costs, reliability and the standard of service in the ports, and as a result they have never properly addressed the impact of those bad practices on jobs in the ports and in the hinterland around the ports.

I am not surprised that the Opposition do not accept the findings of an independent consultancy report that revealed that the abolition of the scheme would create 50,000 jobs. I understand that they would view that with some scepticism. I had an exchange with the hon. Member for Oldham, West on the matter on Second Reading. I, too viewed the report with some scepticism, and on closer examination of it discovered that the effects of 1992 had been left out completely, so it would be more accurate to forecast that not 50,000 but 100,000 jobs would be created by the abolition of the scheme.

Nor would I expect Opposition Members to listen to me. But I would expect the hon. Member for Newham, North-West to read *Tribune*, which wrote:

> "It is common knowledge in the shipping industry and among many registered dock workers that the dock work scheme, as applied in many excellent ports, was hastening their decline to the benefit of non-scheme ports. This has not helped the registered dock workers. For example, Transport and General Workers' Union members in non-scheme ports around Humberside are able year after year to earn much bigger wage packets than their local comrades in the scheme. Growing tonnages and growing incomes go to the smaller non-scheme ports."

It went on to refer to the lack of innovation in the Labour party on this issue. But perhaps Labour Members do not believe *Tribune*. Let them look with their own eyes at the evidence of what has happened to Aberdeen or Grimsby fishing ports. I note that the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) is not here today, and I am not surprised.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: He has bobbed off.

Mr. Davis: Bobbed off, exactly.

We have argued about geography and have been told that all the problems are due to changing patterns of trade, although Labour Members ignore the fact that Ipswich and Felixstowe are next door to one another and that the non-scheme tiny wharves on the tributaries of the Humber, in some of the most difficult places with all the disadvantages of geography, are now taking on more business than is the perfectly placed scheme port of Hull, representing a growth for those ports of from 15 to 21 per cent. of Humber traffic in five years.

Nor do we expect Labour Members to look at ports that have lost business, not just to non-scheme ports—because it could be argued that that was due to a redistribution in British employment—but to ports abroad. Ipswich, Grangemouth, Hull and others have lost business abroad, a subject to which I shall return.

Labour Members talk about themselves as coming from the party of the poor and the underprivileged. We do not expect them to worry about the fact that 100,000 jobs —not 9,000 privileges—hang on this decision. As the hon. Member for Newham, North-West said—and I agree with him—this scheme has been around for 40 years. When it was created, there was a good reason for it. It was designed to deal with the social injustices and economic inefficiencies of the casual system.

I accept all of that, and in Committee I was impressed, if not by the argument then by the passion and commitment of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden), who has a family tradition of knowing quite bitterly about these matters for many years. The scheme was created out of the fear of casualism, and that fear has been carried down through families. But it was not created with the intention of developing it into what it is today. It is interesting to look back to the speeches that were made at the time, for example, by Ernest Bevin; and the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), who is in his place, will no doubt recall them.

I have a soft spot for Ernest Bevin, in view of what was said by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway), who is not in his place, about public schoolboys, because my school is named the Ernest Bevin comprehensive.

Mr. Tony Banks: A very good school.

Mr. Davis: It is indeed, as I hope I am demonstrating.

Ernest Bevin made some impassioned pleas, in the House and before royal commissions, about how the docks should be organised. He said much with which I would agree, especially when he said, in effect, replying to questions about what might happen, "I no more support the idea of people being paid for doing nothing if they are

employees than I do if they are employers and capitalists." He would today look with concern at what we have created in the dock labour scheme.

The fear of casualism should disappear for two reasons. First, it should go because—the arguments have been deployed—of the capital intensity of the modern port and the type of work undertaken by the modern dock worker. The hon. Member for Garston made that point earlier today, and I thank him for doing so.

There is another reason. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West conjured up images, out of a book, of the old days of the casual system. We have talked about the acceptability or otherwise of 6 per cent. casualism, but the people in that 6 per cent. are not suffering the casualism that people think about when they talk about the history of the scheme. It is different from what people fear.

As hon. Members know, I have been antagonistic towards the scheme, but I accept that originally it was well intentioned. Therefore, how has it done so much damage? The answer is long and complex, but the key point is that it broke the link between the interests of the individual worker and the prosperity of the company for which he worked. It rendered that link unviable——

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Inoperative.

Mr. Davis: That is a much better word. It sounds like something said by President Reagan or even President Nixon.

Mr. Bennett: President Bennett.

Mr. Davis: Yes.

There is another aspect which Opposition Members talked about at some length and with a great deal of passion. In some ways, their argument was plausible. It is worth addressing the arguments about joint consultation because it sounds a good idea. I proposed to a Conservative party conference in 1973 that we should pass laws to enable worker participation, and I am still here.

Mr. Bennett: Just.

Mr. Davis: Yes, but perhaps that is a measure of something.

Mr. Tony Banks: It is not a job for life.

Mr. Davis: That is certainly true.

It is worth examining how joint consultation has gone wrong in the docks. We have heard many arguments about an inordinately high proportion of people who have been dismissed for disciplinary reasons being subsequently reinstated by the local or national dock labour board. There was an argument that perhaps they were all innocent, but we dealt with that by pointing out that some of them had served time in prison for criminal offences which related directly to their work.

We must ask how that comes about in a reasonable system. The problem is kicked up to the National Dock Labour Board which consists essentially of half union and half management representation. That means that the union has the ability to block a decision but not to change it. What happens then? Anybody who has been dismissed for a disciplinary offence is put on the temporarily unattached register and will receive fall-back pay of up to £200 a week. He will stay on the TUR until a decision is reached or until somebody has to pay him £25,000 to leave. That is what is meant by a job for life in this context. That is not how I think joint consultation should work, but that is what happens in the dock labour scheme.

Another example is that of dock work definition. There have been many arguments about that issue as new business comes into the ports. I can cite examples in Ipswich, Grangemouth, Hull and so on. In the port of Ipswich there was some sea-dredged gravel to be handled. All that had to be done in the docks was for a button to be pressed on the bridge which led to automatic unloading. That was it. Yet the dockers of Ipswich insisted that that was their work. The matter went up to the National Dock Labour Board and stayed there. It was never solved. The result was that the person who was going to bring that work to Ipswich lost patience and went elsewhere. The same happened at Grangemouth and a number of other ports. That is how a perfectly plausible, perhaps Christian-sounding idea became a destroyer of jobs and a destroyer of discipline.

We cannot afford such a scheme in our ports today. We are an island, so our entire industry depends on our ports. It is right for my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) to speak in this debate because he has as much interest as we have in the matter. The issues are our ability to compete and jobs. Much has been made in this debate, and previously, about the fact that dock labour schemes exist in other countries. But international competitiveness has got to them too. Australia, New Zealand, Italy and Spain are all removing their dock labour schemes, and France is considering doing so at the moment and studying our experience. Those countries know that these schemes destroy jobs.

The Labour party's attitude—and I admit that there are many hon. Members who are impassioned and convinced of their case—has, in general, been irresponsible and dangerous. The Labour party has learnt nothing in the past 10 years. It is ever generous with other people's money, ever defensive of the vocal vested interest over the public interest and always supports the plausible over the practical. Labour's policy review this week demonstrates that its new maxim is that politics is the art of the plausible. I am afraid that Labour Members are not plausible enough tonight.

11.1 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: Several hon. Members have already asked questions about the status of the Bill, which the Government should answer in this debate. I believe that the Bill is necessary and that to phase the scheme out and to create a competitive system, in which all ports can operate on an equal footing, is desirable. However, I am puzzled about the way in which the change has happened.

The Government have, after all, been in office for 10 years. There have been suggestions tonight that there has been a sustained conspiracy between the Government and the port employers and that the abolition of the scheme was planned in advance. The way in which it happened does not square with that. John Turner, for example, the general manager of the Aberdeen harbour board, has been trying to persuade the Government to abolish the scheme for years and the Government told him to go away. It seems that the Government had no intention of removing the dock labour scheme, as has been claimed by those who are vigorously defending it up to the last minute, who

[Mr. Malcolm Bruce]

suggest that the scheme should continue and who claim that it was no great obstacle to progress for the scheme ports.

Now we hear a variety of arguments being trotted out —many of which I agree with—and evidence has been drawn up to suggest why the scheme should be changed. Yet until three months ago the Government were denying that evidence and saying that it was unnecessary, untrue and irrelevant. They told harbour board managers to go away and cope with the situation as it was because the Government were not going to change it. What happened? Suddenly, after 10 years, the Secretary of State for Employment came to the House, published a White Paper that day and a Bill the following day and forced the Bill through rapidly, with a guillotine. He is now anxious to get it on to the statute book.

Unlike Labour Members, I will not speculate about the reason for that change. I want to hear from the Government the explanation about what happened and what were the factors involved because the British public are also entitled to know why there was such a dramatic change.

The timing was certainly interesting. One argument that I have heard was that until that point the Government had felt that the scheme could wither on the vine because the number of workers had reduced to fewer than 10,000 and many arrangements being made in individual ports that were moderating and modifying the effects of the scheme, and allowing new investment to go ahead and new agreements to be reached with employees who were outside the scheme, even in scheme ports, thus effectively enabling progress to be made. However, if that was the case, one might assume that, having got that far, the Government might allow the withering on the vine to continue to its logical conclusion.

I recall that the week of the announcement was the week in which the problems at Aberdeen came to a head and reached the national headlines. The Secretary of State knows that I wrote to him saying that the situation had reached such a pass that it was clear that if something did not happen quickly Aberdeen could lose for good the fish market that had operated in the city for 800 years. That was not an empty threat; it was clearly serious with devastating potential consequences for the whole economy of the city of Aberdeen.

I wrote to the Secretary of State on the Monday. On Wednesday his Parliamentary Private Secretary asked me for a copy of the letter and the press release that had gone with it, and on Thursday the statement was made. I noticed that the Secretary of State was ready with a quotation from me to try to embarrass my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) who basically welcomed the statement.

What I am saying is that things were happening, none of which by themselves could explain why the Government changed their mind and moved so quickly, although it is possible that the fact that those things accumulated was the determining factor.

The problem is that the differential between scheme and non-scheme ports has definitely—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. We can do without sub-committees being conducted while the hon. Gentleman is speaking.

Mr. Bruce: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

It could easily be observed that investment and business was being diverted to scheme ports. Just to make it absolutely clear that I am not speaking for the general manager of the Aberden harbour board, I should say that on a previous occasion he tried to ensure that the development of Peterhead harbour was blocked. That was something that I opposed and resisted because I believed that Aberdeen harbour should not be allowed to prevent the development of its neighbour, which could benefit the whole of the regional economy. Indeed, I supported the Peterhead Harbours (South Bay Developments) Order Confirmation Bill 1986.

If Aberdeen fish market had closed, that would have caused considerable problems for the entire north-east fishing economy because Peterhead was congested and would not have been able to accommodate the whole of the Aberdeen fleet.

Mr. Robert Hughes: I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not trying to give the impression that the problems in Aberdeen fish market in recent weeks have anything whatsoever to do with the dock work scheme. The problems arose because the fish landing company went bankrupt—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"]—The good, honest business people in the fishing industry were not prepared to pay any more money. Landings had dropped because of EEC quotas. The hon. Gentleman must not mix up the two issues.

Mr. Bruce: The hon. Gentleman must know that Aberdeen fish market's problems, which reached a peak in the past few weeks, date back several years. The circumstances that caused the development of Peterhead in the first place were the existence of the scheme and the restrictive practices operating in Aberdeen, which made the inshore fleet simply give up in disgust and move to a port where they were left with freedom to operate in a sensible and commercial way. The hon. Gentleman cannot deny that, when the boats arrived on a congested day and there were not enough porters to unload them, after negotiation the crews were allowed to unload the boats, but they had to pay for the dock porters who were unloading other boats and, therefore, were paid twice. In such circumstances, it is hardly surprising that boats choose to go to Peterhead where they are allowed to unload without having to pay for the privilege of so doing.

Those anomalies have existed. There is a restrictive practice. In the long run, particularly when relatively small numbers of people are involved in terms of employment, the Labour party should look to the wider interests of people working in a port and see whether defending one group ultimately undermines the job prospects of a larger number.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Bruce: I am being got at from two sides. The debate has been going on for a considerable time. Many hon. Members have had a chance to speak. I am the only representative of my party who is present, and I should be allowed to speak in the debate. It will help the House to develop the argument.

The argument in favour of abolishing the scheme is strong and justified, but it does not explain why things have changed and moved so quickly.

Mr. Ian Bruce: In Weymouth, a registered dock port in my constituency, the fishermen have expanded their operations simply because, by tradition, they have not had to use registered dock workers. When the scheme was introduced for other types of cargoes in Weymouth, there were 130 dockers. When I was elected to represent the constituency, there were 24. We now have nine. Surely that shows that, if only we did not have such restrictions, we would see an expansion of employment such as that which occurred in the fishing industry in Weymouth. Jobs for life are clearly not correct.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: The hon. Gentleman's point reinforces my own. Allowing every port to operate on a free and equal basis is ultimately in the best interests of all those who use and are involved in our ports. I am concerned to try to ensure that that is done quickly and reasonably and to try to probe the reason why the Government did not produce their arguments until very recently, and did so in such a hurry.

It is interesting that, in a sense, being called late in the debate has given me the opportunity to watch the way in which the confrontation has developed. I was possibly privileged not to be on the Committee. To some extent, the hon. Members who were on the Committee have continued the debate. That tends to happen in the final stages of a Bill. It has become apparent that it is a rather old-fashioned confrontational issue in which the two main parties line up in their traditional ways to defend the relevant vested interests. Those who believe that Britain is about to revert to a two-party system in which we operate by confrontation between two power blocs would do well to examine the debate. In the past few years, people have forgotten how destructive that confrontation is.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The two-party debate in Committee occurred because the Liberal spokesman attended only six of our meetings and did not speak. He could have contributed.

Mr. Bruce: I do not speak for my colleague in this context. However, my views on the issue are well known and were published before the Government made a statement of intention to publish the Bill. My colleagues and I have indicated support for the Bill, while supporting some attempts to amend it. That is perfectly reasonable, and I am explaining why it is important that people should carefully examine this litmus paper-type issue.

We do not want two-party confrontation re-established in this country. I question the Government rather than speculate. It has been said that there is likely to be a strike, yet both sides are saying that they do not wish a strike to occur and that they will not be responsible for one.

A strike in British ports over this issue would be an extremely unwise and foolish act. It would damage Britain's economic interest and influence abroad. It would be a strike that could not be won and one which—I believe that in its heart of hearts the Labour party knows this —would completely ruin the Labour party's attempts over the past two weeks to suggest that it has effectively been repackaged. It would remind the British people that it is a party that is the creature of the trade union movement and that, ultimately, when the trade unions get into a confrontation, the Labour party will always back them and give way. That is why the Labour party has been out of office for the past 10 years and why it will not find enough support to win office at the next general election.

The Labour party should have the courage to say, "Look, we accept that the scheme was valid and that the reasons for the scheme were justified, but 40 years on, with the trends that have occurred, it is no longer a scheme that can be defended. There are wider interests of working people that should be protected and advanced. We in the Labour party have the courage to say that." I feel that the Labour party, at the very first test, has shown that the repackaged or remodelled Labour party has not the guts to do it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I must remind the hon. Gentleman that on Third Reading we are required to address our remarks to the contents of the Bill. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will do that.

Mr. Bruce: The contents of the Bill relate to the dock labour scheme which the Labour party is defending and is threatening to reintroduce. It is pertinent to say that I believe that the scheme should be phased out. The idea that it is likely to be introduced by any future Labour Government is deeply damaging, and the people of this country should take that point on board.

Dr. Godman: The hon. Gentleman will surely acknowledge that over the past 10 years the Scottish ports have suffered much more from the effects of the cross-subsidisation scheme, popularly known as the grid system, than they have from the workings of the National Dock Labour Board. Is it not the case that, whereas 10 years ago about 75 per cent. of manufactured goods produced for export by Scottish firms left Scottish scheme ports, the figure today is about 23 per cent.? Let us have a little fair-mindedness from the Liberal spokesman.

Mr. Bruce: That is a perfectly fair point, although it is rather wider than the scheme. I maintain that, first, Scotland in particular has suffered from the consequences of the grid scheme, the decline in manufacturing industry, which has weakened the Scottish economy generally, and the fact that our goods do not ship out direct from Scottish ports.

Secondly, our ports are expanding, but, regrettably, much of the investment is to increase the flow of imports into the country, because the supply side of the economy is not strong enough to ensure that we have enough exports to enable us to pay our way. That, of course, stands as a criticism of the Government's own policy, because we have created not a miracle at the end of 10 years, but a scenario whereby we find that what were once industrial sites are now retail stores, which sell goods that we do not make in this country, but which are sucked in through the port schemes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: These are not matters related to the Bill.

Mr. Bruce: The point is that these goods are travelling through the scheme ports, and the Government's claim that the scheme will resolve the problems of the British ports and of British trade is not valid. Until we can ensure that the investment in the ports will ensure increased exports as well as increased imports, we shall not succeed in creating a strong and viable economy. I believe, therefore, that we need a much more fundamental strategy to use our ports more effectively to promote the supply

[Mr. Bruce]

side of our trade. The abolition of the scheme is a small and desirable step, but the Government would be wrong to assume that it will solve our trading problems.

11.19 pm

Mr. Loyden: In Committee Conservative Members tried to disguise the real effects of the Bill and they have tried to do that again tonight. In Committee, Conservative Members relied, as they have relied tonight, on producing slogans such as bobbing, welting and ghosting which they probably learned at the seminar organised by the central policies study group and the Tory party central committee. I understand that that seminar was called "I hate the dockers." To establish at least some credibility about the dock scheme, they have been taught not to discuss the scheme, but to rely on the slogans which date back, as far as I am aware, to a period long before the national dock labour scheme came into being.

For some odd reason, the dockers have always been the Government's and the employers' aunt Sallies. That position has never changed. There has been no attempt by the Government to argue the case. In reality, there is no logic for what the Government are doing to the docks industry in the Bill.

The docks industry in the pre-war period was, as everyone has recognised, chaotic. It had inhuman practices which brought dock workers down to the level of animals. I am surprised that we are being led to believe tonight that the ruthless employers who existed before the war, and the hyper-exploitation on the docks, have disappeared and no employer would try to act like that today.

Since the Government came to power in 1979, it has been their central task to weaken the power of the trade union movement and to wipe away—if they possibly could—every agreement and protective right that has been established in this and any other industry. The fact is that the Tory party and the employers do not change. They are committed to and are part of the system which requires them to maximise profit at the expense of the employees. To do that, they must challenge the rights and negotiated agreements which have been established over generations by dock workers and their forefathers.

At one time, 70 per cent. of dock workers in east London were in receipt of poor law relief. Some 40 per cent. of dockers in Liverpool were in the same position. Those two major ports brought massive profit and wealth to the nation. The ports of London and Liverpool were responsible for creating the wealth for the port transport industry at the time. The result of that wealth creation was that dockers and their families lived in poverty.

The hon. Member for Boothferry (Mr. Davis) referred to the role of Ernie Bevin. Ernie Bevin had to go to the Shaw inquiry with examples of the meals that dock workers and their families were living on to prove that dockers and their families were living below the poverty level and that the quantity and quality of their food were endangering their health and that of their wives and children. The court accepted what he had to say. That is the background to the capitalist system and those such as the Tory party who operate it.

A formidable trade union leader in the 1920s said that capitalism was like a tiger. He said that it was ruthless and pitiless to the weak, and where it sees weakness and disorganisation, it would exploit it to the maximum. The Government have exploited dock workers and their families for generations, year after year. It took the intervention of the state and, more importantly, the second world war, to change the minds, not of the employers, but of the Government, and to ensure that those practices ended as quickly as possible.

The fears at that time were that conditions in the docks were so bad that further trouble was expected during the war. It was to the dock workers' credit that they froze their agreements during that time to play their part during the war and keep the ports running, as indeed they did. Their reward from the Government is the abolition of the scheme that took them out of that position and into one, not of privilege, because the Conservative party is the party of privilege, but one in which they had won the rights for which they fought so hard over the generations. The dock industry became a human industry, and we saw the end of the hyper-exploitation by the employers in the port transport industry.

Conservative Members have clearly exposed their naked opposition to workers' rights. The Prime Minister has shown that in the past couple of weeks. When the statement was made about the possibility of harmonising social policy with Europe, she screamed out in her strident voice that any question of imposing workers' rights on this country would be opposed by her and the Government. That is——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman but he must address his remarks to the contents of the Bill.

Mr. Loyden: The Conservative party has gone to such lengths when introducing this Bill. No argument or logic has come from Conservative Members. They did not even speak very much in Committee. The longest speech made was that of the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett), which was three and a half minutes. They made no attempt to argue the case and there is no doubt in my mind that, whether they liked it or not, they were acting on the say-so of the employer.

The reason why Ministers were not prepared to move away from their briefs in Committee was that they did not want to allow their minds to enter into the arguments being advanced by the Opposition. That showed that they had no real understanding of the industry and were acting on behalf of the employers. Knowing what employers are like, it was natural that they would not want the scheme in the first place. It was foisted on them by legislation and they have opposed it and tried to get rid of it ever since. It took this Government, with the employers' collaboration, to abolish the scheme.

The Conservatives have not taken one factor into account in the Bill: after abolition of the scheme there will be no scheme ports, but only non-scheme ports. Conservative Members will no longer be able to attempt to divide dock workers between scheme and non-scheme ports as they have done in the past. British ports will be united in their common industry.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) and others have said, the non-scheme dock workers, who are also members of the Transport and General Workers Union, have, to a large extent, been sheltered by the scheme. Their conditions are there because the scheme is there. Once the scheme goes, you can bet

your bottom dollar that the employers will move in as quickly as possible to begin attacking the conditions in the non-scheme ports.

When there are no longer scheme and non-scheme ports, the dockers will have to unite to fight their employers and the Government if they are to retain their jobs and enjoy decent conditions. In a paradoxical way I almost welcome the opportunity that the Bill provides for that to happen. Conservative Members' speeches tonight and in Committee have been highlighted by their attempts to divide dock workers in scheme and non-scheme ports. The dock workers will readily see that if they are to establish a common framework they will have to rely on the strength of their trade union. That strength has prevailed for the past 47 years: the British trade union movement, which has survived even the attacks of Tory Governments, will be able to re-establish decent conditions in the ports under a future Labour Government who will understand how nonsensical it was for the present Government to introduce such legislation at such a time.

11.31 pm

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The speech of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) represents the class-war attitudes of the 1920s and 1930s, and to a large extent sums up the attitudes of the real Labour party activists—hidden as they are by the new Kinnock realism and the soft red Labour rose.

The truth is that Labour still believes in restriction, regulation and control. It does not believe in deregulation or in liberalism. In his speech the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) described employers in the free market as cowboys. Labour Members cannot bear for the hand of the state to be taken away and for people to be able to run their businesses honestly, in accordance with the customer's wishes and needs. I was interested to note that the hon. Gentleman would not give way when he was talking about buses. Since deregulation in 1985 there are 400 more bus operators in the country, and I suspect that the Bill will provide new opportunities for dock workers.

I was also interested by what was said by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway), who popped in, made his speech in order to get himself reselected—he is in danger of being deselected and replaced by the wife of the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman)—and then popped out again. He said that my great-grandfather would be turning in his grave. Yes, he may be; but Tom Mann, when he led the 1889 dock strike 100 years ago, was fighting in entirely different conditions from those of today's dockers. The trouble with the Labour party is that it does not come up to date; it fights the old battles. We are concerned with ensuring that the battles of 1992 and the single European market are won, and we must do that be getting rid of the scheme that is blighting so many of our inner cities.

Dr. Godman *rose*——

Mr. Bennett: I am sorry, I will not give way. I have only nine minutes.

The scheme is full of defects. In Glasgow, seven registered plus two non-registered dock workers are in attendance for the bulk coal vessels, with no function whatever. The same is true in Middlesbrough, Cardiff, Newport and various other ports all over the country.

Dr. Godman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bennett: I am sorry; I have only nine minutes.

There are plenty of examples of the abuses—ghosting, bobbing and welting—that have occurred under the dock labour scheme. We must lift the criminal law from employers so that no longer are 10 per cent. of dockers inactive—plus another 10 or 20 per cent. if the ghosters and bobbers are added.

The annual report and accounts of the National Dock Labour Board for 1986 comments:

> "Definition of dock work issues continued to be a problem and 12 cases were dealt with during 1986. There is growing concern over the increasing number of non-Scheme projects which have been and are being developed, often in close proximity to existing Scheme ports. This has been particularly noticeable on the Ouse and Trent rivers, and in the vicinity of the Wash. In some cases, the National Board took the unusual step of expressing its concern to the local authorities which were involved in the planning applications."

The board is in the business of stopping competition and of restriction. It even attempts to use planning laws to prevent legitimate competition. That is another reason why this rotten, lousy scheme must be abolished.

Opposition Members commented on pay and said how poor are dock workers and that we would not work for the same low salaries. Some dockers receive larger salaries than Members of Parliament. There is no shortage of money in the docks. The average wage under the dock labour scheme is £347·57 per week. In Barry it is £588·37. That is hardly peanuts. At the last Labour party conference, the Leader of the Opposition said:

> "Ron Todd made the point with deadly accuracy just a couple of months ago when he asked: 'What do you say to a docker who earns £400 per week, owns his home, a new car, a microwave and a video, as well as a small place near Marbella? You do not say,' said Ron, 'let me take you out of your misery, brother'."

That is the reality in respect of dockers' earnings under the scheme. Let us hear no more nonsense about their poverty.

We heard also from those hon. Members sponsored by the Transport and General Workers Union, who spoke about those of my right hon. and hon. Friends who serve as consultants—but without declaring that they receive payments from the Transport and General Workers Union.

Mr. Bidwell: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman maligns those of my hon. Friends who are sponsored by the Transport and General Workers Union, as I am, and who do not receive any direct pay from their sponsor.

Mr. Bennett: I understand that the Transport and General Workers Union ballot of its members secured 70 per cent. support for strike action, although the union will not publish figures for the individual ports. The ballot paper is headed, "Trade Dispute with your Employer", which is palpably untrue. It is a trade dispute arising from a decision of this House, so it is an attempt to oppose the will of Parliament. The union is so scared that it was not prepared to describe the nature of the trade dispute in the ballot paper for its members to read. That is not surprising, because the TGWU's record is of changing its position every two or three days.

The Bill is necessary because time and again the TGWU was asked to negotiate over the scheme but refused. On 16 April 1986, Mr. Nicholas Finney, director of the National Association of Port Employers, wrote to John Connolly,

[Mr. Bennett]

national secretary of the union's dock, waterways and fishing group, offering discussions. Mr. Connolly's reply of 21 April states:

"In reply to your letter of 16 April 1986, I can advise you that, having in mind our position that the Dock Labour Scheme is to remain, I see no point in having joint discussions to provide for arrangements which might follow its removal."

The TGWU has consistently taken the attitude that its members will strike if any attempt is made to end the scheme.

During negotiations this year, the union issued a press statement on 18 April stating that

"we demand that the National Association of Port Employers should meet us urgently in order to establish national conditions that are no less favourable than the current provisions."

So it appears that it wants part of the scheme to be retained. In discussions between the unions and NAPE the following day, the association made a number of offers, including continuation of the pension fund, holiday entitlement, sick pay, basic working hours, and individual contracts. On that same day the TGWU stated:

"We are not seeking to substitute for the statutory scheme another scheme no less favourable."

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are all listening with fascination to the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett), but when he filibustered on the guillotine motion he read out all the correspondence that he is quoting this evening. Is it in order to read out the same letters a second time on Third Reading?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) will realise that there are other hon. Members who have waited a long time to participate in the debate.

Mr. Bennett: I realise that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I merely say that the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) is wrong. I did not read out during the debate on the guillotine motion the material that I have quoted this evening. If he reads *Hansard*, he will recognise that that is so.

On 24 April, the TGWU were demanding of the port employers that they should have a scheme that would amount to a national scheme. How can the port employers, the Government or anyone else believe what the TGWU says when in five days it changes its position three times?

The strike record in the scheme ports has been about five or six times as bad as that of the rest of British industry over the past 20 years. That is another reason why the scheme has outlived its usefulness. It is time to free the docks and the inner-city areas so that they can prepare for 1992. That will ensure that Britain can make the most use of the economic prosperity that the Government are bringing it.

11.41 pm

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): The debate has demonstrated the absurdity of the guillotine motion. Hon. Members on both sides of the House have spoken with consummate ignorance of the problems of the Aberdeen fish market, which are extremely complex. It is ridiculous to suggest that the problems of a small part of a major port constitute a reason for introducing legislation that will affect thousands throughout the United Kingdom economy.

My constitutents—I hope that the Secretary of State will listen to me because I am speaking of real people—are in limbo, including some who are fish market porters. The employing company—the Aberdeen Fish Landing Company—went out of existence. Those who worked for it found that they had no employer. Some have accepted redundancy pay of £25,000. Others believed—that was until the Minister for Public Transport spoke in Committee—that under the Bill they would receive £37,500. It appears from what the hon. Gentleman said in Committee that that sum will not be paid. I am talking of people whose lives are at stake. Let the House realise that £10,000 is a hell of a lot of money for these people, and that some of them will not work again. The Minister has not had the courtesy to reply to a letter that I wrote some time ago, and he failed to respond to my contribution to the guillotine motion. It seems that the promise given earlier today that I would receive a reply will not be honoured.

When we are dealing with major issues of this sort we should not be proceeding under a guillotine, when the rights of hon. Members to represent their constituents are denied them in a draconian manner. Conservative Members who pretend that they speak for the rights of individuals should be thoroughly ashamed of themselves for what has happened.

I am extremely angry about the way in which the Bill has been handled. It was introduced with deceit, duplicity and dishonour. It was not mentioned in the Conservative party manifesto. It did not even warrant a mention in the Queen's Speech. We are not dealing with a minor industry or a minor change. A generation of practice is being changed. We are not dealing merely with the technicalities of ending a scheme, for we must be concerned with the future of the industry. If the National Association of Port Employers happens to be listening, or if it happens to read the report of my speech in *Hansard*, I repeat what I put to it earlier. If it does not handle properly the changes that are set out in the Bill, it will be landing itself in a great deal of industrial relations trouble for many generations to come.

There are those who believe that it will be possible to abandon the scheme along with national negotiations, training schemes and medical facilities. We do not even know what will happen to pensions. It is thought that this can be done port by port or on the basis of worst practices. Employers have said in Aberdeen and elsewhere, "We shall not return to casualisation. Instead, we shall have a core of permanent employees. As and when we need more men, we shall take them on. When we do not have work for them, we shall fire them." Is that not casualisation? Is that the way to create good industrial relations? The way that the Government are behaving is atrocious.

There was a time when the Department of Employment was a Department of conciliation and good industrial relations practices. It sought to ensure that employers and employees worked together. There was a time when it tried to ensure that industrial relations were good enough to prevent industrial strife, not to provoke it. This Government are intent on provocation. It will do great damage to industry.

We are told that 50,000 jobs will be created—that there will be a gigantic leap forward because the number of jobs

will be doubled to 100,000. The hon. Member for Boothferry (Mr. Davis) said that even more than 100,000 jobs might be created. Whenever the fish marketing scheme has been discussed in Aberdeen we have put it to the employers that if they want to introduce changes they ought at least to offer the prospect of more employment, but they have absolutely refused to consider it. It is nonsense to believe that a scheme to generate 50,000 jobs will be successful when the Bill provides for massive redundancy payments. We do not create jobs by sacking people.

The Government and the port employers will rue the day. I am sad about that and about the damage that it will do to the economy. I am even sadder about the damage that it will do to individuals. The greatest sadness of all is that the Secretary of State for Employment has disgraced the position that he holds. He should be thoroughly ashamed of himself.

11.46 pm

Mr. Strang: During the seven weeks or so that have elapsed since the Government announced that they intended to abolish the dock labour scheme we have been waiting for an answer to the questions why the Government did not announce in the Queen's Speech their intention to abolish the scheme and why they have suddenly decided to introduce this Bill. No Labour Member relishes the prospect of a national dock strike.

It was misleading of the Secretary of State and the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) to suggest that the Transport and General Workers Union intends to vote against the abolition of the scheme. At the meeting with the employers on 18 April the general secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union made it clear that the union would not seek to oppose the legislation currently going through Parliament. He said:

"We will be opposing the Dock Work Bill using the normal Parliamentary channels."

He then went on to ask legitimate questions that we asked in Committee and which have been asked again today about what is to replace the scheme. For example, he asked:

"How will you ensure the job security of dock workers? What arrangements will there be for medical and welfare facilities and training?

Will the provisions of the Aldington-Jones Agreement, which is of course not a statutory provision but a collective agreement between the unions and employers, be affected?

What will be the role of the National Joint Council for the port transport industry?"

He received no answer to any of those questions. Neither the dockers nor the TGWU know what is in store for them. That is why we could be on the verge of a damaging trade dispute.

The union wants to negotiate a national collective agreement to replace the dock labour scheme. We reject many of the arguments that have been advanced tonight. We reject the idea that investment has not been taking place in the scheme ports. Example after example has been given of the millions of pounds that are being invested. We reject the idea that there is low productivity in the scheme ports. The evidence has been given to the House.

There has been a dramatic shift in Britain's trade. The enormous increase in the proportion of our trade with mainland Europe has increased the growth of trade in ports on the east coast of the country.

Mr. Devlin: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Strang: No, because I want the Minister to have time to reply.

We have received no answer to these points. It is therefore hard to resist the conclusion that the Government are going into this with open eyes. They are creating the conditions for a national dock strike.

We hope that when the matter is resolved in the courts, as it will be shortly, the Government will intervene and at the last minute will invite the employers and the unions to the Department of Employment, sit down with them and discuss what progress can be made in negotiating arrangements to replace the scheme.

There is no need for a strike. No one suggests that a strike will stop the passage of the legislation. The ball is in the Government's court. They can accept the consequences of their action and see a damaging strike that is not in the interests of the country, the port employers or of the dockers. That will happen if they go hell bent down the road that leads to confrontation. There is no need for that approach, but it has been endemic in everything that the Government have said since they started to enact the measure. We appeal to them even at this stage to think again. They should recognise that there has to be life after the passage of the legislation and that there should be constructive discussions to arrange for the future of the scheme ports.

11.50 pm

Mr. Cope: We have had another long debate on the Bill. It is drawing to a close but we have heard little new except the deep knowledge of the damage to their local ports from my hon. Friends the Members for Bridlington (Mr. Townend), for Thurrock (Mr. Janman), for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham), for Boothferry (Mr. Davis) and others.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) asked a specific question about whether dockers in Aberdeen could get compensation in the particular circumstances of the fish dock in his constituency. Those who are registered dock workers when the scheme ends, and who become redundant, will get the full money to which they are entitled under the scheme—up to £35,000 for 15 years' service. If the employers cannot or do not pay them, the Government will stand behind the scheme to make sure that they are paid.

All the arguments from the Opposition today were familiar to those of us who were on the Standing Committee. The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) worked up wonderful indignation about the guillotine, as only he is capable of doing. Every hon. Member who was on the Committee knows that there was an almost audible sigh of relief from all sides when the guillotine came into effect. What is more, we never needed to sit late thereafter.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West said earlier in our debates, and repeated today, that this was essentially a one-clause Bill. That is not true. There are important provisions in the later clauses about what will happen after the scheme. The Bill implements a single clear idea. We believe that there should no longer be a special class of registered dock workers, with unique statutory provisions governing their employment. All workers in the docks, including those who were registered dock workers, should have the same rights and obligations as other employees of their companies and, for that matter, employees in other

[Mr. Cope]

industries. We not only think that that is right for the sake of the dock companies and their other non-registered employees but we believe that it is in the interests of scheme ports and the areas around them. There is clear evidence that the scheme's unique statutory restrictions have held back, and continue to hold back, the performance of scheme ports. There is no doubt that they are losing business and jobs to their competitors outside the scheme. That cannot be explained by the shift in the patterns of British trade.

Mr. Devlin: Does my right hon. Friend accept that a crucial problem of the dock labour scheme has been the way that it has put up charges to shippers and that the success of the east coast ports has been due to the fact that they charge £2 per tonne for unloading? They are small ports. Large carriers are going into places such as Rotterdam where they pay £2 per tonne for trans-shipment into small ships which bring the products in through small east coast ports, thus avoiding the large ports such as Teesside in my constituency and Liverpool where they would have to pay £6, £8 or even £17 per tonne for unloading.

Mr. Cope: My hon. Friend makes a shrewd point. It certainly cannot be said that the loss of business has anything to do with the shift of trade to the continent. The scheme ports on the south and east coasts managed a 26 per cent. increase in their trade since 1970, no doubt partly as a result of that shift in trade. The non-scheme ports on the south and east coasts increased their trade by 325 per cent. in the same period. It is also noticeable that Hull and Goole lost ground to the wharves on the Humber and the Trent and that the non-scheme ports on the west coast, Heysham and Holyhead, have grown, while Liverpool has continued to decline.

The scheme's restrictions have proved extremely damaging, but they have also become unnecessary to provide reasonable terms and conditions for dock workers in those ports. As hon. Members on both sides of the House have said, technology, not the scheme, has tranformed the port industry. In the 1940s, before technology was introduced, it was a labour-intensive, low-skilled industry, prone to widespread casual work which was an extremely unpleasant practice. Today it is a highly mechanised industry which is handling more tonnage with one sixth of the labour force.

Today's ports cannot operate without a well-trained permanent work force. Casual work has gone and the scheme is no longer required to prevent it. Those who have raised that spectre, along with other historical matters, do so only to frighten the dockers and other members of the unions. Ports outside the scheme demonstrate that the more modern and efficient they are, the more they rely on a modern, well-paid work force. That is a far better guarantee of good terms and conditions than the artificial, counter-productive controls of the scheme.

In Committee, the hon. Member for Oldham, West drew our attention to research by the centre for labour economics at the London School of Economics. I took the trouble to make inquiries and look it up. It showed why the scheme ports have lost ground. It revealed that the scheme's monopoly allowed the unions to resist the introduction of containerisation during the 1960s; to secure pay increase of about 35 per cent. in 1967 in exchange for the acceptance of new technology; and to refuse to accept lower manning levels, which were a natural consequence of new technology, until an alternative arrangement, heavily subsidised by the taxpayer, was introduced in 1972. That is why the scheme ports have lost half their container trade in little more than 20 years. That trade could have offset at least some of the job losses which the report rightly attributes to the technological revolution which the industry has undergone.

The scheme has defended indefensible working practices. It has produced the most extraordinary recruitment and disciplinary practices. It has led to inbuilt labour surpluses touching 18 per cent. in the past 10 years, which have damaged job creation and competitiveness immensely. All that has been underpinned by a statutory system of joint control which has functioned not to promote change in response to containerisation, for example, but first to block it and then to set an unacceptable price for it. The only way out is to abolish the scheme and to give the entire ports industry the same framework of employment law and free collective bargaining as everyone else.

The Opposition have not defended the details of the scheme. On the contrary, at various times they have offered to alter them, unlike the TGWU, which always refused to discuss change until the moment we said we would abolish the scheme.

But the Opposition have now said—or at least the hon. Member for Oldham, West has said—that they want to keep the scheme in place while the new controls are developed, with all the main restrictions of the present scheme, not only in the existing scheme ports but extended to all the other ports which have meanwhile flourished outside its grip. In particular, Labour Members also want to extend the statutory joint control which unions have used to block change in scheme ports, and they have even seen it as a model for other industries. That would be a recipe for disaster in British industry, and the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) correctly pointed out how old fashioned Labour party policy is——

It being Twelve o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the order [8 May], to put forthwith the Question already proposed from the Chair,* That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 234, Noes 163.

Division No. 214] **[12 midnight**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'th's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick

Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cartiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Heyward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Maclean, David
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle and
Mr. Tom Sackville.

NOES

Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKelvey, William
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun

Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Hesley)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Vaz, Keith
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen McKay.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Vehicle Emissions

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Mr Speaker has selected the amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) and his hon. Friends.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I appeal to you and to my hon. Friend the Minister to call off this debate. It is an insult to Parliament, as you know, to have a discussion on what line the Government should take when they announced this morning what line they had decided to take. I appreciate the constraints of time, but——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman raised this matter earlier, and I advised him that it might be a suitable point to raise in the course of the debate. Doubtless the Minister is aware that the hon. Gentleman raised this point of order. I am powerless to change what is set down on the Order Paper.

12.12 am

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Peter Bottomley): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 6529/89 on vehicle emissions; and supports the Government in its efforts to secure an agreement on emissions from small cars, taking into account environmental effects, fuel economy and the needs of industry.

Hon. Members: Withdraw.

Mr. Bottomley: Withdraw what?

The Government believe that the right way forward is to support the Commission's most recent revised proposal for tighter standards for small cars in 1993. Much has happened since last November and it will be helpful to the House if I recount the developments.

This subject was considered by the House in November. Shortly afterwards, the Council of Ministers agreed a common position on the terms explained to the House during that debate. Under the co-operation procedure, the November agreement was re-submitted to the European Parliament for Second Reading. The European Parliament has a history of favouring higher standards and it soon became clear that there was a genuine possibility of an absolute majority of Members of the European Parliament supporting the rejection of the common position. That would have compelled the Council to act by unanimity to adopt a directive based on the common position.

In the past, the Commission has robustly defended the Council's position, with the result that Council agreements have been adopted as Community directives. The climate of opinion in the Commission on vehicle emissions has changed significantly since the beginning of this year, perhaps because of concern that the Parliament would vote for the outright rejection of the common position. The Commission attempted to pre-empt a rejecting vote by announcing before the plenary session of the European Parliament took place that it would substantially revise its proposal to be more in line with thinking in the Parliament. This move succeeded in deflecting the vote from a rejection to an amendment of the common position. It preserved the possibility of agreement in Council by qualified majority.

The outcome of all this is the revised proposal before the House today. Its central elements are: an advance from

1993 to 1991 of the original stage II standards of 30 g/test for CO and 8 g/test HC+NOx effectively supplanting stage 1; the introduction of a stage, with tighter limits of 19 g/test CO and 5 g/test HC+NOx, in 1993; the strengthening of the Commission's commitment to bring forward further proposals on the high-speed cycle; and the transformation of the proposed directive from an optional to a mandatory basis.

These are radical proposed changes. They pave the way for state of the art standards in Europe not only for small cars, which we are debating this evening, but for all sizes of car. There will be costs to the motorist and penalties on fuel economy.

The standards previously supported would have meant the need to fit simple catalysts to virtually all small cars while still allowing the development of fuel efficient technologies such as lean burn to continue.

Tighter standards mean lower emissions of carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons and oxides of nitrogen—also known as NOx—but the use of three-way catalysts can lead to increases in carbon dioxide emissions, because fuel economy is increased.

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): My hon. Friend has said that this is a proposal, but my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) has said that the decision has already been made. Can my hon. Friend square that circle so that I can decide whether to stay for the debate or to go?

Mr. Bottomley: The Council of Ministers will meet on 8 June. The Government have announced that they intend to support the 1993 proposals——

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): Without waiting for this debate.

Mr. Bottomley: —and to reject the 1991 interim stage —*[Interruption.]* If my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment announces what the Government's intention is and if my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) announces in a written answer this afternoon what the Government's intention is—*[Interruption.]*—and if I could finish my sentence and if my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) would contain himself for a moment, so that I can try to spell out the position clearly and make it possible for the Government and others to hear the views of other hon. Members—

Mr. Aitken: The Government have already decided.

Mr. Bottomley: What has been announced is the Government's intention; the decision will come from the Council of Ministers. To those who say that there is no point in staying for the debate, I say that that would be a loss to the debate.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I assure the Minister that on this matter I shall be strictly procedural. Do I understand from him that the news release of earlier today tells us that the Secretary of State announced—prior to the debate, perhaps by a few hours—what the Government's attitude will be at the Council of Ministers and that, while the House may accept the measure, it is a fact that the Secretary of State has announced his intention prior to the debate? In my recollection, that is a complete novelty because, although the Government's views are often expressed in a motion, they do not usually announce their intention until after the debate. Will the Minister confirm what I have said?

Mr. Bottomley: I would not dream of confirming what the hon. Gentleman has said. What the Government have said is what they intend to do and to support. As the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) said last week when the Government made information available to Members as soon as possible, even before making announcements, it seems perfectly reasonable and to make sense to make the information available during the day better to inform those who are interested in the debate.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): That is what the Minister's speech is supposed to be about.

Mr. Bottomley: If the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) will go back to his new year's resolution of three years ago and listen with his ears rather than his mouth, I will continue.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): If my hon. Friend and the Government are persuaded by the arguments that are put forward tonight, will my hon. Friend explain the effect that will have?

Mr. Bottomley: The only arguments that are being put forward at the moment are mine. When I have listened to the other arguments—I do not have extra-sensory perception——

Mr. Budgen: What effect will it have?

Mr. Prescott: The Minister should listen to the question and then try to answer it.

Mr. Budgen: What effect will it have?

Mr. Bottomley *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. There are too many speeches going on.

Mr. Bottomley: I give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South.

Mr. Aitken: By his rather frivolous manner, my hon. Friend is making it clear that he has not understood the seriousness of the point he is making and the seriousness of the insult which, through my hon. Friend's lips, the Government are perpetrating. We are here to debate a serious issue, and we have amendments, views and ideas on it. Yet, before the debate, the Government announced their policy without listening to hon. Members' views. What is the purpose of the debate, and, specifically, will my hon. Friend answer my question? If he is convinced by any of the arguments that are put forward in the debate tonight, will he have any power to change the Government's policy from that which was so prematurely and insultingly announced without consulting the House earlier today?

Mr. Budgen: Will the Minister answer that question?

Mr. Bottomley: I inform my hon. Friends, and especially my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen), that my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South is asking me to predict the content of speeches that are likely to be made in support of the amendment. Part of that is the idea that it will be a costly and nonsensical problem for

[Mr. Bottomley]

manufacturers. As speeches in support of the amendment have not yet been made, it is not clear whether it relates to the 1991 interim stage or the 1993 stage. The manufacturers' clear view is that they do not want the interim 1991 stage and are content with the 1993 stage.

It is impossible to answer the intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West as I do not know what point he will make. To answer my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South, if this debate demonstrates that the House wants the 1991 stage—the interim stage—against the interests of the manufacturers and against the natural manufacturing and development cycle of engines, which is what we are discussing, the Government would obviously want to consider such a view. It is highly unlikely that any hon. Member will support the interim 1991 stage. *[Interruption.]* Obviously I am not suggesting that, because I am the only hon. Member who has made a speech so far.

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): The Minister seems to be saying that the Government will support the 1993 standard and not the 1991 standard. If the Government cannot have their way in the Council and cannot have the 1991 standard removed, will they still support the 1993 standard?

Mr. Bottomley: My information is that there is no qualified majority to support the 1991 interim standard in the Council of Ministers. Obviously, that is looking forward to 8 June. My expectation is that there will be no qualified majority and that one is unlikely to develop. There is the possibility—perhaps the probability—of getting a qualified majority for the 1993 standard. Those hon. Members who were present during Environment questions will have heard the Government's position on the package which would make sense and make 1993 acceptable. There is a balance in deciding what is right for manufacturers. The 1993 standard, without the 1991 standard, is right for them. It is a matter of what is right for the environment, and I shall refer to that in just a moment.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): I have been listening to what my hon. Friend the Minister has been saying. He will recall that we debated this subject on Wednesday 2 November last year. The Government's view clearly was that we would not and could not accept the 5g ruling because of a variety of reasons, which the Minister most lucidly put. One need not recount exactly what those reasons are; they can be mentioned later. What has happened in the meantime that has caused the Government to revise their view and now opt for the 5g limit?

Mr. Bottomley: I assume that my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) was present when I made the first part of my speech. I do not wish to repeat it. Many other hon. Members heard it, and probably also understood it. I will happily share my view with my hon. Friend later in the debate if he wishes.

One outcome can establish a stable agreement that is understandable by motorists and will offer a sensible path for the motor industry. That is the key change since November of last year. I explained some of the participants in the movement of opinion.

The Government have decided to work as hard as possible to see that the limits are introduced to Europe in an orderly manner. We accept the Commission's proposals for the final stage in 1993.

We shall resist the idea of the intermediate 1991 stage. It is industrial nonsense to set limits that will be superseded after only two years. It may be that the Commission has kept the intermediate stage in its proposal to retain a vestigial link with the common position.

Many other member states share this view. It is likely that the Commission will delete the intermediate limits before the June Environment Council. That would be a substantial step towards the adoption of a directive. It would set a marker for the definitive standards which the Commission is to propose later this year relating to the new, combined urban and high speed test cycle. At the same time, new proposals are expected for type approval durability testing, evaporative emission standards and a second stage particulate standard for diesel engined cars. The Government are giving technical assistance in the development of those proposals.

Some ground is lost by putting lean burn on the back burner. Improving fuel efficiency does matter. It would be a step backwards to have a three-way catalyst rather than one just one way with the lean-burn technology. We want to see what can be done to reap the advantages of lean burn or fast burn. We want to see what scope there is for reducing vehicle weights and aerodynamic drag and taking other efficiency measures. Great strides have been made in the past, in spite of increasingly severe emission and safety standards. That momentum must be maintained.

Good progress is being made towards a stable framework that will allow substantial advances in controlling motor vehicle pollution. It will allow industry to seek optimum technical solutions for the new standards, minimising costs to the motorists. The Government will work to see that the atmosphere is improved.

12.26 am

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): Despite the lateness of the hour, it is a pleasure to address the House on behalf of the Opposition on a subject of such immense importance to human health and the natural environment. The draft directive represents what we believe is best in Europe. It is a recognition by politicians from across the whole continent and the political spectrum that industry must serve the needs of society and not vice versa.

To the Prime Minister, this would normally be a case of "meddling Europe". Indeed, the effects of the directive would be much more dramatic than the cigarette packet labelling about which the right hon. Lady made such a drama last week. Her change of attitude is extraordinary. Less than a month ago, she was lecturing my hon. Friend the Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) at Prime Minister's Question Time about the merits of lean-burn engines over catalytic converters. Of course, the whole stance of the Government over a period of years has been to block the introduction of US-type emission standards to Europe on the basis of questionable scientific advice and a commitment to one particular technology—the lean-burn engine.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I know that there have been changes in responsibility and, as we said on the hon. Lady's first appearance at the Dispatch Box, we welcome her to the Transport portfolio. However, in the November

debate it was not that we had to have lean burn, but that we had to provide the opportunity for it to be developed. It was not one or the other. The purpose was to move forward to the position of achieving fuel efficiency as well as a better atmosphere.

Ms. Ruddock: The result was just the same—there was a blocking mechanism.

None the less, it would be churlish for us not wholeheartedly to welcome this eleventh hour conversion of the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for the Environment. We have, however, no doubt that the catalyst was not the science with which she sought to support the Government's case in the past but rather the European elections in which concern for the environment will be playing such a major part. The Government have clearly realised that public opinion has moved strongly against the accelerating degradation of the environment, which has been the hallmark of 10 years of Thatcherism.

The lessons of the vehicle emission story are important ones that directly contradict the Government's approach. By the Clean Air Act 1970, the Americans pledged to reduce motor emissions by 90 per cent. by 1983. The risks from carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons and nitrogen oxide emissions were beginning to be recognised, but at that time no technology existed to do the job promised by the legislature. Yet the lesson from the United States is a striking one: set the standards and the technology will follow.

By 1975 the Americans had two-way catalytic converters, efficient in reducing carbon monoxide and hydrocarbons. The benefits, of course, reached beyond the control of carbon monoxide, because catalytic converters require the introduction of unleaded petrol.

Unleaded fuel was introduced in the United States in 1974. Within 10 years all American cars had acquired catalytic converters and were running on unleaded petrol. Significantly, I am told, fuel efficiency was increased by 100 per cent. over the same period. With such evidence before them, it is amazing that the Government felt for so long that they had to back a particular technology and to stand in the way of stricter European controls on a technological promise as yet unrealised.

Surely the Government's role is to regulate, to set higher standards and to put the nation's health first. We did not have to choose between catalytic converters and lean-burn engines. They are not incompatible and the scientific evidence varies. Crucially the lean-burn engine is not in production and the three-way catalytic converter is. Whatever may be the best solutions which lie ahead of us today, the Government should not stand in the way of progress.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We will not.

Ms. Ruddock: We shall see.

I want to consider why we need to deal with the emissions. Current car emissions are restricted under the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe regulations which are extremely permissive standards, allowing 400 per cent. more emissions of carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxide and hydrocarbons that are allowed under the United States regulations which have been in place since 1983. On average, a car in the United Kingdom emits a quarter of a tonne of those toxic pollutants while cars in the United States emit only a quarter of that amount.

The problem is growing. Fifty five thousand new cars arrive on Britain's roads each day. The Government's commitment to major new road building will ensure that the problem is continually exacerbated. Sadly the effects of that growth are already demonstrated by the parallel case of vehicle-caused lead pollution.

Last year the level of lead in the air rose in the United Kingdom by 5 per cent. as the result of the growth of traffic volume which exceeded the uptake of lead-free fuel. [HON. MEMBERS: "So What?"] So what? It is going to continue and get worse.

Given the rapid rise in the number of cars, it is crucial that Britain adopts the most stringent standards instead of risking retaining the most permissive.

The emissions with which the directive is concerned are serious hazards to health and to the environment. Road transport is a major source of man-made carbon monoxide emissions. It has an impact on human health, on the cardiovascular and central nervous systems. In London the World Health Organisation guidelines on carbon monoxide in respect of human beings are regularly exceeded. Its impact on the environment is via the chemical processes affecting levels of tropospheric oxidants, green house gases and stratospheric ozone.

The other major pollutants with which the directive is concerned are the hydrocarbons and nitrogen oxides. Both types of pollutants again add to the processes which produce the secondary pollutant ozone. The hydrocarbon emissions contain a proportion of highly dangerous polyaromatics which are known to increase the rate of lung cancer. Oxides of nitrogen are implicated in a range of human diseases affecting the respiratory system. In the atmosphere, nitrogen oxides become transformed into gaseous or liquid forms of nitric acid, adding to the acidification of lakes and rivers and the formation of acid rain.

Britain is already infamous as an exporter of acid rain. According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, British and Danish forests are the most defoliated in Europe. The United Kingdom acid waters review group estimates that a reversal of the acidification of lakes and streams would require a 90 per cent. reduction in emissions.

These are extremely serious environmental concerns. Thankfully we may be in sight of such reductions. If we are in sight of them, as I sincerely hope that we are, it will be a victory for those of us who have continually pressed for higher standards of environmental protection and particularly for the pressure groups including Greenpeace and the Campaign for Lead-Free Air which have so skilfully assembled the evidence—evidence which, I have no doubt, persuaded Conservative MEPs to drop the British Government line and vote to give us the revised draft directive.

If agreed, the adoption of the United States emission standards will be of enormous benefit to society in terms of the reduction of severe pollutants, by proven technology, of the three-way catalytic converters. They do not, however—and the Minister referred to this—deal specifically with the production of carbon dioxide, of which car emissions are the fastest growing source and which, of course, contribute to the dangerous phenomenon known as global warming.

Total emissions from vehicles of carbon dioxide increase directly in proportion to the growth of vehicles.

[Ms. Ruddock]

Given that Europe, with its 110 million cars, is already the world's biggest car market, we have a major responsibility to the world to deal with that problem.

We acknowledge that, in an advanced form, the lean-burn engine would be a major solution to carbon dioxide emissions because of increased engine efficiency. However, there appears to be no reason why the problems of the other pollutants and carbon dioxide cannot be dealt with in parallel. Catalytic converters under road conditions are more, not less—I stress this because I think that the Minister is mistaken—fuel efficient than non-catalytic cars. Substantial research shows that lean-burn engines, which are said to be 20 per cent. more efficient, are comparable to catalytic converters which can be shown to be 18 per cent. more fuel efficient. We are talking about a 2 per cent difference. [HON. MEMBERS: The hon. Lady cannot be serious."] I am indeed serious. I can give the scientific——

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are enjoying the teach in. Modern engines are much more fuel efficient than old ones. When a modern engine has a three-way catalytic converter attached to its exhaust system, I think that it reduces its fuel efficiency. That is the point, and we must not confuse the development of newer engines with what is put in them—*[Interruption.]* I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) who represents catalysts——

Mr. Richard Page: Not my constituency, but one near by.

Mr. Bottomley: I thought that it was my hon. Friend's constituency, but catalysts must be produced in a neighbouring constituency.

Ms. Ruddock: I shall stand by my point, and will provide the Minister with scientific evidence. Having looked at that evidence, I am absolutely convinced that it is quite clear that there are, and can be, gains in fuel efficiency with catalysts, as it is acknowledged that there are with the lean-burn engine. One reason why hon. Members have been misled into thinking that that is not so is due to the test conditions under which the scientific data were originally assembled. That data were based on city driving at an average of 12 miles per hour. In fact, the most important production of carbon dioxide occurs in motorway driving when people are driving much faster. We must make the appropriate comparison in order to find the data on which to base the argument.

Finally, I shall consider the manufacturers, the state of the industry and its preparedness to accept the new regulations. It appears that the manufacturers are not all hiding behind the Minister's caution. Some of them have already dashed to the starting line and many are way out in front. Volvo is making 90 per cent. of its range available with catalysts in the autumn. Vauxhall is already phasing in three-way catalysts on all its cars as standard equipment, starting in the autumn and to be completed within three years. In Germany, one cannot buy an Opel unless it has a three-way catalytic converter. Volkswagen also favours United States' standards. In the autumn it is making its entire range available with catalytic converters as an option and is offering to subsidise retro-fitting to all models made since 1979.

At the moment, Volkswagen is obliged to produce 638 different variants of the Golf engine in order to meet the different standards around the world. I cannot believe, therefore, that the two standards proposed in the draft directive are that significant.

Nissan plans to make three-way catalytic converters available in the United Kingdom ahead of any planned legislation. Ford is introducing the catalyst option progressively on a range of its models over the next 12 months, and from 1990 onwards new BMW models will be available only with catalytic converters.

Mr. Richard Page: I am delighted to hear that those manufacturers are making such a huge contribution to the environment, but do any of them claim that either the catalytic systems already in production in the United States or those that are to be produced will provide more fuel efficiency? That would be a tremendous selling point, and I should be surprised if the manufacturers were not pushing it, if it is the case.

Ms. Ruddock: The evidence from the United States is that fuel efficiency has not been a problem when catalytic converters are fitted to modern cars. We are talking about engines that are being produced from now until 1993, and about the need to reduce three major noxious emissions: carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxide and hydrocarbons. There is no other known way in which those pollutants can be reduced to the necessary level.

Mr. Page: I agree with that.

Ms. Ruddock: I do not think that an argument about another form of gaseous emission can be counterposed to suggest that reducing that will prevent us from dealing with the problem in hand, and catalytic converters have no detrimental effect on fuel efficiency.

In the light of the list that I have provided, we feel that we should be a bit sceptical about the Government's view that industry would be greatly disadvantaged by a two-tier system. A number of companies are already meeting the requirements proposed for 1991, and no doubt the supporters of those standards—particularly the West Germans—feel that their removal would be a retrograde step. It is clear that some companies will choose now to go for the 1993 standards and will have them in place by 1991, and nothing in the directive would prevent them from doing just that. Surely the House should welcome such a development, as every year of more stringent standards is a gain for our environment.

We require from the Government an unqualified statement that they will support the 1993 standards. The interim standards proposed may be inconvenient, but what the Minister seems to have said tonight—perhaps he will be good enough to confirm it when he winds up—is that the Government will support the 1993 standards only if they can secure agreement to the removal of the 1991 interim standards. That is completely unacceptable to the Opposition, and we will put it to the vote if the Minister does not clarify the position. We do not believe that Britain should stand in the way of reducing emissions to the 1993 standards because they do not like the interim standards.

This is a major environmental concern: nothing should stand in the way of improving our nation's environment and our nation's health.

12.43 am

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): I am not easily moved to anger—particularly at 12.43 in the morning—when the House debates an issue of great importance to the quality of life, to the quality of the air that we breathe, and to the whole motor manufacturing industry. However, I am genuinely angry about the constitutional outrage of these proceedings.

This debate marks an all-time low in the already fragile relationship between Government and Parliament over the increasingly contentious issue of how we scrutinise EEC legislation and documents. I have complained often that such debates take place too late, are too short, or concern motions that are too bland or contradictory. But I have never had to complain that there is absolutely no point in the debate taking place at all because the Government have completely cut the ground away from Parliament's feet.

When Mr. Speaker or you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was good enough to select the amendment in my name and those of my hon. Friends, it was clear that the Chair was taking tonight's proceedings seriously, as did many of my other hon. Friends who came to the Chamber prepared with arguments in the hope that they could take part in the debate. What on earth is the point of being asked to debate a "take note" motion, which implies that the views of right hon. and hon. Members will be heard and carefully considered, when, on the very morning of the day on which the debate is to take place, the Government announce, without learning the views of right hon. and hon. Members, their strategy, tactics and policy, thus taking away from the House the right to have any say or to make any input to the process?

I do not like being, instead of a parliamentarian, a parliamentary wimp, a parliamentary eunuch, a parliamentary cipher.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Will my hon. Friend allow me to intervene?

Mr. Aitken: No, I will not. I shall tell my hon. Friend what I will do. You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, invited me to move an amendment. I shall not do so. I will withdraw that amendment, because I regard the circumstances in which the debate is taking place as an insult to the House. Important though the arguments are, I do not think it is right to enter into a debate on the merits of the case deployed by the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) and my hon. Friend the Minister.

We are taking part in a sham, a charade, a farce. Such action by the Government and by their business managers must stop and must never happen again. For those reasons, I shall not move the amendment but withdraw it. I shall now walk out—accompanied, I hope, by one or two of my hon. Friends—as a mark of protest against the constitutional outrage that is taking place tonight.

12.47 am

Sir Hal Miller (Bromsgrove): It is a narrow path to tread between the Euro-fanatics on the one hand and the slashing attack made by the Labour party on the midlands and on industry generally, ignoring completely the interests of workers, whether they be employed in the coal industry—*[Interruption.]* Yes, we heard all about emissions, but the Opposition totally overlook those of coal-fired power stations and of the midlands coalfields. The Labour party likes to pretend that it is the friend of the workers when it suits it, and that it is in favour of the coal industry. Its opposition last night to the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill is now shown to be a masquerade, because they have no interest in protecting the workers concerned.

The only part of the European elections speech of the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) that made any sense—and the Labour party's conversion to the European cause is as breathtaking and as recent as its conversion to multilateralism—was her suggestion that a clear decision should be made to introduce American emission standards, rather than adopt a further range of standards, by a definite date. Shifting the goal posts all the time presents difficulties for the car industry. Of course it is prepared to meet the demands of its customers. If it does not, the industry will soon cease to exist. But the industry must know how the requirements will be framed and when they must be brought into effect.

The hon. Lady recited a list of foreign competitors whom she encouraged to export their vehicles to this country. The Opposition keep blathering about our balance of payments, but motor imports currently account for two thirds of the visible trade deficit—yet this evening the hon. Lady was encouraging that situation to deteriorate further at the expense of jobs and investment. Hers was a preposterous performance.

It is important, of course, that the industry knows what the standards are and when they must be introduced. There could be a great advantage if the European standards were set to match the United States federal standards. If there is not that match, manufacturers will have to continue to change specifications. With large volume throughput—alas, our volume is not what it was—it is easier to make more frequent adjustments with more frequent model changes.

We in Britain were developing lean-burn technology, and we were encouraged by earlier decisions that it would be sufficient for small cars. It was of especial interest to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) and myself and to manufacturers such as Peugeot and Fiat, about which we have not been hearing much this evening. Their Governments have voices on the Council and I should not be surprised if they are the ones to which my hon. Friend the Minister was referring when he was hinting at the qualified majority that might be obtainable in certain circumstances for the European standards to be set by 1993, and to do away with the interim standards in 1991. There is nothing to stop manufacturers meeting the standards earlier. No one is seeking to prevent the earlier marketing of models that meet the standards.

Far too great expectations have been raised of what the converters will achieve in the way of brightening up or rendering more sanitary our environment. The hon. Member for Deptford overlooks the fact that she attacked the roads programme. Having listened to her previous objections to British Rail's proposals, I do not know how we are supposed to be able to move round Britain in the increasing prosperity that the Government are bringing to it. She seems to be saying that we cannot have more roads and we cannot have more railway lines.

Ms. Ruddock: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Hal Miller: I shall finish my point before I give way to the hon. Lady.

[Sir Hal Miller]

As soon as cars stop in a traffic jam, all the good that was sought to be done is instantly undone and far more pollutant comes into the air. It is more important to ensure a free flow of traffic.

Ms. Ruddock: Will the hon. Gentleman acknowledge that in the United States, between 1970 and 1983, the emission of noxious gases was reduced by 90 per cent.? That is a proven achievement, and it has been brought about by proven technology. The hon. Gentleman is contrasting the lean-burn engine with the catalytic converter. That does not make an argument in favour of any method of reducing emissions, including the way in which it can and has been done.

Sir Hal Miller: The hon. Lady is knocking British technology again and the opportunity that we have of developing a lead.

Of course there has been an improvement in the United States. There are much freer traffic flows in the United States. That is the point that I was making. Cars are kept moving in the United States, and as a result there is not the build-up of pollution that is experienced elsewhere.

As I understood the rather interrupted remarks of my hon. Friend the Minister, I thought that he was getting the matter right. We should introduce stricter standards in 1993 and do away with the interim standards, bearing in mind that they apply to smaller cars up to 1·4 litres. That is of great interest to my hon. Friend the Member for Northfield and me, and I know that my hon. Friend will wish to take up the matter if he manages to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Manufacturers and others need to know that there will be a set of standards. They need to know also when they are to apply. With that knowledge, we can get on with the job of compliance.

12.54 am

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): This is a slight improvement, in practical terms, on the last time that we debated this matter. That was at 3 o'clock in the morning, rather than just coming up to 1 o'clock. However, it is regrettable that these debates take place after the event and at a time when no one is listening to them.

It is difficult for the Government to get across the message that they are leading Europe in the drive towards improved environmental standards when in reality they are taking decisions without consulting us first and when part of the proposal is to water down a previous agreement. The Government have a problem over trying to maintain that their view has always been consistent.

As the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) said, the Americans blazed the trail and have achieved dramatic reductions in noxious emissions. It is amazing, however, that whenever this matter is debated we are told about all the wonderful benefits that the non-existent lean-burn engine will create. We are also told —as the hon. Member for Bromsgrove (Sir H. Miller) has again told us—that we are running down British technology. We have in this country one of the world leaders in catalytic converters but it has to get all its business from abroad. The Government refuse to introduce proposals that would ensure that British technology is in the lead.

I agree with the Government that the French are using stalling tactics. France is the anchor man of Europe in this area. I recall the advert that says that the Peugeot takes your breath away. I think that it does. The French Government's attitude takes it away even more. Peugeot says that catalytic converters are absurd, but it fits them to all its export models so that it can pick up all the business that is to hand.

We must grasp the nettle. We must move forward in a clear and consistent direction and accept that the catalytic converter is the way forward. We should get on with it instead of continuing to use stalling tactics.

It has been said that the catalytic converter leads to loss of efficiency. The hon. Member for Deptford said that that is not necessarily true. I hope that she is right. However, we may have to face up to a loss of efficiency and to an increase in cost, but that has to be set against the environmental improvement that will follow from its use.

The sooner a directive can be agreed and put into effect the sooner the industry will get its act together and address the efficiency and cost problems. I fear that it is wishful thinking to believe that the industry will respond to customer demand. Consumers want to see an improvement in the environment, but how many people are prepared to pay an extra £300 for a catalytic converter unless they are obliged to do so? People were not prepared to switch to unleaded petrol until there was a financial inducement to do so. Incidentally, I wonder when the Government will do what the German Government did. They allowed a significant differential on unleaded petrol until everybody had converted and then they imposed a surcharge. In Germany unleaded petrol is 10 per cent. dearer than leaded petrol now that the Government have got everybody hooked on to using it.

When we last debated the matter the Government said that they were anxious to go in this direction but not too fast because there were a number of technical difficulties and British interests to consider. That will always be the excuse and the argument. Ultimately, however, the nettle has to be grasped. The political groupings within the European Parliament have decided to put on the pressure, and the Commission has responded to it.

I accept that on occasions the Commission gets carried away by its own enthusiasm. Sometimes it makes proposals that are unnecessary or unworkable, and sometimes the time scale is unrealistic. I am not wholly convinced, however, that on this occasion that is the case. The Government will be left with egg on their face. They are suggesting that we push for an agreement that weakens what we had six months ago, on the basis that the ultimate goal is stronger, but that it will take two years longer to get there. That is not a convincing advance in greening the environment. It does not convince me and I do not believe that it will convince the British public. I wonder whether we are engaged in an exercise that will do until 15 June, with the real negotiations happening after that.

I realise that there is very little time and that other hon. Members may wish to speak. I think that we should move forward. The lean-burn engine is now an irrelevance. We should give our catalytic converter manufacturers a clear goal to aim for. We should recognise that the industry has the ability to respond but that it needs to be given a target. The Government should not give the industry all the leeway that it asks for, and nor should the European Community.

1 am

Mr. Peter Griffiths (Portsmouth, North): I have always felt that there is a case to be made for catalytic converters in their own right, and not just as something imposed on us that we reluctantly accept. I do not think that there is a conflict between catalytic converters and lean-burn engines. The catalytic converter is present-day technology which has been used on millions of vehicles throughout the world and of which we have wide experience. There are no lean-burn engines in the strict sense, despite an earlier comment about the Ford engines being built at Bridgend. No one wishes to decry the success of Ford in that work. The plant was built for that very purpose but the engines are not capable of themselves, or even with a one-way converter, of meeting the standards to which my hon. Friend the Minister referred.

The standards that we should be aiming at are those acceptable to the United States and to Scandinavia. We should be second to no one in our aim. Some of my hon. Friends do damage to the interest of the environment by talking about three-way converters as being an additional cost. Over the years a great many developments in motoring were regarded as an additional cost but they have become the accepted norm. In regard to comfort, we have the car heater; in safety, we have windscreen washers; in environmental protection we have silencers and resonators. I have no doubt that in future we will regard a development perhaps beyond the three-way converter as the norm. It may even be combined with a form of the lean-burn engine.

Accepting the converter does not mean that we have to abandon all other means of improving the efficiency of engines in order to save fuel and the efficiency of their operation so as to reduce the amount of emission into the atmosphere. The sooner manufacturers can ensure that electronic ignition and fuel injection are the norm on all small vehicles, the sooner we shall see improvements in fuel efficiency which will make it more possible to accept the cost of installing three-way converters.

The motorist may well feel that he will be faced with additional cost. The cost will not be so great when this is a world standard. When converters are fitted to all motor cars as a matter of course, the cost will come down markedly. Because they contain precious metals, the cost will never be negligible, but technology will improve them and the cost will be acceptable. If we can get away from the argument, "Your kind of technology is better than mine," and look for a combination of the best existing technology, we shall be able to sell that to the motorist.

The motorist is as keen as everyone else on improvements in the cleanliness of the atmosphere. I have considerable experience of driving in Los Angeles. Reference has been made to the wide open spaces and the lack of traffic jams in the United States. Anyone who has been in a traffic jam on the San Diego freeway knows what a traffic jam is. I know a great many people in California but I do not know anyone who is not an enthusiast for the improvements that we are still busily discussing. Americans have lead-free petrol and converters and they recognise them as aspects of modern motoring. The sooner we accept that the matter is not controversial, the better.

1.5 am

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): I have listened with great interest to the speeches of hon. Members on both sides of the House. Everyone should have expressed an overwhelming desire that we should tackle the problems of pollution, especially those that affect the car exhaust system, in the most workable way. Much of the legislation that has been agreed by the European Commission and the member states on the cleaning up of the exhausts of cars of higher ccs than we are discussing would go unchallenged. Many manufacturers, including the Rover Group, already offer cars fitted with catalytic converters and desmogging exhaust systems necessary to comply with that legislation.

In November, we seemed quite clear about our attitude towards vehicles of up to 1·4 litres, but we now have to look at a more stringent set of requirements. Perhaps we thought we had the opportunity to adopt the twin track development of, first, a lean-burn engine system and a single converter and, secondly, a single converter for more conventional engines.

I am not cynical by nature, but I am aware of the imminent European elections. I noticed that the latest edition of the CLEAR newsletter, of which we have all received a copy, under the column headed, "What the papers say", contained an item which encapsulates exactly why this debate is taking place tonight. It highlights an item that appeared in *The Independent* on 6 April 1989 which stated:

> "EC bows to greens and plans tough exhaust controls. In a remarkable gesture to the Green movement, the European Commission last night pledged to propose tough US-style emission standards for cars, which could cut exhaust fumes produced by small saloon cars alone by as much as 75 per cent. before 1993."

I wonder whether there is a connection between what the Commission is seeking to do through the revision of rules that we are discussing and the fact that there is pressure on European parliamentarians in the run-up to the elections on June 15 to take a more positive initiative in solving the perceived problems of exhaust pollution.

Certainly the suggestion that we are seeking to clean up exhaust emissions by 75 per cent. is not correct. Exhausts will not pump out clear air as a result of the new proposals; they will pump out carbon dioxide, and we have another problem with the build-up of carbon dioxide around the earth which will not be helped by creating more of it in the proposed system of exhaust clean-up.

I am not suggesting that we should turn our backs on that system, but there are other ways of tackling the problem. In the early 1970s the United States had a major problem of exhaust pollution, principally in the Los Angeles basin. In those days it was common for Americans to buy 4, 5 or 6 litre V8 cars with very crude technology and very early ignition systems, which because they were never serviced—Americans keep their cars until they stop working before having them serviced—were polluting incredibly badly the environment in which they were travelling. That resulted in the legislature deciding that the exhaust should be cleaned up.

Since then, automobile technology—even allowing for the fact that catalytic converters are not fitted—has moved considerably further forward. For instance, we now have positive crank case ventilation, which means that the internal exhaust fumes which were vented into the atmosphere and which accounted for about 20 per cent. of

[Mr. Roger King]

exhaust fumes from cars are recirculated and burnt by the engine. That has had a significant effect on reducing emissions.

We have also moved to transistorised ignition, better fuel injection and carburation systems and better techniques of engine management generally, all of which have helped to reduce emissions. We have, therefore, benefited considerably, and in America they have also benefited from the fact that the average size of car, in terms of engine cubic capacity, has dropped as their love affair with Japanese cars has had its impact. They are no longer driving such large vehicles.

It is time for us to ask whether, by this legislation—which will have a significant impact on small vehicles—we are moving in the right direction and whether it will rebound on us. If we pursue this course, it will handicap lean-burn technology. Ford is producing about 450,000 lean-burn-type engines, and I accept what my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths) said about that achievement. New and more advanced types of engine are being prepared, and the Rover Group has a new type of lean-burn engine which is due to be announced later this year.

That is significant progress, but we are putting that in jeopardy by insisting that those engines are also coupled to three-way catalytic converters, which will increase fuel consumption. There is no way round that. The engine is driving an air pump, and as anyone who knows anything about the internal combustion engine is aware, as one drives more systems off the engine, one must use more fuel; it takes energy to drive the generator, the electrical system, the water pump and an air pump into the exhaust system. So it is not true to say that given two cars, one with and one without a converter system, the converter system vehicle will be more economical.

In other words, we shall be consuming more fuel, which will create more exhaust emissions—more carbon dioxide—as a result. If we abandon lean-burn technology and go for the conventional engine-air ratio, burning within the engine, and a catalytic converter system, we shall get an increase of about 20 per cent. in fuel consumption and, hence a 20 per cent. increase in exhaust emissions. In other words, we shall be consuming fossil fuels in terms of petrol at a rate one fifth greater than we need consume.

There will also be a 13 to 15 per cent. increase in price, and there is no escaping that fact. Catalytic converters are expensive, and the ancillary air blowers fitted to them are equally expensive and require a small amount of maintenance. They are expensive to fit and the price will not drop dramatically.

There will, therefore, be little desire to develop the small engine. Surely, rather than concentrate on bigger engines for cars, it would be in everybody's interest to encourage the development of ever smaller and more efficient engines that breathe in less air and, by implication, pollute less. By attaching all this equipment to engines, we shall destroy an area of development which, in my view, could play a significant part in ensuring a better environment.

I fear that, as a result of this legislation, we shall see the end of vehicles such as the Mini, which has performed sterling service as an exceptionally fuel efficient car, averaging between 45 and 60 miles per gallon, thereby polluting in a small way. That vehicle is not large enough to take this type of three-way catalytic converter. We will have to get used to bigger cars which will allow this type of system to be fitted because space in the car is required to take all the exhaust cleaning devices. They cannot be retro-fitted to existing cars. A car such as the Mini, which has been in production for 30 years, will go out of production as a result of the inability to modify it to comply with the 1993 regulations. A 1-litre car, consuming small amounts of air and polluting less, would be preferable but that is not what is suggested. We seem to want bigger engines and more pollution as a result of loading vehicles with this type of emission control.

Surely it makes sense to exempt vehicles up to 1 litre from having to use this type of anti-pollution equipment to allow engine developers to develop more and more precision engines which are more efficient. We should have engines capable of polluting less. As I have said, we should concentrate on engine efficiency.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State spoke clearly at the beginning of the debate. However, the interim measures suggested will confuse industry. If we have to accept emission control, it would be better to have the 1993 United States-style emission control rather than any interim measures. That would allow the manufacturers to concentrate on one goal. To that extent, I agree with my hon. Friend. However, it would have been much better for us to continue a debate with the European Commission and our partners in Europe to devise a much more sensible way of tackling this serious problem as it affects the small passenger car. There are alternatives and we should have explored them. However, in the event of our not being able to, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State is entirely right to opt for the 1993 solution alone.

1.16 am

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) asked how many people would voluntarily spend money to improve the environment. The answer is that some would, but not enough. We need some enforcement and a great deal of encouragement and, perhaps, example. I want to pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment who is responsible for litter and anti-pollution measures. With others, she has managed to help raise the proportion of unleaded fuel that has been sold from 1 per cent. on her appointment to 15 per cent. now. It has been the second greatest cultural change since the war. If I was asked—I am sure that no one will ask—I would have to say that the greatest is the move away from drinking and driving in which I have played a small part.

The important point is that the 15 per cent. of people using unleaded fuel represents only about a quarter of those who could do so. Even with plenty of information to overcome ignorance and with a 10p price differential to overcome the apathy, there is still a large number of people—some are probably Friends of the Earth, some may be in the Conservative party and some may be in one of the Opposition parties—who have not yet got round to using unleaded fuel in their cars. People should do so because that is the way forward. Whether we have cars with three-way catalysts or even one-way catalysts, we shall all use unleaded fuel in our new cars soon. We might as well start doing that now and show that we are concerned.

We have heard some lectures during the debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr.

King) gave us a lecture. I am sure that it was accurate but I am not sure how much of it would be supported by the manufacturers. We should not mislead ourselves and say that the smallest capacity cars have the best fuel efficiency. That is not always so. In fact, sometimes it is the middle range cars that have the best fuel efficiency. However, that varies between models and manufacturers. My hon. Friend was right to say—I hope that I made it clear in my speech, although some other lectures were taking place at the time—that 1993 would provide clarity for manufacturers. That is important. 1991 appears to have no friends here.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Sir H. Miller) made probably the best speech in the debate. It was forthright, forceful and right. Those who have any doubts or who are no longer in the Chamber might take the opportunity of reading that speech. In that way they will understand what is in Britain's interests as manufacturers, consumers and environmentalists, led by my right hon. Friend, the well-known fellow of the Royal Society, the Prime Minister.

We have to try to keep common sense moving in line with technology. We must provide opportunities for future technology to come forward. It is clear that fast burn and lean burn will be the technology of the future. We shall have moved back one step on fuel efficiency by moving to this apparent compulsion for three-way catalysts. However, that is acceptable and we believe that it is achievable at the environment meeting on 8 June.

I need to say to my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths) that his record on these matters over a long time was brought out to the House well this evening and we are grateful to him for explaining some of the myths that should not worry people too much. There are advantages in welcoming progress, rather than rejecting it.

I can remember the early days of my motoring life, as a passenger when I was about eight years old, when it took about six hours to drive up to Stafford. I used to wonder why so many wimps and wets—before I realised that being a wet was a good thing rather than a bad thing—had heaters in their cars when everyone knew that a blanket was perfectly sufficient. Then came flashing indicators rather than little arms that came out at the side of the car to tell people which way one was going. As my hon. Friend pointed out, there are many things that are now accepted as part of progress and even as being necessary, when previously they were optional extras and not all that desirable.

The hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) gave the speech that I might have given if I had decided to take twice as long. She explained some of the basic chemistry. There is general agreement on what we are trying to achieve, except that there seems to be a rather liberal approach among the transport spokespeople on the Labour Front Bench. Her hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) supports more new roads. She does not. It seems that we should try to find some way to reconcile that.

Ms. Ruddock: I did not, of course, say that I did not support new roads. I actually said that, through the Government's programme of much increased road building, the problem of increased carbon dioxide emissions will be continuously exacerbated.

Mr. Bottomley: I am grateful for that intervention. When we open roads like the Acle bypass on the A47 between Norwich and Great Yarmouth, where people in the summer can get through in two minutes rather than previously getting through in 45 minutes, or when we open the Okehampton bypass, where people can get past in 10 minutes rather than 1 hour 10 minutes, we find that there are fewer exhaust fumes. It seems to those of us scooting past on the high-speed train, seeing great lines of motorists and important commercial traffic that needs to be on the roads going nose to tail unnecessarily, that we are seeing more exhaust fumes coming out—exhaust fumes are a better way of describing them than gaseous emissions. We are trying to go for efficiency and to improve the environment.

Ms. Ruddock: I am sorry, but the Minister must acknowledge that it is the increase in the number of vehicles that will be dramatic. One cannot offset that by talking about vehicles in traffic queues.

Mr. Bottomley: Two thirds of the people with provisional licences are women. Under my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, the proportion of adult women with driving licences has moved from 40 per cent. to 50 per cent., and will shortly rise to 60 per cent. and 75 per cent., the figure for men. It is all very well for the Labour party to say that it is all right for people to drive cars as long as they are middle-aged, middle class and male. We should try to remember the women, the pensioners and the ethnic minorities as well. I am a one-nation Conservative, as the hon. Lady has discovered.

The hon. Lady was in slight difficulty with her speech because she had obviously read *The Guardian*. I need to apologise to David Hencke because I only explained things to him once yesterday and, sadly, he was badly sub-edited. I want to make it plain that I was trying to explain to him —and I take all the blame myself—that we were not keen on 1991, but we were keen on 1993. I hope that when *The Guardian* reports this debate, it will try to report what I have said tonight, which I leaked to that paper last night.

Ms. Ruddock: Will the Minister clarify now, therefore, what will happen if there is not a qualified majority—he may expect it, but he must acknowledge that there may not be—which will agree to remove the 1991 proposals? If the Government cannot have their way on the 1991 interim proposals, will they still support the 1993 proposals?

Mr. Bottomley: Our aim, which I stated clearly, which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has stated clearly and which my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley), also stated clearly this afternoon, is that 1993 is to be supported. We do not support 1991. We believe that there is no qualified majority available for 1991. There is no manufacturing sense to the 1991 proposal, so we are not likely to get it. If the Council of Ministers cannot reach agreement the whole thing will be back on the boil and we can invite my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) back into the Chamber because then the sense of his amendment will have been met. I apologise to my hon. Friend because I should not perhaps have tried to insist on intervening in his speech in the way in which he intervened in mine because then it might not have been necessary for him to say

[Mr. Bottomley]

goodbye. What is important is to meet the last part of the amendment, which was not moved, which is to have what makes sense for the manufacturers.

It is also important to realise that the Government cannot always come to these debates with a totally open mind. I do not recall, when I was a Back Bencher, always coming to debates with a closed mind. When hon. Members, sadly, decide to leave in the middle of a debate, having obviously through extra-sensory perception come to the same view at the same time, they must allow Government to do the same thing and occasionally to try to anticipate the interests of manufacturers, as was wisely pointed out by my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove and many other hon. Members, and to try to provide an indication of what we believe to be not only in the national interest, but in the wider European interest as well. I pay tribute to my right hon. and hon. Friends who have helped to make that possible and I look forward to getting agreement at the European Council on 8 June, supported by everyone who has spoken in the debate, even those who, sadly, are no longer with us.

I ask that the House support the motion and that we move forward towards having a better atmosphere in Europe as well as in Britain.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 69, Noes 4.

Division No. 215] [1.20 am

AYES

Amess, David	Burns, Simon
Amos, Alan	Burt, Alistair
Arbuthnot, James	Butcher, John
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*	Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*	Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Blackburn, Dr John G.	Carrington, Matthew
Boswell, Tim	Chapman, Sydney
Bottomley, Peter	Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia	Currie, Mrs Edwina
Brazier, Julian	Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Bright, Graham	Day, Stephen
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*	Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank	Mills, Iain
Durant, Tony	Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Fallon, Michael	Neubert, Michael
Garel-Jones, Tristan	Nicholls, Patrick
Gill, Christopher	Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*	Page, Richard
Hague, William	Paice, James
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*	Pike, Peter L.
Hanley, Jeremy	Prescott, John
Harris, David	Ruddock, Joan
Haynes, Frank	Ryder, Richard
Heathcoat-Amory, David	Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Hind, Kenneth	Stevens, Lewis
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*	Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*	Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Irvine, Michael	Twinn, Dr Ian
Jack, Michael	Waddington, Rt Hon David
Janman, Tim	Waller, Gary
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*	Widdecombe, Ann
Lawrence, Ivan	Wood, Timothy
Lightbown, David	
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*	Tellers for the Ayes:
Maclean, David	Mr. Stephen Dorrell and
Maude, Hon Francis	Mr. Tom Sackville.
Miller, Sir Hal	

NOES

Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*	
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*	Tellers for the Noes:
McAllion, John	Mr. Dennis Skinner and
McAvoy, Thomas	Mr. Eddie Loyden.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 6529/89 on vehicle emissions; and supports the Government in its efforts to secure an agreement on emissions from small cars, taking into account environmental effects, fuel economy and the needs of industry.

INHERITANCE TAX

Ordered,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Estates of Deceased Persons and Inheritances and on Gifts) (Sweden) Order 1989 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 14th April.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

To be presented by Privy Councillors or Members of Her Majesty's Household.

Schools (Capacity)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

1.37 am

Mr. Tom Arnold (Hazel Grove): I am most grateful for the opportunity to raise the issue of school capacity. As my hon. Friend the Minister knows, I want to draw the attention of the House to the dispute that has arisen between the village of Highlane in the Hazel Grove constituency and the local authority, the Stockport metropolitan borough council.

The borough council has recently carried out a reorganisation of secondary education in the borough and, as part of that reorganisation, it has also introduced new priority areas for determining who can be admitted to particular schools. Since October of last year, I have received representations from parents in the village of Highlane, who have discovered that, contrary to the previous history of the village, they can no longer expect to send their children to the town of Marple to be educated in Marple's high school. That has come as a great shock to my constituents in that village, because hitherto Highlane has been included in the Marple priority area, and now and henceforth that will no longer apply.

I have received a great deal of correspondence and I have attended a great many meetings, including at least two public meetings that were extremely well attended. The feeling in the village has run high, because it is a village community and one where a sense of cohesion has traditionally been a marked characteristic of life in the village.

The situation has been made worse by the fact that it had been widely thought in the village of Highlane that at a meeting in 1985 to discuss the council's proposals an undertaking was given by the then chairman of the education authority that, consequent upon the changes to reorganisation in the borough, parents in Highlane could continue to send their children to Marple. The parents believed that an undertaking had been given at that meeting. The local authority denies that and as there is no agreed record of what took place at the meeting, this rather odd and disturbing situation cannot be resolved one way or another. I thought it worthwhile mentioning this to my hon. Friend the Minister because it underlines once again the extent to which feeling in the village has been driven to a very high pitch by the sequence of events which has taken place.

The history of Highlane has been inextricably bound up with the town of Marple. The children of Highlane have been educated in Marple, to my understanding, since the first half of the 19th century. Certainly in recent decades the links between the village of Highlane and the village of Marple have been very strong. The issue that we are facing now relates to parental choice.

I do not believe that it was right for me to have campaigned at the last general election on the issue of parental choice only to turn round now to the parents in Highlane who are affected by this issue and say to them, "Ah well, but of course in your particular circumstances parental choice does not apply. It is administrative convenience which must rule the day." I do not accept that proposition, but the local council and councillors are urging me to accept it.

There will always be occasions when granting freedom to individuals will produce untidy situations. It may well be that in trying to organise secondary education in the metropolitan borough of Stockport the council will face a certain amount of untidiness if the principle of parental choice is to be allowed to proceed. My attitude towards that is, "Well, so be it." It is worth having a certain amount of untidiness to maintain a fundamental freedom and to increase it with regard to parental choice in this issue.

In a letter to me dated 1 December 1988 my hon. Friend the Minister pointed out that there is an appeals procedure. Mrs. Hazel Howard, who lives in Highlane and who is a leading campaigner in the local movement, said that the effect of the new priority areas is that

"the children of Highlane will in future have absolutely no choice but to attend Hazelgrove high school."

My hon. Friend the Minister explained that that is not so. Stockport education authority operates an admissions system which guarantees children living in a certain priority area a place at the school associated with that area. However, that does not debar other pupils from applying for vacant places. It is also open to parents to appeal to an independent local appeal committee if their choice is not accepted. My hon. Friend the Minister explained that he understood that last year 15 appeals against non-admission to Marple Hall school were successful.

All that is true, but I do not believe that an annual appeals procedure is the same as having a right. Previously the parents had a right by virtue of the way in which the boundaries of the priority area were drawn. To tell the parents that they have an appeals procedure available to them is hardly the same as recognising the historical ties of the village and allowing them to take it for granted that their children, upon completing primary education, could proceed to Marple. As I suggested earlier, administrative convenience has won the day. While I do not doubt for one moment that compromises were necessary within the metropolitan borough of Stockport to carry through the reorganisation of secondary education, I want to make my position perfectly clear. I am challenging the council's policy of priority areas.

The councillors and council officials concerned have been at some pains to say to people who have raised objections and made representations to the authority that they do not consider that the capacity of the Marple school is the real point at issue. They say that we are effectively challenging the authority's decision on priority areas. My response to that is to say, precisely. It may well be proper for the council to develop a policy and it may be entirely understandable that it should wish to develop it in this particular way, but not at the expense of the principles to which I referred earlier.

The capacity of Marple Hall school has been the subject of widespread local debate. My hon. Friend the Minister has kept me in touch with the various complicated developments which have taken place in the recent past. I shall not rehearse all the figures now, except to say that parental choice should be limited only by the school's capacity to take pupils, and no other criteria. If Marple Hall has the capacity to take these parents' children, the school should be allowed to do so.

The numbers of children involved are not large. Although, when the matters were first brought to my attention, 35 families were involved, the number of children has now dropped to 11. That is because the

[Mr. Tom Arnold]

passage of time and the parents' concern about the future of their children's education this autumn has led them to make other arrangements. A number of children have accepted places at a Cheshire school in Poynton. A number of other parents may be thinking that they should accept the policy put forward by Stockport that henceforward their children must go to Hazel Grove. However, 11 parents who want their children to go to Marple Hall enjoy my support.

I have seen no evidence to suggest that Marple Hall does not have the capacity to take the relatively small number of children involved. However, the council has been adamant in responding to all my representations by saying that it is not prepared to deviate from its policy because to do so would create serious repercussions across the metropolitan borough. It would say that, but my constituents and I cannot possibly support that attitude.

What then is to be done, and what would I like my hon. Friend the Minister to do? I recognise that in such matters his powers must, necessarily, be limited. My hon. Friend was kind enough to point out in one of his letters to me that, under the open enrolment provisions of our new legislation, there would be scope for what is referred to technically as the standard number—in this case 270, which has been set as the admissions level for Marple Hall—to be revised.

In his letter, my hon. Friend the Minister pointed out that:

"The authority are of course, free to admit above the published admission number if there is fair capacity available. From 1st September 1989, the governing body of the school will also be able to propose a higher number than the authority's published figure if it has reason to think that that number, whether it is the standard number or not, is too low. If that is rejected by the authority, the governing body's proposal will then fall to the Secretary of State to decide . . . I should explain that this provision does not come into force until September because it will only be then that admission levels are published for the 1990 intake. Admission authorities are entitled to set a level for 1990 and beyond which is higher than a school's standard number, without publishing proposals. It remains to be seen whether Stockport will do so for Marple Hall, but whether they do so now or not is a matter for them."

At the moment, I am not optimistic that Stockport council would wish to avail itself of that procedure because it has been so adamant about its desire to stand by its present policy at all costs. I hope that this debate will help to focus attention locally on the important issues of principle which are involved. I hope that it will help both the Marple Hall governors and the councillors and their officials to recognise that my constituents' sense of grievance in this case is genuine and rooted in much precedent and local history.

I hope that—notwithstanding the lateness of the date in terms of the arrangements that must be made for next autumn—a spirit of good will can prevail, and that the council will recognise that it should try to meet the points that have been made by adopting a more flexible and, I believe, more reasonable policy. That policy should recognise that parental choice has a part to play in our fundamental freedoms, and that an issue of freedom faces us now.

1.55 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. John Butcher): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hazel Grove (Mr. Arnold) on the tenacity and clarity with which he has pursued this issue over a long period. When I knew that he had succeeded in securing this Adjournment debate I looked at past correspondence and noted that my predecessor also had to deal with the matter. In the light of that, I thought that the best way in which I could help my hon. Friend would be to see whether I could give the House any new or additional information which my hon. Friend could then communicate to his constituents when they sought his advice—which I am sure they will continue to do, given his diligence in pursuing their interests.

As my hon. Friend made clear, his main concern is the matter of the priority areas for Marple Hall and Hazel Grove high schools in Stockport. He has written to me about it several times, and I am aware that it is currently of particular concern to parents in the Highlane area. My hon. Friend described the long and historic links between Highlane and the village of Marple. I confirm that his anxiety for parental choice to be delivered is also very much my concern, and we do not differ at all on the priority that it should be given in practice within local authorities. However, we run a pluralistic system in our society and, indeed, in education, and there are parts of local authority remits in which a DES Minister cannot and should not intervene. We can, however, urge on all involved the view that local authorities should where possible consolidate on schools that are supported by parental choice, and that that is the best way in which to serve the interests of the local community—and, in the long term, those of the local education authority.

As my hon. Friend has pointed out, the children of Highlane have for the most part attended Marple Ridge high school. Because Highlane is further from Marple Hall than from Marple Ridge and is nearer to another school—Hazel Grove high school—I understand that it was the LEA's decision to include Highlane in the priority area of Hazel Grove high school. That was Stockport's decision. My hon. Friend, as I have said, is fighting for his constituents' interests, and is legitimately seeking ways either to challenge that decision or—as I interpret his comments—to appeal to the authority's sense of reason and duty to respond to the demands of its residents, ratepayers and electors.

I am a little mystified by the attitude that a long tradition should be curtailed, and that long-standing loyalties, parental choice and commitments—which, for all I know, may well run through families for generations—should be severed in this way.

I shall amplify the comment that I made in my recent letter to my hon. Friend. From 4 August 1990, as my hon. Friend correctly pointed out, schools will be required to admit at least their standard numbers if there is sufficient demand. There is provision in the Education Reform Act 1988 for admissions authorities to admit in excess of a school's standard number. Furthermore, an authority that is not responsible for admissions can take action if necessary.

Where the local education authority is responsible for admissions, that authority is the governors—and vice versa. My hon. Friend may like to consider that aspect tomorrow morning, when we have had a chance to

recharge our cerebra with the tonic that comes from sleep. If the judgment of that authority is that the existing standard number underestimates the school's capacity, and if it cannot reach agreement with the admissions authority on the level of admission, on or after 1 September 1989 it may ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science to fix a higher standard number.

Any future amendment to the standard number of Marple Hall school will be for the local education authority and the governors to consider in the first instance. Only the Secretary of State can vary a standard number, so it would not be in order for me to comment on that possibility—in case such an application were to come before my right hon. Friend. My hon. Friend will appreciate that, to use these awful words, the quasi-judicial position of the Secretary of State is a regular and frequent restraint on what can and cannot be said, even in this Chamber.

As I indicated, the question of priority areas is not within my right hon. Friend's locus and therefore I cannot comment on it. However, I hope that my remarks on the mechanism of requesting—as in this case, presumably—an upward variation in the standard number are helpful. I have no doubt that my hon. Friend will refer to me again if he requires further advice or clarification of how his constituents can make use of that mechanism—presumably, and preferably, with the co-operation of the local authority. I hope that my hon. Friend finds some reassurance in those few words. I shall continue to keep a close eye on developments in the community whose interests he represented so well tonight.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at three minutes to Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 25 May 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

ASSOCIATED BRITISH PORTS (No. 2) BILL *(By Order)*
Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [23 May], That the Bill be now read the Third time.
Debate to be resumed on Thursday 8 June.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (PENALTY FARES) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT (PENALTY FARES) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Order for consideration, as amended, read.
To be considered on Thursday 8 June.

HYTHE, KENT, MARINA BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON UNDERGROUND (VICTORIA) BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE SOUTHBANK BILL *(By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 8 June.

REDBRIDGE LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Tuesday 6 June at Seven o'clock.

WENTWORTH ESTATE BILL *(By Order)*
Read a Second time and committed.

Oral Answers to Questions

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Sheepmeat Regime

1. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on progress on the negotiations on the future of the sheepmeat regime.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John MacGregor): Discussions on the Commission's proposals for changes to the sheepmeat regime have made little progress. I suspect that negotiations are likely to continue for some time.

Mr. Howells: I am sure that many of our sheep farmers would like to know whether the Minister is in favour of the present grading system, the deficiency payment and the headage payment, or is he in favour of further cuts in support systems.

Mr. MacGregor: I certainly think that we have to tackle the escalating cost of the sheepmeat regime because it has virtually doubled in three years and is now nearly 1·7 million ecus. In terms of the outcome of the regime, I am very much in favour of ensuring a system that will enable our industry to gain full benefits from its excellent structure, efficiency and expertise and from our natural advantages. I suspect that at some stage we will be looking at a different set of proposals, which is why I do not want to be too specific about how exactly we achieve our objectives. I am clear about our objectives and that we want to ensure that our sheepmeat industry has the maximum opportunities in the Community. I have made it clear from the outset that I am opposed to limits on headage payments.

Mr. Ian Bruce: My right hon. Friend will know that the farmers of south Dorset are particularly well set up and very efficient producers of mutton and lamb, and that they depend very much on the sheepmeat regime. Can my right hon. Friend reassure them that by a combination of the sheepmeat regime and green pound reform the Government will ensure that it is economic to produce mutton and lamb well into the next century?

Mr. MacGregor: I can assure my hon. Friend that that is very much my objective. Recent decisions that I have secured in the Community have proved that. My hon. Friend will know that the green pound devaluation which we secured in the recent price negotiations was more than double that of our nearest competitors in the Community. That greatly improves the competitive position of our producers and is another indication of how I fight for their interests.

Mr. Home Robertson: What is the Minister's reaction to the fact that the European Commission wants to do away with variable premiums by 1992? The Commission specifically proposes to impose headage limits for hill livestock compensatory allowances. Is that not a serious threat of discrimination against British producers, especially those in the hills and uplands? Will he take this opportunity to give sheep farmers and their employees a clear statement of his and the Government's intentions for the future of the industry?

Mr. MacGregor: I have already made it clear that I am determined to fight for their interests in the way that I have always done. I have indicated the extra benefit that we secured in the price negotiations this year. I am as opposed as anyone to the imposition of limits on headage payments, because as well as running against the general objective of the CAP, which is to reward efficient producers and take advantage of natural advantages, it is clearly discriminatory. It also fails to take account of the importance to producers on quite modest incomes of the need to have substantial numbers of sheep in certain parts of the country, especially in Scotland where I have been for the last two days and where I thoroughly discussed these matters with Scottish sheep producers.

Irradiated Food

4. Mr. Morgan: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether a diagnostic test for irradiated food is yet available.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Richard Ryder): Work is continuing to develop tests that could be applied to particular categories of produce. Meanwhile, in those countries where food irradiation is already permitted, control of the process is carried out by licensing and documentary checks as recommended by the World Health Organisation and the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations.

Mr. Morgan: Can the Minister confirm that with or without the availability of a diagnostic test his Government have decided to authorise the legitimation of the sale of irradiated food? Perhaps that is inevitable. If we believe everything we read in *Vanity Fair* the Prime Minister herself believes that ionising radiation in the bath will extend her shelf life. Is it not the case that dodgy produce that has passed its sell-by date is as unacceptable to the British consumer as are Prime Ministers who have passed their sell-by date?

Mr. Ryder: The World Health Organisation approves of irradiation. More than 20 countries use irradiation, and more than 30 countries, including the United States and France, permit it despite there being no test available to those countries. Under those circumstances, there is no reason why we should not follow suit.

Mr. Ashby: Does my hon. Friend realise that the consumer finds it unacceptable not to be given the choice of choosing food that is irradiated or not? Until a test is available that can inform the consumer whether food is irradiated it should not be sold in this country.

Mr. Ryder: I ask my hon. Friend to be patient. Next month we shall publish a report by some of our officials who are drawing up a framework for irradiation. I will be greatly surprised if labelling does not feature among their main recommendations.

Dr. David Clark: As no diagnostic test currently exists, does the Minister appreciate that not only consumers but farmers, retailers and the Labour party are against irradiated food? The only people in favour are the Government's big business backers. Will the Government back down and respect the will of the British people not to market irradiated food in this country until a diagnostic test is available?

Mr. Ryder: I have seldom heard such nonsense. The advisory committee on irradiation and novel foods, formerly under the chairmanship of the master of Darwin college, Cambridge, and now under the chairmanship of the vice-chancellor of the university of East Anglia, concluded without doubt that irradiation is safe. All the Government's scientific advisers have shown that it is safe, as has the World Health Organisation. More than 30 countries permit it, so why not Britain?

5. Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received regarding the proposed introduction of food irradiation in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: As my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary said, the Government accept independent scientific advice that food irradiation, properly applied, is safe, and that moreover it offers consumers real health and economic benefits. I have just received the report from officials on the framework of controls that would be necessary if we were to remove the present prohibition. I will announce a decision as soon as consideration of their report has been completed. A number of organisations and individual bodies have drawn attention to specific matters relevant to the controls, and they too will be taken into account in our consideration.

Mr. Sumberg: I hope that my right hon. Friend will move cautiously. There is widespread public concern that irradiation will merely mask unsafe foods. After all, we have lived happily for generations without it, and can do so in the future. There is a danger that 30 years hence we shall all be back here saying that we should not have taken such a step because there has been damage to life and health.

Mr. MacGregor: The advice of scientists from 54 countries, based on their consideration of the matter over a long period, is that they believe irradiation is safe. It is important of course that food is not unfit for consumption before it is irradiated. Irradiation can do nothing for food that has already deteriorated, any more than can pasteurisation.

Provided that there is a proper framework of controls, irradiation will help to ensure the safety and wholesomeness of food, and it has a contribution to make to the reduction of food-borne illnesses. Irradiation has been shown to be effective in significantly reducing the organisms that cause illnesses such as salmonella and listeria. When I present the working party's report on the framework of controls, I hope that we shall then have an informed debate.

Mr. Martyn Jones: Does the Minister accept that, leaving aside the probable dangers of irradiation in terms of the creation of free radicals which may well create chemicals within food which are dangerous to human health, irradiation is dangerous because it is impossible to detect whether the food was unfit before it was irradiated? The only way of detecting whether food is of sufficient quality at present is by examining the bacterial load on that food. We have no means of detecting the original bacterial load before the bacteria have been killed by irradiation.

Mr. MacGregor: The advisory committee on irradiated and novel foods consists of top-level experts specialising in radiological protection, biochemistry, microbiology, toxicology and nutrition. They have thoroughly examined all aspects of the subject and have come to the clear conclusion that it will not prejudice the safety and wholesomeness of food and that it has certain advantages. The hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clarke) may be correct in what he said about the Labour party, but I can assure him that he is not correct in what he said about the responses of many consumer organisations, farmers, consumers and others outside the industry.

Mr. Greg Knight: Is my right hon. Friend aware that every winter an advertisement on television shows a young boy who eats a bowl of porridge and then starts to emit a red glow? Is he aware that many members of the public feel

that a similar result may occur when they eat irradiated food? It is absolutely necessary that there is public confidence in this matter. Will my right hon. Friend assure the House that he will take whatever steps necessary to bring about that confidence?

Mr. McGregor: Yes, indeed. We ave already received a report from the advisory committee on irradiated and novel foods. There have been many conferences in many countries, and as my hon. Friend said, irradiation is practiced in more than 20 countries and is available in more. It is important to have a proper framework of control in general and to deal with the problem of unfit food. Labelling will also be necessary so that consumers can exercise free choice. I hope that when we publish that report we will have a very thorough debate, which I believe will show that irradiation, properly controlled, can play an important part in food safety.

Dr. David Clark: Does the Minister appreciate that a great weakness of the irradiation of food is that it allows unfit food to be dressed up as good food? Is he aware that in this country imported seafood has been found to be unfit for consumption, exported to Holland, irradiated and re-imported to Britain and put on the market?

Mr. MacGregor: Such matters will be an important aspect of the framework of controls that we shall set up. I urge the hon. Gentleman to await the publication of the working party report and the Government's conclusions on it.

EC Price-fixing

6. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what response he has received on the outcome of the recent price-fixing negotiations in Brussels.

Mr. MacGregor: The price settlement was very satisfactory for the United Kingdom. The green pound devaluations and reductions in the milk co-responsibility levy which I secured have been particularly welcomed in the House and elsewhere.

Mr. Latham: Is my right hon. Friend aware that he is entitled to gentle if not ecstatic congratulations on that generally satisfactory outcome? Is it not particularly good that there has been a step towards reducing the milk co-responsibility levy and will he press for further progress in that regard?

Mr. MacGregor: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend. One of the major breakthroughs in this year's price negotiations was that we achieved a reduction in the milk co-responsibility levy across the board, and elimination of it in less-favoured areas. We also secured a commitment that that would be the first stage in further developments towards phasing it out. It is particularly satisfactory that many other Ministers now recognise that the milk co-responsibility levy does not necessarily have a part to play in the CAP reforms. I hope to extend that to cereals. I assure my hon. Friend that I will be pressing for further progress in future price negotiations.

Mr. Kirkwood: Will the Minister give us an assurance that the recent changes in interest rates will be taken into acount in future price-fixing negotiations, as they are creating adverse financial conditions for farmers in my constituency? Returning to headage payments, is the Minister aware that 884 farms in my constituency and in Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale are in receipt of hill livestock compensatory allowances, and the headage payments restrictions would adverseley affect them? We welcome the Minister's support, and hope that he will strengthen his resolve to ensure that those arrangements are not interfered with.

Mr. MacGregor: The next price negotiations—I am almost tempted to say thank goodness because they take so much time—will not begin for another nine months or so. It would not be right for me to comment on what general aspects of agriculture we shall be considering then. The draft proposals for the hill livestock compensatory allowances are only at an early stage of consideration and I am sure that there will be long negotiations on them. I have made clear my position on headage payments limits, but I must point out that one of the difficulties facing us is that a number of other member states are trying to skew the many elements of the common agricultural policy far more towards very small farmers. That is not in the interests of agriculture in the Community as a whole. However, it is one of the factors that they will be taking into account in looking at the limitations, so I shall have quite a battle. I am clear that it would be a mistake to extend the system any further. I voted against the beef regime recently because I disliked the limitation on headage payments there.

Mr. Knapman: Will my right hon. Friend inform the House what effect the devaluation of the green pound will have on farmers' incomes?

Mr. MacGregor: I am glad to say that the changes in the green pound this year will, of themselves, add about £155 million to farmers' incomes, but will have a negligible effect on the retail prices index.

Mr. Ron Davies: That, of course, will not do anything to offset the 20 per cent. loss in farm incomes from which farmers have suffered since 1983. Can the Minister tell us whether, when he was in Brussels, he discussed the pricing of organic produce? Can he tell us especially whether he tried to convert his colleagues in Brussels to the view advanced in Britain by his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, who said a couple of weeks ago that he regarded the production of organic food as another means by which farmers rip off consumers?

Mr. MacGregor: That is not what my right hon. Friend said.

Mr. Ron Davies: Yes, it is.

Mr. MacGregor: In answer to the hon. Gentleman's question, we did not discuss the pricing of organic produce in Brussels and we have not done so before. The increase in organic production has a part to play—although in my own view, it is not a major part—in the development of agriculture and it is important to allow it to develop because I know that some consumers especially want organic food. It is important that organic produce should be defined correctly and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will welcome our recent announcement about an agreement on standards for organic produce, which is an essential first step in the development of organic produce.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. Friend won many advantages for British farmers in the Brussels negotiations. Did he have an opportunity to discuss the fruit and vegetable regime, which still suffers from many inefficiencies, costs about £1 billion ecu a year and has been sharply criticised by the Court of Auditors?

Mr. MacGregor: I have noticed that the Court of Auditors has just criticised the operation of the regime and I am trying to get hold of a copy of its report myself because I want to study it urgently. I am grateful for what my hon. Friend said about the price negotiations. We managed to extend the stabilisers to certain further vegetables and there have been, therefore, reductions in price there, which will be helpful in dealing with some of the critical aspects of the regime that my hon. Friend has in mind.

Whales

7. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress is being made in reducing the damage to the world's whale population.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Donald Thompson): The moratorium on commercial whaling, agreed by the International Whaling Commission, has been the major step in reducing damage to the world's whale population. It has been in place since 1985 and effectively observed since 1987. The United Kingdom has played a leading role in achieving that and in tackling possible loopholes.

Mr. Banks: May I thank the Minister for his sterling work on behalf of the world's whale population? Does he agree that far more needs to be done, especially in respect of the actions of the Japanese? Does he agree that the Japanese Government seen to be positively venal in the way in which they abuse the world's animal resources, especially whales and elephant ivory? Will he ask his right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary to call in the Japanese ambassador and tell him that if the Japanese continue to exploit almost to extinction some of the most wonderful animals on this planet, we will stop buying their wretched cars and hi-fi?

Mr. Thompson: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind words. I have a fellow feeling for both whales and elephants. We have taken the lead in sponsoring resolutions against Japanese whaling in the International Whaling Commission. Despite attracting 16 votes in favour and only four against, our latest proposal failed to be adopted by just one single vote. Nevertheless, the result clearly demonstrated the serious concern that exists not only in this House but around the world and Japan should pay firm heed to that.

Mr. Dickens: Is the Minister aware of how deeply the nation feels about the plight of whales and elephants? How much whale and elephant meat——

Mr. Speaker: On whales, please.

Mr. Dickens: The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) mentioned elephants. What steps are being taken to prevent both those meats being imported for dog food?

Mr. Thompson: I do not have a specific answer to my hon. Friend's question but I shall write to him on that matter.

Lamb Variable Premium

8. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for how long he expects the lamb variable premium to continue.

Mr. Donald Thompson: There are complex negotiations ahead. We must ensure that the future regime, whether through variable premiums or some other means, enables our industry, including that in Northern Ireland to prosper and gain full advantage from the excellent structure, efficiency and expertise that it already has.

Mr. Marshall: In the light of the need to continue to reduce consumption of animal fats, does the Minister accept that any scheme succeeding the present premium should also encourage and favour the production of lean meat?

Mr. Thompson: Yes, in fact we have just reduced the maximum weight payable on fat lambs from 26·5 kg to 21 kg, which does exactly what the hon. Gentleman has requested.

Rev. Ian Paisley: As the Minister mentioned Northern Ireland in his answer, what does he see as being the future of the sheepmeat regime as we move towards 1992?

Mr. Thompson: I see the sheepmeat regime, especially that in Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom, moving forward with greater exports and greater efficiency. We have already exported 23,572 tonnes of sheep and mutton this year and we hope that that will continue.

Suckler Cow Premium

9. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to persuade the EC to concentrate beef support on the suckler cow.

Mr. MacGregor: In the discussion on the reform of the beef regime we pressed for reduced levels of intervention support and increased direct payments to producers, particularly specialist beef producers. I am pleased to say that the case for concentrating more support on the suckler cow was recognised and we secured the possibility of a major increase in the suckler cow premium which will, following the announcement that I made recently about United Kingdom national financing, be set 42 per cent. higher in 1989-90 at the maximum permissible of £47·43 per cow.

Mr. Gill: When my right hon. Friend discusses these matters with our European partners, will he remind them that in concentrating support for beef on the suckler cow rather than on intervention and on headage payments, with all the difficulties and problems to which they give rise, they would be helping a system that would be much easier to administer, much less prone to fraud and which would target aid to rural areas and specifically to the primary producers? Will he also remind them that that in its turn would help to keep people and families in the

countryside, which would be helpful in producing a high quality product in a natural way and bring tremendous nutritional value to the consumer?

Mr. MacGregor: I agree with all those points. We now have a policy that is more market oriented, and that too is in the interests of the consumer. Those were the points that I had in mind when we pressed for the changes that we have now secured.

Mr. Beggs: In future, will small farmers who at present are earning more from part-time employment off their farms, benefit from all the payments that are made available on suckler cows?

Mr. MacGregor: Yes, I think that is so.

Mr. Boswell: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on securing a 42 per cent. increase in the suckler cow premium, not only from Europe but in negotiations with our own Treasury. Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind the importance of not rushing into any proposal to amalgamate the suckler cow premium with the remaining value of the headage payment, certainly not for the present, and under no circumstances when there might be a headage limit on the suckler cow premium as well?

Mr. MacGregor: There are no further proposals on this front at present, but I shall bear in mind what my hon. Friend has said.

Mr. Beith: Will the Minister keep particularly in mind that any headage limitation is just as inappropriate in this area as it is for sheep, particularly in parts of the country such as Northumberland, where farms units are large and where the nature of the land and the acreages involved are such that large numbers are necessary?

Mr. MacGregor: The point about large numbers being necessary is one that I have stressed constantly in relation to limits on headage payments. As I indicated earlier on the special beef premium, I eventually voted against the final package because it still contained that element. I am sorry to say that we could not muster a qualifying blocking minority, but I indicated my position by voting as I did.

Licensed Trade (Tenants)

10. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he proposes to take any action in response to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's recommendation on licensed trade tenants' security contained in its report on the supply of beer.

Mr. Ryder: Government decisions on the recommendations of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission are for my noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. He will, of course, be taking account of the views of the National Licensed Victuallers Association.

Mr. Colvin: I should like him also to take into account the views of my hon. Friend, because he bears responsibility for tenant security for licensees; I do not know why. He has been subject to a considerable amount of lobbying over the years by publicans who are concerned about their tenant security. As the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the supply of beer recommended that publicans now become subject to the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 my hon. Friend will obviously want to express an opinion to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, and the House would like to know what that opinion is.

Mr. Ryder: As soon as the report was published, I met the NLVA. Its views have been passed on to my noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mr. Morley: Is it not fair to say that the Minister should have consideration for the small producers of food? That could apply also to small producers in the brewing industry. The small producers have been squeezed out and crushed for far too long by the juggernauts, the few large brewers. The report gives small breweries a chance to get their beers into more chains through the guest beer slot and therefore encourages those businesses. Should not the Minister make representations to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to defend those people?

Mr. Ryder: Conscientious to a fault, I also met the small brewers soon after the report was published. It is inconceivable that my noble Friend is unaware of their views.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Does my hon. Friend not accept that the tenant of a pub, particularly in a rural area, plays a vital role in the community? Is he not concerned that if we erode the position of the tenant, we shall be doing great damage to rural communities? Therefore, will he not prevail upon his right hon. Friend to amend the recommendations of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report?

Mr. Ryder: My hon. Friend is tempting me, but I will resist the temptation. I am sure, having spoken to my noble Friend, that he is fully aware of the point of view that has been expressed by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Cormack: Will my hon. Friend stop being so coy? He has not only a right to an opinion but a duty to have an opinion. Is he aware that on this extremely important issue the totally unreconstructed free market philosophy advocated from the Opposition Benches is not shared by all Conservative Members?

Mr. Ryder: My hon. Friend is never short of his opinions. He can be certain that I am never short of mine when it comes to talking to my noble Friend.

Beef Premium

11. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the new beef premium.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The special premium for beef production, which replaced the beef variable premium, was introduced in the United Kingdom with effect from 3 April 1989. The first payments under the scheme were made to producers at the end of April.

Mr. Clarke: What are the Minister's views on headage limits as a means of targeting support to smaller farmers?

Mr. Thompson: I completely dislike headage limits. That is why we voted against the proposal in the Council of Europe.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: Does my hon. Friend agree with the farming industry's opinion that, because of the decline in the national dairy herd of about 1·5 per cent. to 2 per

cent. a year, we shall need an increase in the suckler cow herd of about 4 per cent. a year to meet the flow of beef required for the United Kingdom market? In the light of that, although the increase in the suckler cow premium to the maximum was welcome, is it possible that it will be insufficient to ensure that growth in the suckler herd? Will my hon. Friend carefully watch developments in the beef industry and ensure that growth is sustained so that United Kingdom producers can continue to supply their own present market shares and not be disadvantaged accordingly?

Mr. Thompson: It is too early yet to see what effect the increase will have on dairy and suckler herds. Nevertheless, I will do exactly as my hon. Friend asked in the latter part of his question.

Mr. Haynes: The Minister is not doing too bad. I liked his answer to the question. Is he aware that we like beautiful British beef on our tables on Sunday? I hope that the Minister will tell Europe where to get off and stop this European rubbish coming to our shores. We should all eat British beef.

Mr. Thompson: I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman on that point. The increase in the suckler cow premium will help to produce that British beef.

Festival of Food and Farming

12. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a statement on the public's response to the Hyde park festival of food and farming.

Mr. MacGregor: The festival of food and farming was a great success. Attendance was about 1 million, and visitors clearly enjoyed themselves thoroughly and were impressed. Great credit is due to all concerned in the planning and execution of that most imaginative event.

Mr. Brown: I congratulate my right hon. Friend's Department on its work on the festival. Does my right hon. Friend intend to repeat the festival? In view of his question, I suggest that the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) should be invited to open another festival.

Mr. MacGregor: A most distinguished guest opened the festival. As my hon. Friend knows, that guest could not have been more distinguished. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments. I fully recognise what is behind his question, which is the importance of getting over to the public at large, and particularly the urban population, the great contribution that the farming industry makes to our food and to the attractiveness of our countryside. The festival was a great success in that respect. It was the first major Hyde park festival for nearly 150 years. There are obvious difficulties in repeating it year by year. I have noted my hon. Friend's support for the idea of doing it again.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: Is it not the case that British food and farming has been rather soured by salmonella and listeria scares? Does the Minister agree that the British public want cleaner, healthier and pesticide-free food and a system of agriculture with a lower input of fertilisers and pesticides?

Mr. MacGregor: The British public quite rightly want an increasing range of high-quality, safe food. There will always be some problems throughout the world about dealing with safety, because salmonella and listeria are in the air that we breathe. As the hon. Gentleman will know, in the past few months we have taken a wide range of measures to deal with the new problem of one particular type of salmonella. The festival showed the very high quality of food that British farmers are producing, and the consumers' response was extremely good.

Mr. Paice: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the festival was a marvellous opportunity to celebrate the centenary of his Department and to recall the excellent work that his Department has done and is doing on behalf of the British consumer in its polices, which it is pursuing vigorously, for the reform of the CAP?

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for those remarks, and in particular for underlining the dual role which we have and which is correctly done in one Department—that of pursuing the best agricultural production that we can possibly have and ensuring that the consumer interest is completely taken into account.

Quota-hopping

14. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking to prevent quota-hopping.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Under the Merchant Shipping Act 1988, substantially foreign-owned fishing vessels can no longer be registered as British fishing vessels and have no entitlement to fish against United Kingdom quotas. Following the failure of certain quota-hopping interests to obtain an injunction suspending the operation of the Act, the Government are monitoring the position and will take any action necessary. The Government are also urging the Commission to take action on a Community level to eradicate the practice of quota-hopping.

Mr. Harris: I welcome that reply. Will my hon. Friend pass on to our right hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General the congratulations of the House and of our fishermen for the determined way in which he fought the case brought by Spanish interests? He fought it right up to the High Court and won. Will my hon. Friend also take a message of unity from this House to the European Commission to the effect that its apparent insistence in favour of quota-hopping would undermine the common fisheries policy in a way that would be absolutely fatal and to the detriment of our own fishermen in particular?

Mr. Thompson: I shall pass on my hon. Friend's congratulations to the Law Officers. I noticed in the judgment that the judges congratulated them on the way in which they presented the case. I shall also reinforce, as we have been doing, our unanimity in the House to stamp out quota-hopping.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Will the Minister explain what he means by monitoring quota-hopping? When he refers to the Government taking "any action necessary", may I ask him to explain what action will be taken, if necessary, to protect the fishing fleet and the rest of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Thompson: The action that we have taken in the courts up to now has been successful and has driven quota-hoppers away from our shores. A licence can now be valid only if the vessel to which it relates is British registered. We intend to press on—in the courts, in the Community and elsewhere—to eradicate quota-hopping.

Council for the Protection of Rural England

15. **Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the chairman of the Council for the Protection of Rural England; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Ryder: I met representatives of the Council for the Protection of Rural England, including the chairman, on 22 March when we discussed several issues of mutual interest.

Mr. Knight: Does the Minister agree that the whole House should recognise the value of hedges as wildlife habitats? Will he confirm that grants are available for the planting and laying of hedgerows under the new farm and conservation grants scheme? What action is being taken to prevent the erosion of the soil in some areas?

Mr. Ryder: I fully share my hon. Friend's views about hedgerows. As he knows, the farm and conservation grants scheme, which began on 20 Feburary, provides grants of up to 40 per cent. for the planting of hedges in lowland areas. I particularly urge farmers in the east midlands and in East Anglia, my own part of England, to make full use of the grants.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Did the chairman raise with the Minister the whole question of the reorganisation of his Ministry? Is it true that discussions are going on as a result of which the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food might be linked to the Department of Industry? Alternatively, is it true that the Government might be considering setting up a whole new green Department based on a combination of briefs from various other Departments?

Mr. Ryder: When I spoke to the chairman of the CPRE, Mr. David Astor, that matter was not on his agenda, but perhaps it may be next time.

Nitrate Pollution

16. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what he is doing to reduce levels of nitrate pollution caused by agricultural activities.

Mr. MacGregor: I announced in March the Government's intention to designate a pilot sample of nitrate-sensitive areas, in which a range of agricultural measures could be tested. Since then, a consultation document has been issued setting out the Government's more detailed ideas and inviting comments on them.

Mr. Hughes: When does my right hon. Friend expect to be able to announce the set-aside in the nitrate-sensitive areas? Will he agree that the whole scheme that he has initiated is further proof that the Government care about good water quality and that we are in the lead in the European Community in trying to achieve that?

Mr. MacGregor: Set-aside is a different scheme from the proposals for nitrate-sensitive areas on which we intend to embark. We are getting ahead with our proposals for nitrate-sensitive areas. I hope to have the areas which we are using as pilot samples in place for the harvest in 1990. Of course, we need to have the Water Bill through Parliament, and the National Rivers Authority set up, before we can proceed with our proposals for the nitrate-sensitive areas. The fact that we are getting ahead with our proposals before the decisions in the European Community on this matter must be a clear indication of the Government's leading role in dealing with those matters.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 25 May.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. McKay: From personal experience, what advice would the Prime Minister give to neighbours who do not get on too well?

The Prime Minister: I am not experienced in such matters.

Mr. Atkinson: Does my right hon. Friend share the concern of a great many hon. Members that the principal member of her Government, the Lord Chancellor, is today being held to account by his Church for fulfilling his public duties? Does she agree that that is hardly the mark of a Church which would call itself Christian or tolerant?

The Prime Minister: I have very great sympathy with my right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the Prime Minister tell us this month's excuse for the appalling trade figures?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, part of the reason for the trade figures is the higher investment that I understand he seeks.

Mr. Budgen: Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is some confusion on the Conservative Benches about the Government's economic policy? Will she state whether the recent increase in interest rates was to hold up the value of the pound or to restrict private credit and the money supply?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend is aware, the recent increase in interest rates is to get the rate of inflation down. I am sure that my hon. Friend will find no confusion on economic policy. The Chancellor and I find none. The only confusion that we find has arisen from the interview given on the BBC today by the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition, when he called for import controls and for us to stop treating the pound as if it were a sacred relic. That is against the Common Market, against GATT, against the pound and against common sense.

Q2. **Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 25 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Fraser: Does the Prime Minister acknowledge that since the last general election the rate of inflation has doubled, the trade deficit has quadrupled and mortgage rates are going through the roof? If those are signs that the Prime Minister is doing well, what will happen if she does badly?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, to us the rate of inflation is unacceptably high, but to the Labour party it was unsustainably low. It is better than it could sustain for more than a few months. Our performance has given the highest standard of living ever known, the highest number of jobs and a rate of inflation infinitely below the 26 per cent. rate of the Labour party.

Q3. **Sir Julian Ridsdale:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 25 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Sir Julian Ridsdale: In view of the turmoil in China can my right hon. Friend give some assurances to the people of Hong Kong as, in the present situation, there must be considerable anxiety among them?

The Prime Minister: I share my hon. Friend's view and I believe that there must be very great concern in Hong Kong about events in China. My hon. Friend will recall the joint declaration we negotiated with China to guarantee that freedoms and the capital, economic policy, which Hong Kong enjoys, should continue for 50 years after 1997. I believe that it is very much in China's long-term interests to make that agreement work and to see Hong Kong remain stable and prosperous. I believe that that will be the case and we shall do everything possible to see that it is.

Q4. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 25 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Livingstone: Has the Prime Minister been briefed on the contents of the book "Who framed Colin Wallace?"? Is she aware that it contains specific details and evidence of acts of treason by the security services and that it contains specific records, on the record, from former members of the armed forces and the Civil Service confirming those acts? What advice would she give to Members of the House who wish to pursue such allegations, when her own Ministers continue to be evasive whenever those issues are raised?

The Prime Minister: No, Sir, I am not aware of the particular allegations in the book referred to by the hon. Gentleman. I dealt fully with allegations of that kind in my statement to the House on 6 May 1987 and I have nothing further to add to that statement.

Q5. **Mr. Robert B. Jones:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 25 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Jones: Will my right hon. Friend find time today to plan a visit to Lisburn and North Down where she would find that a huge number of people who see the path away from sectarian politics as being Conservative party participation in elections there?

The Prime Minister: I have been to Lisburn and I had a very warm welcome from all of the people there and I greatly enjoyed my visit. I shall not be able to get there very quickly, but I understand the point that my hon. Friend has made.

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: Will the Prime Minister please explain to the House how we can have a record deficit on the import of manufactures and, at the same time, barely reach the 1979 level of investment in the manufacturing industry? Will she explain to the House what has happened to the supply side miracle in the economy?

The Prime Minister: The supply side miracle has given us the highest standard of living the country has ever known, the highest standard of business investment ever known and now, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman will be very glad to welcome, the highest level of investment in manufacturing industry in real terms.

Q6. **Mr. Goodlad:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 25 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Goodlad: Will my right hon. Friend find time today to congratulate the police in Wolverhampton on their prompt and effective action in apprehending, earlier in the week, those who were dealing in crack? Will she reassure the House that she will give every support to those involved in making sure that that evil trade, which has brought so much misery and degradation to other parts of the world, is never allowed to take root here?

The Prime Minister: I believe that the police were entirely right to take firm action against drug dealers and that crack peddlers must know that they have no safe haven. I believe that the disturbances that followed the enforcement of the law at Heath Town on Tuesday night were absolutely disgraceful. I also believe that the police should be warmly commended on the action they took and on the way in which they restored order, quickly and effectively. I believe that, in doing so, they have the support of the overwhelming majority of the people of our country.

Q7. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 25 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Madden: Does the Prime Minister believe that the threatened expulsion of diplomats and journalists threatens the improving good relations between Britain and the Soviet Union, which are most welcome to the overwhelming majority of people of both countries?

The Prime Minister: I hope that the hon. Member is not suggesting that we should refrain from taking action against people who are carrying out unacceptable activities in this country. We found those people in both the Soviet and the Czech embassies and we had to take action against them. The action had to be taken regardless

of the effect upon our relations. The worst thing of all would have been to say that because we have better relations we can ignore all those unacceptable activities.

Mr. Michael Brown: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that she has never suspended an interview on "The World at One" because she objected to the line of questioning?

The Prime Minister: I confirm that. I was absolutely appalled at what happened today. Clearly, the right hon. Gentleman could never take his place at this Dispatch Box because he would object to the line of questioning.

Mr. Kinnock: Try me.

Q14. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 25 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Morgan: Can the Prime Minister confirm that the economic problem of this country is no longer that we are suffering from overheating but that the radiator has now blown up into tiny fragments all over her?

The Prime Minister: No, Mr. Speaker, but I note that official Labour policy would make things infinitely worse by wanting lower interest rates, lower exchange rates, higher public spending and, according to the shadow Chancellor, a less deflationary emphasis, all of which would lead to the sort of inflation we had when Labour was in power.

Mr. Knapman: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that she has never been a member of CND but has consistently advocated multilateral disarmament? Does my right hon. Friend believe that this consistency is absolutely vital if one is to be taken seriously as a political leader?

The Prime Minister: I confirm that I have never been a member of the CND. I believe in sure and strong defence of liberty. We know from experience that conventional weapons are not enough to prevent war, because of the two world wars that we have had. We must continue to have the nuclear weapon if we are to have peace in Europe.

Q15. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 25 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Skinner: We have been listening with interest in the course of the past two or three months to the Prime Minister's references to the ozone layer and green issues generally. Can she tell us whether she expects that hole in the ozone layer to be patched up by the use of market forces? Has she got in mind a man, a ladder, a bike and an enterprise allowance?

The Prime Minister: I would have thought that the hon. Gentleman—I believe a grammar school boy—would have had the understanding to know that it is the success and profits of the private sector that have been sufficient to finance the excellent research of the Antarctic Survey and to provide even more money for the survey to discover the hole in the ozone layer, which formed the basis of the action which has been taken on it, and that also it is the success of the market sector which is very rapidly producing ozone-friendly products to stop the threat to the ozone layer.

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: Can I say to my right hon. Friend how much the people of Heath Town will welcome her reassurance this afternoon? I will personally deliver her message to the police tomorrow. Can I have her assurance that she will advise that those who are found guilty of the terrible offence of handling crack be dealt with severely?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. Crack is a very great danger and we shall do everything possible to stop it coming into this country. I hope that the courts will take notice of what my hon. Friend has said. I believe that people want that offence dealt with by severe sentences.

Mr. Ashdown: Is the Prime Minister prepared to repeat today the Chancellor's Budget prediction of 5½ per cent. inflation by the end of the year?

The Prime Minister: I am not going any further than my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whose handling of the economy has given everyone the highest standard of living and the highest standard of social services that they have ever known—*[Interruption.]* There is so much row from the Opposition because they cannot bear the facts to be told.

Q16. **Mr. Rhodes James:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 25 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Rhodes James: Does my right hon. Friend recall the speech that she made at Perth when she expressed strong support for the threatened Glasgow university veterinary school? Is she aware that we in Cambridge have always strongly supported Glasgow veterinary school, as it has supported us? Can I assume that my right hon. Friend's support for Glasgow extends to Cambridge?

The Prime Minister: I am very supportive of veterinary schools, which have a high standard of excellence. Glasgow, in addition, does a great deal of highly relevant research, and attracts much research from the private sector. I fully support my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland in his attempt to save it, which I believe will be successful.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Will the Leader of the House state the business for the first week after the spring Adjournment?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): Yes, Sir. The business for the first week after the spring Adjournment will be as follows:

TUESDAY 6 JUNE—Conclusion of the remaining stages of the Employment Bill.

Remaining stages of the Pesticides (Fees and Enforcement) Bill.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

WEDNESDAY 7 JUNE—Opposition Day (12th Allotted Day). There will be a debate on an Opposition motion, subject for debate to be announced.

Motions on the Treatment of Offenders (Northern Ireland) order and the Community Service Orders (Northern Ireland Consequential Amendments) Order.

THURSDAY 8 JUNE—There will be a debate on the Army on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

FRIDAY 9 JUNE—Private Members' motions.

Mr. Dobson: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his statement.

Could the Leader of the House arrange for the Secretary of State for Scotland to come to the House as soon as possible to deal with poll tax rebates in Scotland, where the 56-day deadline for claiming poll tax rebates runs out tomorrow? Anyone in Scotland who applies for a poll tax rebate after tomorrow will not have it backdated to cover the whole year. Many thousands of Scottish people, who are recognised by the Government to be entitled to poll tax rebates because they are so badly off, have still not had the opportunity to apply. Therefore, it is vital that the Secretary of State comes to the House to extend the deadline. If that requires a change in the regulations, the Opposition will do everything they can to facilitate a speedy change to ensure that the badly off people in Scotland are not robbed of the rebates to which even this Government believes they are entitled.

When may we expect a debate on the Government's response to the Social Services Select Committee's report issued today, which urges the Secretary of State for Health to abandon his headlong rush to change the National Health Service? That all-party Committee is concerned and has serious fears about the stability of services and the continuity of patient care if the Secretary of State achieves his aim.

When can we expect a debate on the Government's response to the Griffiths report on care in the community; and, for that matter, when will the Government publish their response?

When are we to have a debate on the Green Papers on the reform of the legal profession?

When can we expect a debate on the proposal to substitute student loans for student grants? That is a matter of growing concern for many parents of students and would-be students who, in many cases, are the self-same parents who are growing more and more concerned about the rapid increases in mortgage payments, and the likely increases that are to come.

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman has asked me five questions about the business for the first week after the spring Adjournment. First, he asked whether my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland would make a statement about the Scottish community charge arrangements. I cannot give such an undertaking, although I will of course refer the hon. Gentleman's question to my right hon. and learned Friend. I understand, however, that the community charge arrangements are proceeding pretty well in Scotland, in spite of some not very helpful remarks by Opposition Members.

I think that it is a little premature to arrange a debate on the Social Services Committee report, which I believe was published this morning, but I shall bear in mind what the hon. Gentleman said. I was interested to note that the Committee took evidence from my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health yesterday afternoon, and seems to have compiled its report rather rapidly thereafter.

As I have said, I recognise that there is a good deal of interest in the Griffiths report, and also in the Wagner report. We are working on our own proposals, which we shall introduce in the near future. There will be no undue delay, but it is essential for us to reach the right answers when considering such an important subject. Any further debate will take place when we have announced our proposals.

I cannot promise an early debate on the Green Papers on law reform. The Lord Chancellor will announce the conclusions of his review later, and there will of course be time for debates on any proposals that are presented.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science is having discussions with the financial institutions about the administration of the student loan scheme, and they are continuing to make progress. As I have said on many previous occasions, the time for debate will be when conclusions have been reached.

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): I understand that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is to make a statement later this afternoon. Can my right hon. Friend give some assurance that before the summer recess we shall have an opportunity for a full debate on the situation in Northern Ireland? We shall have an opportunity this afternoon for some cross-examination, but that does not quite take the place of the assurance that I understood my right hon. Friend to have given me some months ago that we would have a full debate in due course.

Mr. Wakeham: I do not think that I want to add to the assurance that I gave until we have heard my right hon. Friend's statement. I recognise the concern felt by my right hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery), and the matter is indeed suitable for debate, but I think it best to hear the statement first and then consider how to proceed.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): When can we have a full debate on sport to enable hon. Members to express their views on participation, sponsorship and the current anxieties about crowd safety and the exploits of ticket touts at sporting events? In view of the recent decision by the Scottish Rugby Union to allow its players to go to South Africa, will the Leader of the House join the

General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, which yesterday condemned the decision after being told that for the vice-president of the Scottish Rugby Union to assert that the players are white, free and over 21 was an insult to the players, to the game and to Scotland?

Mr. Wakeham: Sport is clearly a suitable subject for debate in the House, but I cannot promise a debate in the near future. The question of ticket touts was raised in Monday's Adjournment debate. As for matters such as football safety, the Football Spectators Bill will have its Third Reading in the other place in the not too distant future, and there will be arrangements for it to be debated in this House after that.

As for the South African visit, I stand by what my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary said about the Gleneagles agreement. We have given our views. In a free society people must make up their own minds, but the Government's view is quite clear.

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): Will my right hon. Friend consider the need for a debate on the White Paper on information technology which, as he will recall, was produced in response to the Trade and Industry Committee's report and which has raised considerable concern in industry? A debate before the summer recess would be most helpful.

Mr. Wakeham: I agree. I wish I could find the time, but I cannot. Of course, the Opposition day debate recently on investing in the future was devoted largely to the subject and my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry recently gave evidence to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry on the IT White Paper. Of course, it is an important subject. I should like to find time for a debate, but I am not too hopeful for the immediate future.

Mr. John Morris (Aberavon): Since the Lord Chancellor has invited widespread consultation on his Green Papers before he reaches any conclusions, and since he has extended the time for the judges to give their views, would it not be wrong if the House, which is in charge of Supply for the Executive, did not have an opportunity of presenting its views to the Lord Chancellor before he reaches any conclusions?

Mr. Wakeham: It will, in the end, be for Parliament to decide if there are to be changes. I do not think it is wrong at all. However, I believe that hon. and learned Gentlemen who wish to make representations to the Lord Chancellor have plenty of opportunities to do so. I agree that a debate would be useful, but I cannot find the time at present.

Mr. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, the majority population in Northern Ireland were not consulted about the Anglo-Irish Agreement when it was drawn up. Now, we have a review of the agreement. Is he telling the House that the representatives from Northern Ireland will not have the same right as any other person in the House to have a full discussion and to express their opinions on that review? For the first time, that review puts members of all the regiments of the British Army into the same position as the Ulster Defence Regiment where they cannot appear in the streets of Belfast or anywhere else in Northern Ireland without being accompanied by a member of the Royal Ulster Constabulary. The review also gives to the Dublin Government the power to nominate to the Mournes in Northern Ireland. Surely the Leader of the House should safeguard minority interests and say that we will have a full debate in the House as well as an opportunity of voting on the matter.

Mr. Wakeham: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman took the opportunity during the review to give his views to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State because that would have been an important thing for him to have done.

I have not ruled out the question of debate. Indeed, when the matter was raised earlier, I said that it is a proper subject for debate and I would hope to be able to arrange one. It is a question of finding an appropriate time. The right thing now is to hear the statement from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and decide how best to proceed.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Having regard to the uncertainty in the financial markets and on the Government Back Benches, would it not be right to have an urgent debate on the state of the economy as soon as we return from the Whitsun recess? Also, does the Leader of the House think that it is time the House was given an opportunity to discuss the Select Committee report on televising the proceedings in the House?

Mr. Wakeham: With regard to the point on televising the House, I hope to be able to make an announcement very soon as to when that debate will take place because it is needed as soon as we can find time for it.

I do not accept the proposition that it is necessary for there to be a debate on the economy at the present time. I believe that the Government have made it absolutely clear that they are not prepared to take any risks with inflation. I recognise that high interest rates are not desirable in themselves, but they are necessary if we are to bear down on inflation. I believe that that is the right policy.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): My right hon. Friend will have noticed that recently a proposition, drafted largely by British Rail, even if not presented by it, failed to secure approval in their Lordships' House largely because it had been hurried. Given the fact that British Rail is engaged on a proposition which involves noise parameters which have not yet been settled by the Department of the Environment, changing the costs by hundreds of millions of pounds, trying to create a parkway station in the middle of an area of particular landscape importance, and a whole range of other things—including the fact that the Kent county council has just employed a set of consultants—would my right hon. Friend agree that the time has come to have a debate to try to prevent British Rail from bringing a half-baked proposal before the House next November rather than postponing it until it has really worked it through?

Mr. Wakeham: I understand my hon. Friend's concern and interest in the matter, but I do not believe that that allows me to support his proposition. It is not right for me to advise British Rail on its tactics as to how and when to bring a private Bill to the House. I do not believe that it would be wise or helpful for the House to debate the subject. British Rail has to decide what is right, and the House will then have an opportunity of dealing with it.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): May we have a debate on the defective laws affecting people who are knocked down and injured on our roads, in particular people such as my constituent, John Sweetman? He was a pedestrian who was knocked down by a bicycle. He lost an eye and his job and has never gone back to work. He received no compensation because the cyclist was uninsured and a man of straw. May we debate the suffering of ordinary people in cases such as that because they are extremely common?

Mr. Wakeham: That is a serious matter and I regret that the hon. and learned Gentleman had to raise it in the House. I extend my sympathies to the person concerned. It is difficult to find time for a debate on the subject now, although I recognise that if there are shortcomings in the law they should be considered. Perhaps the hon. and learned Gentleman would try to initiate an Adjournment debate on the subject.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): Has my right hon. Friend's attention been drawn to early-day motion 827, which refers to a judgment in the Family Division of the High Court at Leeds?

[That this House notes the judgment of Mr. Justice Ward of the Family Division of the High Court, Leeds, on 14th April, that the doctors concerned with Baby 'C', a Ward of Court, should 'treat (the ward) to die' and that it would not be necessary to feed the child either by intravenous fusions or nasal gastric regimes; notes that both these sections of the formal order were deleted in the Court of Appeal on Thursday 20th April; notes that medical evidence provided by the Official Solicitor was instrumental in guiding Mr. Justice Ward in his conclusions; and calls on the Law Officers to publish in full both the medical report from the Official Solicitor and the judgment of Mr. Justice Ward, deleting those sections which would breach the anonymity of the child, her family, and the doctors involved.]

The decision was that doctors concerned with baby C should treat the baby to die—in other words, medical attention should be withdrawn. The matter went to the appeal court but, because of the nature of the matter it is impossible for the House to ask questions about it; hence the early-day motion. Tragically, the baby died today.

This is a matter of grave public concern and an opportunity should be given to Parliament to debate the issue. I realise that it cannot be debated next week, but will my right hon. Friend, who I know cares deeply about such things, consider the matter, consult the Ministers concerned and arrange for a debate at the earliest opportunity?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that my right hon. Friend has raised a serious matter about which he is greatly concerned. I share his concern and I shall certainly accept his suggestion to discuss it with my right hon. Friends to see whether there is anything that can be done. Baby C, who has tragically died, was a ward of court. The proceedings were held in private and, under section 12 of the Administration of Justice Act 1982, any person who publishes material about the case other than that authorised by the court would be guilty of contempt of court. Therefore, it would be improper for the Law Officers to seek to circumvent that statutory provision. Nevertheless, there are principles and issues involved and it may be possible to have a debate if we can find the right formula.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I am not asking the Leader of the House for a statement yet, but may we have some highly publicised Government action on the position of the Kurdish refugees? The Government should urge the Turkish authorities to stop their persecution of the Kurdish people, they should release the Kurdish refugees they have in detention and they should provide financial aid to hard-pressed local authorities, particularly in east London, which are acting humanely in this matter.

Mr. Wakeham: I note what the hon. Gentleman has said. The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) has an Adjournment debate tomorrow which will provide an opportunity for a Minister to make a considered comment.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): Will my right hon. Friend consider arranging an urgent debate on what appears to be the crass decision of the Department of Transport to postpone the building of the north Birmingham orbital road, despite six years of planning and the payment of millions of pounds in compensation and blight payments? We need to debate the prospect of it being put out to tender or finding a new alternative route, subject to the suggestions of contractors or the people prepared to pay for it. It has vital effects on the economy of the west midlands, from the north to the south. It seems to be a crass decision which was taken without any consultation with the Members of Parliament affected by it.

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot comment on the road concerned or on the details because I do not have the details here. The statement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport on the substantial increase in the road building programme was widely welcomed in all parts of the House. I shall certainly refer the matter to the Minister concerned.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): The Leader of the House does not seem to appreciate the seriousness of the problem raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). The Government boasted that the rebate was one of the advantages of the new community charge and tomorrow, Friday, is the last day on which those who are entitled to a rebate can apply, otherwise they will be disallowed this benefit. The Leader of the House must take this matter much more seriously. A campaign in Scotland by the SNP suggested that people should either not pay the tax or should flood the registration officer with requests for rebates whether or not they were entitled to them. People are genuinely in need of knowledge on whether they are entitled to the rebate. We need an extension of the time limit, and we need it now.

Mr. Wakeham: I entirely reject the charge that I have not taken this matter seriously. I told the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) that I would refer the matter to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. That is about as much as I can do from the Dispatch Box at the moment. The Opposition have responsibilities in this matter. The other day the hon. Gentleman complained about the number of people who had not registered, and the Opposition continually refer to the community charge as the poll tax. No wonder some people are misled.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): The trade figures published this morning show a further sharp deterioration in trade with the Common Market as opposed to the rest of the world. For example, exports to other developed countries went up by 8 per cent. and exports to the EEC have gone up by only 1 per cent. As this follows a year in which the deficit was more than £13 billion, will the Leader of the House arrange for a debate on what is proving to be the national disaster of our appalling and consistently worsening trade with the EEC? As that affects jobs and the Government's economic policies, may we have a full day's debate simply to find out why our trade with the Common Market is such a dreadful disaster? For every £3 of goods that come in, £2 of goods go out, whereas our trade with the rest of the world seems in some respects to be steadily improving. May we have a debate on this big issue?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that the balance of trade is a perfectly proper subject for debate, but I cannot promise my hon. Friend a debate in the immediate future because there is a great deal of other business that I have to get through.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Leader of the House arrange for an urgent debate on poll tax registration? That would allow our constituents in England and Wales to be told that it is perfectly lawful for them to return unsigned registration forms and to ask legitimate questions. It would also allow Ministers to explain why overseas students are liable for poll tax while American service personnel are exempt. It would draw attention to the discretion of poll tax officers, because in Bradford the poll tax officer is proposing to exempt persons from poll tax if they are outside the United Kingdom for more than a year. However, they lose entitlement to social security if they are outside the United Kingdom for more than eight weeks.

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman does not carry much conviction when he tries to raise questions concerning his constituents and continually refers to the community charge as the poll tax.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Is my right hon. Friend aware that dog lovers, owners and breeders all over the country are banding together and writing to hon. Members hoping that we will have a debate on the question of dog registration and its many benefits? What are the prospects for those people of such a debate being held?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the concern, and I have had many letters on the subject. The Government do not believe that implementing section 37 would assist in the matter. I regret to say that I cannot see the opportunity for a debate on the subject in the near future.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): When will there be the promised debate on the report of the Select Committee on the Environment on toxic waste and on the Government's inadequate response to it? Has not the need for such a debate been strengthened by the report of a Committee of another place underlining many of the concerns that the Environment Select Committee expressed?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not accept the premise of the hon. Gentleman's question, and I cannot promise him a debate in the immediate future.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): When does my right hon. Friend expect to announce his long-awaited reforms of the unsatisfactory methods by which the House scrutinises EEC legislation? Is he aware that in the early hours of this morning the House reached an all-time low in the saga of inadequate scrutiny when right hon. and hon. Members were invited to give their views on an EEC document on a "take note" motion, only to find that the motion had been pre-empted by a Government announcement earlier in the day to the effect that they accepted everything for which the EEC document asked? My right hon. Friend must surely see the ludicrous absurdity of the House being asked to spend its precious time offering its views on an EEC document when nothing said in the debate could possibly influence either the EEC or the Government.

Mr. Wakeham: There are two parts to my hon. Friend's question—a general part and a specific part. I was present last night, and I heard the points of order.

In EEC scrutiny debates, it is far from unusual for the Government's views to be known in advance. In the particular case in question, we feel that we are now able to support the Commission's proposal and decided that that view should be publicly known in advance of the debate. To have done otherwise would have been to mislead the House.

However, I recognise that there is concern about the way in which EC documents are scrutinised by the House. It is not satisfactory, but it is not for me to announce the way in which matters will be improved. The Select Committee on Procedure is considering the matter and I am having discussions with the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee. I shall also want to have discussions with the Opposition. We must reach a general consensus as to the best way forward. I share my hon. Friend's view that the present arrangements are unsatisfactory.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Has the Leader of the House read the 15 or so early-day motions that I have tabled calling on Mr. Tiny Rowland to divest himself of his interests in *The Observer*? Is it not clear that Mr. Rowland is abusing his position by using journalists and that newspaper's editor to secure his commercial ends?

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Where is the evidence?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is it not absolutely clear that the independent directors of *The Observer* are failing in the duties that were placed upon them when Mr. Rowland was allowed to take over the newspaper?

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Where is the evidence?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is it not time that those directors either resigned or did their job properly? May the House have a debate so that those matters can be properly discussed in Parliament?

Mr. Wakeham: I have taken a cursory glance at some of the hon. Gentleman's early-day motions but cannot say that I have read them in great detail. However, I can make a general comment. The tradition of press freedom in this country means that newspaper editors are free to publish what they wish, provided that they observe the criminal and the civil law. Where there is doubt about the accuracy or fairness of their reporting, complaints should be made to the Press Council, which is responsible for investigating such matters.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): In a week in which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary had very constructive discussions with the Prime Minister of Israel, and in view of the fact that Ministers have met the Palestine Liberation Organisation leader, Yasser Arafat, is it not high time that the House had a proper debate on the problems of the middle east and the Arab-Israel conflict?

Mr. Wakeham: A number of very important foreign affairs subjects, of which that to which my hon. Friend refers is one, should be the subject of debates, but, as I have said at this Dispatch Box in recent weeks, we have a particularly heavy programme and at this time of the year it is difficult to find time for debates. Nevertheless, I recognise my hon. Friend's concern and will do my very best.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): When the House returns from the recess, will there be a statement on the law relating to defamation, bearing in mind the libel damages of £600,000 that were awarded yesterday? Is not that a matter of some importance? Although we want people to utilise the law fully if they are libelled, should we not also bear in mind that two of the women attacked by Sutcliffe but who fortunately survived have yet to be paid a penny of the compensation of £10,000 and £8,000 that they were awarded? Is it likely that Mrs. Sutcliffe, although she was in no way responsible for her husband's crimes, will pay out to those two women and to the relatives of the women who were murdered?

Mr. Wakeham: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that it would be quite inappropriate to comment on any particular case, but I am aware that there has been criticism recently of a number of aspects of the law of defamation, including the size of some libel awards. My right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor is to consider proposals for reform, taking all issues into account. My hon. Friend the Secretary of State, Home Office has already announced that an inquiry is to be established into privacy and related matters, and that could affect this consideration.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): Will my right hon. Friend reconsider his answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) as hon. Members on both sides of the House are receiving vast numbers of letters from constituents about dog registration? I should like us to debate the matter for a different reason from that given by my hon. Friend—to highlight the disgraceful advertising campaign by the RSPCA in which it accuses the Government of causing a larger number of dogs to be destroyed by removing the dog licence. Its annual report this year says that the number of dogs which have had to be destroyed has reduced since the dog licence was abolished. That needs to be highlighted.

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend makes his point very clearly. As I said, I cannot find time for a debate on this subject in Government time, but perhaps my hon. Friend will consider applying to raise the matter in an Adjournment debate.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Is the Leader of the House aware of the collapse of the electoral register by more than 4 per cent. in 17 constituencies, including that of Finchley? Should not the House have a discussion about the serious state of the electoral register? It is a matter of great democratic and constitutional concern, and not to have such a debate would be to intimate that the House did not care one iota about the democratic procedures of the country.

Mr. Wakeham: I do not accept the premise of the hon. Gentleman's question. I realise that he has raised a perfectly proper matter for discussion. I cannot find time for it immediately, but as his colleagues on the Labour Front Bench have not chosen a subject for debate in the first week back after the spring Adjournment perhaps the hon. Gentleman should ask them whether they might like to discuss this subject.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the serious environmental pollution problem in the city of Southampton? The ship Moby Dick, crewed by Greenpeace, has been blockading what is known as the "sludge ship" which takes the sewerage of Southampton out into mid-channel and dumps it. In 1989 we should not be dumping all the sewerage from a city the size of Southampton into the channel. The licences issued by MAFF should be brought before the House and scrutinised to find out just how much pollution of the sea is taking place. Would not a debate clear up some of those points?

Mr. Wakeham: A debate might clear up some of those points. I hope to be sailing my boat somewhere in that area during the spring Adjournment next week, if the weather stays fine, and I might have more knowledge when I return.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the Leader of the House look into a problem that has arisen concerning lobbyists coming to the House? I understand that the Grand Committee Room has been used by an inquiry for some months, so no public lobbyists will be able to use it to meet Members of Parliament. I understand that other rooms cannot be made available for lobbyists to meet Members of Parliament. On 22 June a very large pensioners' lobby will be coming here.

Will the Leader of the House look into the problem and propose lifting the rule for other Committee Rooms so that lobbyists can meet Members of Parliament, or will he make arrangements for Westminster Hall to be made available so that the pensioners can meet Members of Parliament to put their perfectly legitimate claims for a decent old-age pension for all?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot give the hon. Gentleman any undertaking that something can be done because there are difficulties, but I can certainly give him the clear undertaking that I shall look into the matter to find out what can be done and will write to him.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I wonder whether my right hon. Friend will allow the House to have an urgent debate on the cultural vandalism of the BBC in its proposal to tamper with the ball-by-ball commentary on Test Match Special? Will my right hon. Friend agree with me that cricket, cathedrals, "Land of Hope and Glory", an enduring distrust of foreigners and the continuing premiership of my right hon. Friend the Prime

Minister define classically the best of England, and it would be a disaster and a catastrophe of the first order if any of these were damaged or destroyed in any way?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not have a Test score later than lunchtime, but I believe that it was 132 for three at lunchtime today. I am interested to know what has happened since then. If it is not irresponsible of me, I share the sentiments of my hon. Friend, but it is for the BBC to decide what sporting events to cover and the extent of that coverage. I understand that the BBC aims to continue providing as much uninterrupted ball-by-ball coverage as possible. For the majority of the time, the BBC sees no reason why Test Match Special should differ from its persent form.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): May I remind the Leader of the House that, although we have had Adjournment debates on the Roman baths at Huggin hill and the Rose theatre, there remains in the House considerable concern that a great deal of damage is being done to Britain's archaeological heritage by the activities of property developers and that we will not safeguard our heritage by one-off campaigns that occur on sites within easy reach of Fleet street and Westminster? May we have an urgent and early debate on the preservation of our archaeological heritage and the clear loopholes in present legislation?

Mr. Wakeham: I thought that the Government and the developers moved speedily and effectively to deal with recent cases. By their very nature, one cannot always anticipate when such matters will arise, but I agree that the subject is suitable for debate. It is difficult for me to make time for a debate in the immediate future, but I shall certainly bear the hon. Gentleman's suggestion in mind.

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): It would obviously be improper for my right hon. Friend to comment on any one case of libel, even one as significant as the Sutcliffe case about which so many members of the public are concerned, but is he aware that it is now 14 years since the Faulks committee on defamation reported, yet none of its recommendations has been implemented by any Government, although several of them are relevant to recent cases? Does he agree that it might be appropriate for the House to have a debate on that matter so that the views of right hon. and hon. Members could be taken into account by the committee reviewing the press, privacy and similar matters that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has announced?

Mr. Wakeham: It is clear from the way in which he phrased his question that my hon. Friend is aware that he has raised a difficult subject on which it is not easy to find a solution. The right approach is for my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor to consider these matters in the way that he has suggested, but if any right hon. or hon. Member has any suggestions I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend will be only too pleased to receive them.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Does the Leader of the House agree that the time is now right for the House to debate the appointment of regulators? The matter has been highlighted this week by the appointment of Professor Littlechild as regulator-designate of the electricity industry, the appointment last month of Ian Byatt as regulator-designate of the water industry, and just before Christmas the appointment of Adam Peat as the new director, with regulatory functions, of the Housing Corporation for Wales.

It is notable that those three appointments are of civil servants, temporary or permanent, who were deeply involved in writing the legislation. That raises two important constitutional issues which need to be thought about seriously by the Leader of the House and by the House as a whole. Those appointments mean one of two things: either only those who are engaged in writing the legislation understand its functions——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Business questions should be about future debates.

Mr. Morgan: The other point that we should debate is whether the Government approve of the idea of civil servants writing £40,000 or £50,000 a year jobs for themselves.

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman seems to misunderstand the whole process. Parliament is considering the legislation that requires the regulators to be appointed. The gentlemen that the hon. Gentleman mentioned seem eminently suitable for the jobs. I see no cause for a debate.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): May we have an early debate on the subjects of disarmament and defence so that hon. Members of the soft Left wing, the hard Left wing and the provisional wing of the Labour party can place their views on record and the House can discover what Labour's defence policy really is?

Mr. Wakeham: The debate on Thursday 8 June might be an opportunity to start on that litany of subjects.

Anglo-Irish Conference (Review)

4.11 pm

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tom King): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement on the review of the working of the Intergovernmental conference set up under the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The review was completed at the meeting of the conference in Belfast yesterday and copies of the report have been placed in the Library. Also in the Library are copies of a paper setting out developments since the signing of the agreement. The review has been a very worthwhile opportunity to take stock of the working of the conference and I am grateful to all those who submitted views on this subject.

Both Governments reaffirmed in the report their full commitment to all the provisions of the agreement and to its shared understandings and purposes. The report deals with the work and achievements of the conference under each article of the agreement. In the conclusions of the report, the two Governments agree that the conference, supported by the secretariat, has proved its value in the past three years and that, while requiring no fundamental change at present, its role could, nevertheless, be developed and enhanced in a number of ways.

If in future it were to appear that the objectives of the agreement could be more effectively served by changes in the scope and nature of the working of the conference, consistent with the basic provisions and spirit of the agreement, the two Governments would be ready in principle to consider such changes.

What the report and the record of developments since the agreement was signed show is that neither the agreement nor the operation of the conference is a threat to either tradition in Northern Ireland. On the contrary, they have provided a framework that respects the essential interests of both sides of the community and their right to pursue their aspirations by peaceful means. They facilitate co-operation in the fight against terrorism and set out to create the conditions in which the whole community can live together in peace.

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): I thank the Secretary of State for his statement this afternoon. My party gives a warm welcome to the declaration made yesterday. We had only one regret about the declaration and that was the absence of the Tánaiste, the Foreign Secretary of the Republic. I am sure that the whole House hopes that he has a speedy and successful recovery from his recent operation.

In many ways, the declaration has mirrored the opinions of the Labour party and the submission we made to the Government on it. However, the greatest achievement of the agreement has been its survival, despite all the pressures and controversy to which it has been subjected. As the review document clearly points out, the agreement has assisted the development of cross-border security, which is very important, and has resulted in a far more mature and constructive relationship between the British and Irish Governments. It has provided the forum for the institutionalisation of disagreements and has furnished a mechanism for the handling of disputes.

When we look at the detail of the review, we are pleased that the two Governments have accepted so many of our suggestions. I welcome the recognition of the need for greater openness about the working of the agreement, as well as the decision to hold regular meetings of the conference. The crisis management atmosphere has been detrimental to the agreement.

In terms of the legal aspects of the review, we welcome the fact that the review recognises the need to bring the Law Officers into the agreement process. We can do without the disputes between the Law Officers which have in the past marred Anglo-Irish relations. Furthermore, we note that efforts are to be made to make use of the extra-territorial legislation and, in addition, that the proposals for the harmonisation of the criminal law between the two countries are to be furthered.

There are two other areas of policy that we described in our submission as relevant and important. We are glad that the two Governments have accepted our recommendation that more effort should be made to use the agreement to deal with cross-border co-operation in social and economic matters. We are especially impressed that the implications of 1992 for the relationship between the two parts of Ireland appear to have been recognised by the two Governments. We are certain that there can be future progress in that area.

I also welcome the publication of the document "Developments since the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement", although some sections of that document tend to over-egg the pudding and others are somewhat contentious. However, it is good that the Government have attempted to provide information that will assist in drawing up a realistic assessment of the agreement.

The Labour party supports the conclusions of the review and, in particular, paragraphs 27 to 30. Paragraph 29 states:

> "If in the future it were to appear that the objectives of the Agreement could be more effectively served by changes in the scope and nature of the working of the Conference, consistent with the basic provisions and spirit of the Agreement, the two Governments would be ready in principle to consider such changes."

That shows a degree of flexibility which we wholeheartedly endorse.

Will the Secretary of State agree with us that the prime objective in the next phase of the agreement is to bring all the constitutional parties in from the cold, not betraying their principles, their traditions or their communities, but working for the good of the Province as a whole?

Mr. King: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) for the welcome he gave the statement and especially for the welcome he gave to the paper we produced on developments since the signing of the agreement. It is helpful to remind the House and the wider public of a number of events which have taken place since the agreement was signed and which show, not spectacular developments in particular directions, but the steady and valuable progress made in developing a closer understanding and relationship between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland on the issues in Northern Ireland. Anybody who considers these matters sensibly—and this is one matter on which I am sure that I command the support of the whole House—knows that there has to be a relationship between Dublin, Belfast and London. There are issues of manifest benefit that can be better resolved by discussion together. The lesson of the review is that the work of the conference started perhaps with a bit of crisis management, but is now steadying down to worthwhile,

sensible progress in a number of important areas and that can only be of benefit to relations within Northern Ireland and to people within the whole island of Ireland.

At the end of his speech, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North invited me to bring people in from the cold. My door is open so that people can come in from the cold. If people are determined to stay out in the cold, I will not arrest them and compel them to come through the door. In the end, they have to decide whether they want to do that. I say as genuinely as I can from the Dispatch Box that if people wish to come, the welcome is there.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): The majority population of Northern Ireland were not consulted when the Anglo-Irish Agreement came forth and when it was signed. They had no opportunity at that time to say anything about its conditions because they were kept secret. However, the minority population, led by the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume), had full access to all that was going on, which was acknowledged by the Secretary of State at that time, who is now the Home Secretary. The Unionists were left out in the cold.

Then we had the agreement. When it was signed the hon. Member for Foyle told the Government to face down the Unionist population. At the time, the Unionists were told that they would not be consulted and to carry on as they had been doing. There was then an inquiry into the agreement. The hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell), who was then Labour's deputy spokesman on Northern Ireland and who is in the House now, attended that session and admitted that in his opinion the status of Northern Ireland had been changed through the Anglo-Irish Agreement. When we look at the review——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Although I appreciate the importance of this statement to the hon. Gentleman, will he please bear in mind that he should ask the Secretary of State a question?

Rev. Ian Paisley: When we are having a statement in the House, Mr. Speaker, I must put the background to my question—*[Interruption.]* If I do not have the freedom to do that—*[Interruption.]* In your hearing, Mr. Speaker, I have already pressed that this House—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): The hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) would do better to listen.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I should like a full-scale debate in the House on this matter. However, that has not been forthcoming from the Leader of the House or from the Secretary of State who could have said in his statement today, "We will give a full debate" because the only place that the view of the majority of Northern Ireland's representatives can be heard is in this House.

It is completely wrong of the Secretary of State to say that the views of the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) and myself were not put to him forthrightly because he knows the Unionist view over a period of nine months. He knows exactly where we stand on this issue. Surely this House should have an opportunity of having a full debate on this issue.

The Secretary of State is saying that the agreement hurts nobody, that it is even-handed and that it will bring about peace, stability and reconciliation. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), speaking for the Labour party, said that cross-border security has been improved. I wonder whether they would like to visit the homes of two senior police officers and ask their widows whether they think that it has been improved.

The House needs to face the fact that the Ulster question will not go away and that the way in which we should debate it is in an open debate in the House, not with a mere statement. There are things in the statement that radically change some of those democratic rights that are left. Matters such as appointments to boards will be tinkered with. If the Secretary of State is going to be forthcoming to the majority, let him say today, "Yes, we will have a debate on this issue in the House."

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman began his intervention, or question, with a travesty of the truth. He knows perfectly well that the first thing that I did when I went in to my office at Stormont as the new Secretary of State was to sit down and, in my own hand, write him a letter before the Anglo-Irish Agreement was even signed inviting him to talk to me on behalf of his party and the people that he represents. I issued the same invitation to the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux)—but the hon. Gentleman never came. He is now saying that people were not consulted, but he bears a heavy responsibility for the fact that the people whom he represents did not have a chance for their voices to be heard. We also know that the hon. Gentleman did exactly the same thing when we reached the review period. It is not good enough for him to stand up in the House asking why people were not consulted when he represents one of the two parties that refused to give any views on this review of the agreement.

Having put that on the record, I genuinely want to see the ways in which progress can be made. If I may say so, it is more likely to be made by the sort of approach that the hon. Gentleman has now adopted than by him sending me the sort of letter that he sent yesterday, which is published in the *Newsletter* today. If he is interested, and if it was with his agreement, I would ask for permission to publish it in the *Official Report* so that the House could see what is not the right approach, what is the negative approach, of abuse and vituperation in Northern Ireland politics when what I looked for from him—I take encouragement from his remarks—is a constructive and sensible discussion on important matters.

The matters concerning the administration and government of the Province can be debated in the House, although that is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House. I made it clear in my answer to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) that my door is open. If the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) is genuine in what he has just said, I am happy to sit down with him to talk about arrangements for administration and government within Northern Ireland which, as he knows, he can do outside the agreement. However, if he sits in his trench and bellows "Not an inch" and "No surrender", what happened to him in the local government elections will continue to happen, because more sensible voices will prevail.

Rev. Ian Paisley: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Secretary of State has referred to a document which I should like to be printed in full. I should like the House to read it and to see that it is not the document that the Secretary of State has painted to the House. By all means, print the document.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It would not be appropriate to have the document printed in the *Official Report*. Perhaps the best course would be to have it placed in the Library.

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): I congratulate the Secretary of State on reaching agreement with the Government of the Republic of Ireland which, in his own words, shows the full commitment of both Governments to the genuine implementation and use of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and Secretariat for the benefit of all the people of Ireland, North and South, and for the benefit of all the people of Northern Ireland, be they Protestant, Catholic, Unionist or Nationalist. I am sure that the Secretary of State will agree—indeed, he has stated this—that nothing in the agreement is detrimental to the rights and the duties of any citizen in Northern Ireland or in the Republic of Ireland.

I welcome the Secretary of State's statement on behalf of both Governments that there is an attempt to expand the scope and the timetabling of the deliberations. While it is important that security is always the number one issue on the agenda, because of the unfortunate and damaging terrorist activity in Northern Ireland, nonetheless, the Anglo-Irish Agreement deliberations have been reactive rather than proactive. I hope that in the ensuing meetings of the Secretariat there will be a structured agenda and a structured timetable when dealing with, say, the economic issues that would be beneficial to both communities, in both Northern and southern Ireland. I welcome the intent that appeared to exist in the Secretary of State's statement that that would be the norm in the future.

As we head towards 1992, it is only appropriate that two neighbouring Governments evolve a harmonisation and compatibility such as is envisaged for all Europe. Why can it not be envisaged for the small nation of the island of Ireland?

In response to the Secretary of State's remarks to the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley), I reaffirm and agree with the Secretary of State when he says that opportunities were available to every party and to people of no party in Northern Ireland to make representations on this matter. The hon. Member for Antrim, North stated that my party leader and, presumably, myself had had some privileged access prior to the signing of the agreement. We consulted with the British Government and with the Irish Government. We put our views on both tables. We would have been fools not to, prior to any international agreement being signed. That opportunity was available to everybody on the island of Ireland, and in the British Isles.

When the hon. Member for Antrim, North speaks of the majority in Northern Ireland, he is really speaking for a very small minority of the people of the United Kingdom and a very small minority of the people of Ireland in relation to his campaign of opposition to the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

While there have been hiccups in the relationship between the two Governments over the past three years, the 27 meetings of the Secretariat must be recognised as having done away with the previous negative diplomacy and shouting across the Irish sea. The meetings have had a positive result. The opposition of the Unionist fraternity to the agreement got its answer in the local government poll last week. To say that the Anglo-Irish Agreement is an obstacle to political and economic movement in Northern Ireland is nonsense. The very parties that created the obstacle cannot get over the hurdle, so it is a self-imposed obstacle. I encourage the Secretary of State to expand the work of the agreement in such a way that not only the security but the economic and social welfare of all the people of Ireland may be enhanced and improved.

Mr. King: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, who speaks for his constituents and obviously is keenly concerned about the interests of the Nationalist community. Some people believe that addressing the concerns, and perhaps the grievances and disaffections, of the minority community is somehow to the disadvantage of the majority community. It is abundantly to the advantage of the majority community within the Province that there should be good relations between both communities. It is tragic that some political leaders in the Province fail to recognise that.

We have sought through discussion to establish a constructive relationship with the Irish Government. From the position in which I sit, I can see the benefits which can flow from that. There are manifold economic benefits, not least with the approach of 1992. I appreciate the constructive relationship that we have with the Irish Government, which owes much to the outstanding leadership of the Tánaiste, Mr. Brian Lenihan. I know that the whole House will share the hope, expressed in the communiqué, that his recent operation in the United States will be a success and that he will be restored to good health.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I have allowed discretion to the two hon. Members from Northern Ireland constituencies for reasons that I hope the House fully understands. We should now get back to asking questions of the Secretary of State on the statement that he has just made.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): How carefully did my right hon. Friend consider the alternative to the present agreement that was sent to him on 28 September last year on behalf of some of my hon. Friends and myself? Is my right hon. Friend aware that the greatest single factor in prolonging the tragedy of Northern Ireland is uncertainty about the constitutional future of the Province and that that uncertainty has been increased, rather than diminished, by the Anglo-Irish Agreement in its present form? How is it that my right hon. Friend is in favour of legislative devolution for Northern Ireland but is opposed to legislative devolution for Scotland on the ground that in Scotland it would injure the Union?

Mr. King: I think that my hon. Friend knows well that this was not a review of the agreement but a review of the workings of the conference. The agreement has been signed and is in place. That is not in dispute.

I regret profoundly my hon. Friend's comment about spreading doubt and uncertainty about the Union. He knows my position on that. He knows of my support for article 1, which has been signed and is supported by the Irish Government. It states that there should be no change in the status of Northern Ireland without the agreement of the majority. That is an absolutely clear and firm understanding, expressed and signed by two sovereign Governments, the United Kingdom Government and the Irish Government. It has been lodged with the United

Nations as an international treaty. There is no uncertainty about that. I hope that we all stand firmly in support of that.

On the latter point that my hon. Friend made, I do not want to rehearse the history of Northern Ireland, but my hon. Friend knows that there is a difference between the background of Northern Ireland and Scotland in that Northern Ireland had the Stormont Parliament while Scotland did not have a parliament. We need to think seriously about the most appropriate way to ensure that the people of Northern Ireland have a greater say in and greater responsibility for the administration of their own affairs. I have made it clear that I am open to discussions on the most appropriate forum for that. If we are to make progress, we need to get discussions going with the people who might have responsibility for the affairs of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): May I associate myself with the expressions of goodwill towards the early recovery of Mr. Lenihan. I also take the opportunity to say to the right hon. Gentleman how much we on these Benches have admired the courage, determination and painstaking care with which he has assured the survival of the agreement. Those who seek peace in Northern Ireland are greatly in his debt and the debt of those in the South who have worked with him. His statement and the common statement that he made with representatives of the Government of the Republic have identified, rightly, that nothing in the agreement presents a threat to either tradition in Northern Ireland. That is seen by the Government as important, not in terms of the last dot and comma of the agreement but of its basic principles and spirit. The Government clearly see the agreement as not the last but the first step in the process.

In the light of those facts, does the Secretary of State agree that those who seek peace and the best interests of Ireland on both sides of the border would be better advised to develop and build on the agreement rather than seek to destroy it?

Mr. King: I appreciate very much the right hon. Gentleman's opening words and his general comments. I agree profoundly with his last remark about the agreement not being a threat to either tradition. The only threat to those traditions in recent years has come from some of the methods of opposition and some of the behaviour that has appalled many people in Great Britain and many hon. Members whose belief in the Union is that people should play their part in the Parliament of the Union. Those hon. Members were concerned about the unwillingness of some people to continue on constitutional routes. I hope that people will recognise that the agreement is not a threat and that it can bring benefits. They should look at the positive side. We owe that to the people of Northern Ireland. I believe that real benefits can flow from that recognition.

Mr. Peter Temple-Morris (Leominster): My right hon. Friend is only too well aware of the grave difficulties in British-Irish relationships. Potentially horrendous difficulties must reach his desk every day, involving cross-border security, Libyan arms, extradition, Gibraltar and all the rest of it; I do not need to list them all. Does my right hon. Friend agree that in his difficult job, which, if I may say so, he does so well, the existence of the Anglo-Irish Agreement has been of great assistance to him?

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. One of the least valid comments that is made about the agreement is that security has got worse as a result of the agreement. People who perpetuate that falsehood fail to recognise that some time ago, probably about 1983, plans were laid and preparations were made for the shipment of substantial quantities of Libyan arms, equipment and explosives, which were starting to arrive in Ireland before the agreement was signed. We are facing a determined and vicious campaign which, to put it bluntly, was intended to be the campaign to end all campaigns and to force victory for the IRA. That campaign is being resisted by the courage and determination of the security forces and by the resolution of all the people of Northern Ireland who are standing bravely against it. We are aided by the close support and co-operation of the Irish Government, the Garda Siochana and the Irish army. I should not like to face that serious campaign without the co-operation that has resulted in a series of arms finds and in the close working relationship that now exists. That is the reality of the security matter, and that is the reality of one of the benefits that have flowed from the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Is there a danger that the Anglo-Irish Agreement is becoming an aim in itself? Its initial worthwhile provisions to end terrorism and extend democracy, especially in the Province, are not being pursued with sufficient vigour. Although there are great problems in controlling terrorism, democracy could be acted upon more quickly. A democratic devolved Government with a Bill of Rights to protect civil liberties should be the result of the agreement or of alternative discussions if the Anglo-Irish Agreement cannot deliver.

Mr. King: I hope to see a more constructive approach in political matters. There are some signs that, after the local government elections that have just taken place, that is increasingly the view of more and more people in Northern Ireland. Although they certainly wish to protect and defend their own respectable traditions and values, they look for dialogue and a constructive way forward, and not the hostility, hatred and distrust that some people still try to engender.

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): Will the Secretary of State inform the House whether, during the review of the workings of the conference on the Anglo-Irish Agreement, he considered the heady days of late 1985, when claims were made in the House that the Anglo-Irish Agreement would produce peace, stability and reconciliation? In his analysis of the Anglo-Irish Agreement over the three-year period, did he conclude that the increase in violence, political and economic instability, and the divisions within Northern Ireland demonstrate that the policy has not been a success? Will he admit that all the talk of the IRA's plans being set in 1983 was known to him when he claimed that things would get better under the Anglo-Irish Agreement?

Will the Secretary of State please acknowledge that all hon. Members want Northern Ireland to move towards peace, stability and conciliation? Some of us at least believe that this is not the means to do it and that there is a better way. Will the Secretary of State please inform the House that he is not closing his mind to alternative means of bringing peace and stability to Northern Ireland and that there can be other proposals to get peace, stability and reconciliation? Does he recognise that the vast majority of

[Mr. Peter Robinson]

people in Northern Ireland still reject the Anglo-Irish Agreement and still refuse to accept it as the basis of good government for the Province?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman's last sentence yet again confirms his total misunderstanding of the basis of the agreement. It is not a basis of government in Northern Ireland. The responsibility of government in Northern Ireland is the responsibility of the United Kingdom Government and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the office that I have the honour to hold. In discharging that responsibility, I am aided by several contributions. I would have hoped to have more contributions from some of the elected politicians and representatives from the Province. I am aided also by the Anglo-Irish Agreement Conference, in which the Irish Government put forward to me views and proposals on certain matters. We co-operate on some economic and social activities and security matters as well. The hon. Gentleman's last sentence is precisely the misunderstanding that some have sought to perpetuate—it totally misleads the people that listen to it—as the true nature of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

The hon. Gentleman talked about economic instability. I am proud of the improvements in the Northern Ireland economy that we have seen over the past three years. They have been largely as a result of the improvement in the United Kingdom economy. There has been a substantial fall in unemployment and a significant increase in industrial investment. I welcome that, and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman does, too. Our approach is to seek a better future for the people of Northern Ireland. The hon. Gentleman will have listened to my statement and heard me say that if, in future, it appears that the objectives of the agreement can be more effectively served by changes in scope and nature, the two Governments will be ready in principle to consider such things. I hope and believe that the hon. Gentleman understands the significance of that statement. In the light of my opening comment and my last comment, putting the nature of the agreement into its true context and making it quite clear that the actual government of Northern Ireland is a separate matter, I hope that he will feel able constructively to discuss any ideas that he might wish to put forward.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is it not the case that, whatever they may have said when in opposition, successive Governments in the Irish Republic have supported the agreement? Does the Secretary of State appreciate that his task has been made much easier by the support that he has received from both sides of the House since the agreement was signed? One hopes that, if a Labour Government were responsible for the agreement, we would have got the same support from what would have been the Tory Opposition.

Does the Secretary of State agree that far more substantial improvements in housing and employment would do much to undermine terrorism? That is probably why the Provisional IRA is so opposed to the economic progress that we would like to see in Northern Ireland.

Mr. King: It is certainly true that the Provisionals are opposed to much of the economic improvement. It is true also that they are the bitterest opponents of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and the developing co-operation between our two countries. There is no question about that. We know why they are so frightened. I have had support from both sides of the House of Commons for the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which has been in place for about three and a half years. Anybody who knows what has happened in housing and the economy in trying to encourage more jobs in Northern Ireland knows that sensible co-operation in tackling other social problems will also help to improve the situation in the Province.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I will call those hon. Members who have been standing, but, in view of the business before the House today, I ask them to keep their questions brief.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): Does my right hon. Friend agree that there have been many positive achievements by the conference? I refer to article 10 of the agreement and the success of the international fund for Ireland, thanks to the generosity and understanding of the United States, New Zealand, Canada and the European Community. Does he agree that economic co-operation leads to economic confidence, which leads to economic prosperity, which benefits all people north and south of the border, and brings peace with it?

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for mentioning the international fund. Although we very much appreciate the contributions of Canada, New Zealand and the European Community, obviously the major contribution has come from the United States. It is a remarkably fine gesture as a result of the close relationship between the United States and the island of Ireland. That gesture of good will and support is being used in increasingly constructive ways to help in many matters within Northern Ireland, the border counties and the Republic.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the most notable achievements of the Anglo-Irish Agreement has been the greater emphasis on fair employment and education? Both matters deal with people. The reduction of tension between people of different traditions has played a notable part in ensuring not only that the Anglo-Irish Agreement will be successful but that there will be a much greater chance of peace in the community of Northern Ireland.

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for mentioning that matter. In particular, successive Governments have been determined to tackle discrimination, whether in housing or in jobs—topical as the subject is, as the House is about to complete the last stages of the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Bill. That development, allied with what I hope will be a continuing improvement in the number of jobs available, gives us the best chance now not only of more jobs but of equality of opportunity in the availability of those jobs.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): Does my right hon. Friend recall that I was one of those who voted against the Anglo-Irish Agreement? I now feel, having studied the document "Developments since the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement" regarding the working of the conference, that it must be acknowledged that there have been considerable beneficial developments from the Intergovernmental Conference.

Does my right hon. Friend agree that the continuation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement need not be any reason why politicians should not accept the invitation which he has proffered, today and on previous occasions, to come before him with constructive alternative proposals?

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for those comments and for the time he has taken to study the report on developments, which I have made available to the House. I can certainly confirm what he says. If people wish to talk, that does not imply acceptance or approval of the agreement and it does not need to be within the agreement. Nothing could be fairer than that. I have invited people to come and talk without preconditions. It is no good for people to jump up and down and shout about people not being consulted when that offer is available.

I am not here to belabour the point, but I would rather see genuine, sensible discussions taking place. The opportunity is there if they want to take it. If they do not, they can go on sticking in their trenches. We shall go on with our responsibilities of government. An opportunity will have been lost and the people of Northern Ireland will be the poorer for it.

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): Does the Secretary of State really believe that the vast majority of the people of Northern Ireland are now in favour of the Anglo-Irish Agreement? Is he not aware of the alienation that is felt by the Unionist population in Northern Ireland? Has he any idea of the objection that the Unionist population has to the Anglo-Irish Agreement?

If the right hon. Gentleman believes, and is confident, that the people have changed their minds and that the vast majority of the people of Northern Ireland are now in favour of it—and that the voice of Unionism in this House is not the voice of the people of Northern Ireland—he could prove it in a simple way. If he feels so confident, why not ask the people of Northern Ireland this simple question in a referendum: do they believe that the Anglo-Irish Agreement is in the interests of the United Kingdom? I and, I hope, the Secretary of State and hon. Members in all parts of the House would be happy to abide by the answer.

Mr. King: I have never pretended—I have made this absolutely clear—that a substantial number of Unionist people are, or have been, happy about the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Some of them felt extremely strongly at the time of the signing. I am well aware of that. Indeed, I recognise one or two faces here who have sought to come in quite close contact with me on various occasions to try to make sure that I was aware of that fact. I do not resent that. There were strong emotions at the time.

I recognise also that, increasingly, people—while they may have reservations—are honest enough to admit that it has not proved to be the threat or disadvantage that they feared, and there are a few who are honest enough to admit that perhaps it could just have some benefit.

If there is one hon. Member in the House who should recognise that, it is the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea), who must have recognised the benefits that could flow to Northern Ireland from a fall in the Sinn Fein vote and from an increase in support for constitutional nationalism—*[Interruption.]*—and that a reduction in votes and numbers of councillors, which has happened—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster cares to add up the numbers of Sinn Fein councillors elected, he will find that in 1985 there were 59 and that on the last occasion there were 43. He may agree that that was a reduction. I would describe it as a fall of about 25 per cent. I should have thought that he would be the first to recognise that.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): Paragraph 15 of the document "Developments since the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement" mentions extradition and related matters. Extradition is perhaps the factor that has given most trouble in the three and a half years since the signing of the agreement. Is my right hon. Friend now happy that extradition arrangements have reached a satisfactory position? If not, what further aspirations has he to ensure that fugitives to the south from the north are returned for trial in the north if they are apprehended in the south?

Mr. King: My hon. Friend is right to say that that is an area which has given some of the most difficult problems and where some of the greatest emotions have been aroused. The report of the review shows that the two Governments are committed to continuing their examination of these matters with a view to ensuring that appropriate arrangements are in place, both for extradition and for extra-territorial jurisdiction. In other words, we have concerns in this area and the work is continuing, and my hon. Friend will be aware that extraditions have recently been completed and that extra-territorial prosecutions have been conducted—*[Interruption.]* It is a matter about which some will laugh. They are not in the business of trying to establish effective arrangements. They are more interested in shouting abuse at the Irish Government than in seeing whether, between us, we can find an effective way to get arrangements in place so that fugitives cannot escape from justice merely by transferring themselves to another jurisdiction.

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): Will my right hon. Friend accept that there will be a wide welcome for the review because it represents a limited but significant record of co-operation between two countries, and not least because there is no record in the review, which I have studied, of interference in Northern Ireland, which was feared by many. Nor has the other difficulty of the internationalisation of the problems of Northern Ireland occurred?

Does my right hon. Friend agree that benefits are flowing to both sides from cross-border co-operation and from the international fund for Ireland? May I add my voice to that of my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) in hoping that my right hon. Friend will press hard with the Law Officers to make further progress under paragraph 18 of the review so as to achieve fair and effective procedures for extradition?

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and I confirm that the work is continuing. We are determined to ensure that it is effectively in place and we have made that point clear. Under the Criminal Law Jurisdiction Act one successful extra-territorial prosecution has been conducted and a conviction achieved in Dublin. The Attorney-General has made it clear, depending on the suitability of individual cases, that we are ready to consider extra-territorial prosecution as well as extradition. The important point is that those who may be chargeable for crimes are brought before the court.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Will my right hon. Friend agree that the Anglo-Irish Agreement has been a spectacular success, reflecting the skill of himself and his fellow Ministers and Ministers from the Republic of Ireland in the work that has been done, contrary to the prognostications at the time when it was originally launched? All the press in many countries said that the agreement would not last.

Will he also agree that much more needs to be done, both within the formal and informal framework of the agreement, on economic policy co-operation? Are there also prospects for greater co-operation within the EEC in achieving some of those goals?

Mr. King: Part of my message has been to try to discourage the claim that anything is a spectacular success. Irish issues—Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland relationships—long-standing and difficult as they are, do not lend themselves to immediate or overnight reconciliation or resolution. However, what I believe—and what I believe the House has honestly recognised in looking at the developments that have taken place—is that we are making steady and worthwhile progress in a constructive way that can only be of benefit to both communities and to all the people in the island of Ireland.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Notwithstanding that there have been improvements in cross-border security co-operation since, and as a result of, the signing of the agreement, may I ask my right hon. Friend what further progress he thinks can be made?

Mr. King: We can continue to reinforce that co-operation. The difficulty about security issues is that, obviously, I cannot talk about them in any detail. A lot of work is taking place and there is now ever closer co-operation in a number of important and relevant spheres. We are undertaking a considerable amount of work to try to ensure that wherever the terrorist may be and from wherever his resources may come—and I am talking not merely of armaments, weapons and explosives but particularly about an area that has not been sufficiently addressed in the past, which is money, cash, racketeering, smuggling and other aspects which undoubtedly have underpinned much of the terrorist effort—we can together steadily improve and concert our actions in all the necessary spheres.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): Can my right hon. Friend confirm that, fundamental to any progress in Northern Ireland and at the heart of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, is a recognition of the rights and identities of the two traditions in Northern Ireland? The Anglo-Irish Agreement has given practical expression to that recognition by the improvements in appointments to public bodies, a code of conduct for the police, and improvements in the law relating to public order, employment and terrorism.

Mr. King: I agree with that. I feel that part of the quality of Northern Ireland comes from the diversity of the two traditions, which should be a source of enjoyment and appreciation and not a source of division. I have been struck by the Nationalists, who appreciate the marching tradition that exists in Northern Ireland. Marching, for instance, need not be seen as an aggressive and triumphalist act. Conducted in a responsible and non-provocative way, it can be seen as a decent remembrance of an ancient tradition. So many aspcts of the culture and tradition could be enjoyed. One would certainly like to see mutual respect enhanced and encouraged in that way.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take the application under Standing Order No. 20 first.

5 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the Anglo-Irish Agreement review of the working of the conference".

The matter is specific, it is important and it is urgent. We have heard in the House today the benefits of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Good wishes were given to the Foreign Secretary of the Irish Republic, and I am sure that everyone would wish him well. I hope that he gets better quickly.

However, today I am thinking of the widows and the orphans in Northern Ireland. Not a line in the document concerns them. I would go further and say that today I speak for them. What has been said in the House about the Anglo-Irish Agreement does not reflect what is happening in Northern Ireland. The hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) knows Downpatrick. It is the centre of his constituency. The hon. Gentleman knows that there is a grammar school, a Roman Catholic grammar school and a Roman Catholic secondary school. The proposal is to close down the one state Protestant grammar school in Downpatrick, so that the only children who will have an education in a grammar school will have to travel to Belfast. Therefore, the children of working-class people will not have the opportunity of a grammar school education.

Those are the issues that lie at the heart of the matter —discrimination against the Protestant sector of the community. That is why I am saying that the House should have a thorough discussion of the matter. Hon. Members should not talk about Northern Ireland Members not making any approach to discuss the matter. This is the place where the matter should be discussed.

I would welcome a referendum in the whole of the United Kingdom. That is not the first time that I have said that. I said it 10 years ago. Let us hear from the people of the United Kingdom what they want to do with Northern Ireland and Northern Ireland will abide by their decision. However, I can assure the House that it will not go into a united Ireland.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the review of the working of the Anglo-Irish Agreement that has been announced."

I have listened with care and concern to what the hon. Member has said, but, as he knows, my sole duty in considering an application under Standing Order No. 20 is to decide whether it should be given priority over the

orders set down for today. I regret that the matter that he has raised does not meet the criteria of the Standing Order. I therefore cannot submit his application to the House.

Community Charge

5.2 pm

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the extension of the date for poll tax rebate applications in Scotland beyond tomorrow's deadline."

The House is bitterly divided over the poll tax, but it should be united on the specific matter of trying to ensure that those who are entitled receive in full such rebates as are available to them. Yet, unless rebate applications are received by tomorrow's deadline, there is a danger that many thousands of Scots will begin to lose their rebate entitlements, for a number of reasons.

First, in many areas of Scotland, the implementation of the poll tax is causing the kind of administrative chaos that the Opposition have long predicted. There is a huge backlog of current rebate applications. There has been a much higher than expected volume of changes to the register, as people move around and across regional council boundaries—for example, Strathclyde officials are processing more than 120,000 changes to their register every week. There has been a flood of calls from angry and perplexed poll tax payers who are demanding explanations and more information on the tax. All those factors are placing enormous strains on the administrative systems and on local authority staff, and, as a result, the system is failing to deliver and to meet the administrative requirements for implementing the tax.

Today's *Glasgow Herald*, for example, reports that regional council finance departments are admitting that many Scots are only now receiving their payment books —just a few days before the deadline. It is little wonder that in the midst of such administrative chaos many who will be entitled to rebates will not yet have fully realised that they have to apply for a rebate or that the deadline for applications is tomorrow. If they apply beyond tomorrow's deadline, their entitlements to rebate will not be backdated to 1 April, and they will therefore suffer heavy financial loss.

That is a deplorable situation, but what is worse is that a party represented in the House is deliberately aggravating the situation by encouraging those who are not entitled to rebates to flood councils with rebate applications in the hope of bringing the entire rebate process to a grinding halt. That party is the Scottish National party. I do not know what kind of political capital it hopes to gain from such gross irresponsibility, but one thing that is certain is that the losers will be the poor, who will be denied rebates which to them could be a matter of make or break.

The poor must not be made to pay the price either of bureaucratic breakdown or of malevolent politicking. I urge you, Mr. Speaker, to consider my application for a debate on this important matter.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

[Mr. Speaker]

"the need for an extension of the deadline for applications for community charge rebates in Scotland beyond tomorrow's deadline."

I regret that I have to give the hon. Gentleman the same answer as I gave the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley). I have listened with concern to what the hon. Member has said, but I regret that I do not consider that the matter that he has raised meets the requirements of the Standing Order. I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

ROYAL ASSENT

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified Her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

1. Atomic Energy Act 1989.
2. National Maritime Museum Act 1989.
3. Civil Aviation (Air Navigation Charges) Act 1989.
4. Disabled Persons (Northern Ireland) Act 1989.
5. Scrabster Harbour Order Confirmation Act 1989.

Lonrho (Letter)

5.9 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recall that earlier this afternoon the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) called for a debate based on a whole series of early-day motions that he has tabled. I apologise for raising the matter when the hon. Gentleman is not in the Chamber. I did look for him in the building so that I could notify him of the fact that I was going to mention him, but I could not find him. Most of those early-day motions concern my constituent, Mr. David Coghlan, and his allegations of telephone tapping for Lonrho. Mr. Coghlan sent a letter to the hon. Member for Workington on 11 May, of which I have a copy, and a copy also went to Mr. Rowland of Lonrho.

The main thrust of that letter is illustrated by the following quote:

"You may recall I came to see you in the House and you showed me a photocopy of what you alleged was an affidavit sworn by myself. The contents of this so-called affidavit were extensively used by you in your early-day motions. You refused to give me a copy of this so-called affidavit. I believed it to be a forgery and told *The Guardian* just that . . . In order to put the record straight I am enclosing with this letter a copy of the statement in which I set out the events of 1985 to date to the best of my ability."

He went on to say that he was sending a copy of the letter to me, his Member of Parliament, and to Mr. Rowland.

I seek your ruling, Mr. Speaker, on whether the Table Office should, in future, accept early-day motions from the hon. Member for Workington on this subject, as I have given public notice to the House that there are grave questions about the authenticity of the material on which the hon. Gentleman bases his early-day motions and on which the hon. Gentleman is relying for his vendetta against Mr. Rowland of Lonrho.

Mr. Speaker: I can give a ruling on this. First, the hon. Gentleman should have notified the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) that he was going to raise this matter. Secondly, every hon. Member must take responsibility for what he says in an early-day motion and, provided it is in order, it can then go on the Order Paper. I cannot be held responsible for the accuracy of statements that may be made.

Mr. Dickens: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I apologise to you for not informing the hon. Member for Workington, but, unfortunately, I did not know that he intended to raise this item during business questions this afternoon. I discussed this matter with your Office, Mr. Speaker, and with the hon. Gentleman and I intended to raise it in the House after the recess. Unfortunately, the hon. Gentleman asked for a debate on the subject today, so I had to raise the matter today.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Civil Jurisdiction and Judgments Act 1982 (Amendment) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

Orders of the Day

Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New Clause 1

POWER TO SECURE FURTHER UNDERTAKINGS OR ISSUE FURTHER DIRECTIONS

'(1) Subsection (2) below applies where, by reason of any undertaking or directions under section 12 of this Act, any directions substituted for such directions by the Tribunal or any order made by the Tribunal for the purpose of giving effect to any such undertaking or directions, a notice has been served on any person under section 35(2) of this Act.

(2) If, while the notice has effect, the Commission forms the opinion—

(a) that the progress specified in the notice in respect of any period has not been made, and

(b) that the person concerned ought to take action for promoting equality of opportunity in addition to the action required to be taken under the existing undertaking or directions,

section 12 of this Act shall again apply in relation to the person concerned as if the Commission had conducted a fresh investigation under section 11 of this Act.

(3) Where, by virtue of this section, the Commission secures a written undertaking from the person concerned or serves a notice on him containing directions—

(a) the undertaking or directions shall have effect in place of the existing undertaking or directions, and

(b) any notice previously served on him under section 35(2) of this Act shall cease to have effect, but without prejudice to any power to give a new notice under that subsection.'—*[Mr. Viggers.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

5.12 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Peter Viggers): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The Bill, having passed its Second Reading and completed 18 Committee sessions, now moves back to the Floor of the House.

New clause 1 represents a significant strengthening of the provisions in the Bill dealing with goals and timetables, and complements other amendments on the same subject which have been tabled to clauses 30 and 31.

As the Bill stands at present the Fair Employment Commission may serve on an employer a notice relating to goals and timetables, and may make further inquiries of the employer at six-monthly intervals to assess what progress has been made. The amendments to clauses 30 and 31 to which I have just referred will enable an employer to set his own goals and timetables in the context of the periodic review of his work force which he is obliged to undertake under clause 30. The amendment will empower the commission, in those circumstances also, to make further inquiries in order to assess progress.

The new clause essentially completes the exercise by enabling the commission to follow up a notice relating to goals and timetables by means of seeking further undertakings from an employer or issuing further directions to him. Both undertakings and directions are, of course, enforceable before the tribunal. An employer's failure to achieve the objectives which the commission thinks he should be able to achieve, as a result of action taken following earlier undertakings or directions, or his failure to achieve such objectives within the time the commission thinks appropriate, therefore become the triggers to allow the commission to seek further undertakings or to impose or modify, so as to strengthen, directions. The new clause also makes it clear that undertakings given or directions issued under this clause replace and supersede any previously given by or issued to the employer. I trust that the new clause is clear and I believe that it will be acceptable to the official Opposition as it will strengthen the Bill. I commend it to the House.

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): I agree with the Minister that the Bill was fully discussed in Committee. On a number of important points we were able to convince the Government of the need to alter and, in some cases, improve the Bill. We are delighted that the Minister and the Government have been able so to do.

In the spirit of bipartisanship that has arisen from the Bill, we certainly welcome new clause 1. As the Minister rightly says, it strengthens the goals and timetables and, therefore, it is warmly welcomed by the official Opposition.

5.15 pm

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): There is no doubt that new clause 1 does exactly what the Minister and the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) suggest —it strengthens the goals and timetables set out in the Bill.

It is important to consider the backcloth against which the goals and timetables will be used. The Bill is not what it purports to be—in favour of fair employment. To me and my colleagues, fair employment means that a person gains employment on merit—that that person is the best for the job. By inserting the provision that, over a specific period, the work force must be of a certain composition means that the criterion for employment is no longer merit, but the religious or political views of those who come to the personnel office. *[Interruption.]* I am sorry, but does the right hon. Gentleman wish to intervene? He seems to have stopped the gesticulation in which he was engaged. Perhaps that is the kind of behaviour that we can expect from the Alliance party.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): Is the hon. Gentleman talking to me?

Mr. Robinson: The right hon. Gentleman seems to be unaware of the gestures which he makes, which suggests more about his character than anything else.

Rather than enforcing the principle of employment on merit, the Bill means that people will now be employed on the basis of their religion. That is contrary to the spirit of fair employment and, for that reason, my colleagues and I will oppose the new clause.

I made it clear in Committee, and I repeat today, that I support the principle of fair employment. I believe that the best way to ensure fair employment is to impose severe punishments on anyone who discriminates in his employment policy. The steps that have been taken by the Minister, however, have been taken because of pressure coming from the Republic of Ireland as a result of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The documentation that we discussed earlier this afternoon specifies that the Bill is part of the process instigated by the Intergovernmental Conference. The Secretary of State, however, has tried to deny that there is any basis for my argument that the government of Northern Ireland is now shared between

[Mr. Robinson]

the Government of the Irish Republic and the British Government. The Bill was born out of the Intergovernmental Conference and was pushed through the Anglo-Irish process by the Government of the Irish Republic, no doubt with accompanying pressure from those with republican traditions in the United States.

The new clause will bring more division within the workplace and it will not assist in bringing a proper peace to the work force. We have a good work force in Northern Ireland and our workplaces have not experienced many problems. The Government, however, are attempting to introduce tension in the workplace and the new clause will go a long way towards that.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): I have to agree with many of the observations of the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson). Will the Minister point out to us how he sees a policy of goals and timetables being able to rest easily with the merit principle? Does he not agree with the views expressed by the Confederation of British Industry, which is committed to fair employment and held seminars on fair employment long before this legislation was drawn up? Does he accept that the Bill puts severe pressure on the merit principle? As the CBI interprets it, it is expected that employers should meet heavy demands without somehow transgressing that principle. How are they to avoid transgressing the merit principle if they are forced to comply with goals and timetables?

Mr. Viggers: I reaffirm that the merit principle, the appointment of the best man or woman for the job, is central to this legislation. It is a principle which has guided us throughout the drafting of all the clauses. The hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) referred to the CBI and I pay a tribute to the co-operative attitude of the CBI. I think that the CBI would recognise, as perhaps the hon. Gentleman does not, that it is necessary to have legislation to rectify the imbalance in employment in Northern Ireland. That is what this legislation sets out to do.

The new clause simply broadens slightly the application of goals and timetables, which was extensively debated in Committee. I would not wish to go further into the merits of the issue, except to say that we are urging companies to apply good personnel practice and to look to all the population in Northern Ireland for recruitment purposes. In so far as companies may have been drawing from only one part of the community, we are encouraging them to look at all the community. So the guiding principles in this Bill have been the merit principle and good personnel practice.

There is nothing further to say on that point and, on the basis of those two principles, I commend the new clause to the House.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:

The House divided: Ayes 182, Noes 3.

Division No. 216] **[5.21 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allason, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashby, David
Aitkinson, Rt Hon Paddy
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bermingham, Gerald
Boateng, Paul
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't'e)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dixon, Don
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Foster, Derek
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gow, Ian
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hinchliffe, David
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Ingram, Adam
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janner, Greville
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Latham, Michael
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McGrady, Eddie
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mans, Keith
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Michael, Alun
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Paice, James
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Price, Sir David
Riddick, Graham
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Ruddock, Joan
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Vaz, Keith
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Wells, Bowen
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winterton, Mrs Ann

Winterton, Nicholas
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wood, Timothy
Worthington, Tony
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory
and Mr. John M. Taylor.

NOES

McCrea, Rev William
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Roy Beggs and
Rev. Ian Paisley.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am not complaining because I have done this, but I understand that while I was out of the Chamber the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) suggested that I had been given incorrect information and had tabled an early-day motion including that material. The document that I received, and on which the early-day motion was based, is a sworn affidavit that I interviewed the constituent of the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth in my office for one and a half hours, and that during that meeting he was unable to deny the total authenticity of that material. Subsequently, I have sought, and gained, a further affidavit from a person who was directly involved in the drawing up of the original affidavit. I stand behind every statement that I made and seek to confirm the information contained in the affidavit.

The original affidavit is signed by Mr. Coughlan, a self-confessed phone tapper, in which he states that he, on behalf of Mr. Tiny Rowland and Lonrho, tapped the phones of the Al-Fayeds.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. Mr. Speaker dealt with that point earlier on and the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) has now got his point on the record.

New Clause 2

MEASURES TO ENCOURAGE TRAINING

After section 37 of the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1976 there is inserted—

"*Measures to encourage training from under-represented community*

'37A. Nothing in Parts III or IV shall render unlawful any act done by

(a) an employer,
(b) an employment agency,
(c) a vocational organisation, or
(d) a person providing services mentioned in section 22(1) in or in connection with affording members of the Roman Catholic, or members of the Protestant, community in Northern Ireland access to facilities for training which is not intentionally confined to members of the Roman Catholic or Protestant community as the case may be and which would help to fit them for employment, for employment in a particular capacity, or for a particular employment or occupation, where the act is done in pursuance of affirmative action (within the meaning of the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1989'."—*[Mr. McNamara.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 87, in line 20, leave out clause 51.

Mr. McNamara: The new clause seeks to protect affirmative action programmes from challenges under the provisions dealing with direct discrimination. The issue was extensively debated in Committee, and, therefore, I shall not detain the House too long on this point. However, it is essential to put it on record.

The purpose of the new clause is to ensure that employers can organise training schemes for the purposes of affirmative action. Those schemes are calculated to help members of an under-represented community to obtain employment in a place of work. On that, the Government and the Opposition are as one. However, in order to do so, the employer must be protected from those who would claim that affirmative action constitutes a violation of the prohibition on discrimination. That is normally done by means of a specific exemption, which excludes affirmative action from the prohibition on discrimination. That is the case with the legislation that deals with racial and sexual discrimination in Great Britain.

More interestingly, the position has been recognised by the Government, who have introduced amendments that protect employers who advertise posts in a way that appeals exclusively to the under-represented community. The Bill also contains exemptions protecting the employer engaged in affirmative action training schemes from allegations of indirect discrimination. We welcome those.

However, there is a difference of opinion between the Government and the Opposition which the Government have not, as yet, accepted. We believe in the need to provide an exemption against direct discrimination. The Government have two objections to that. First, they sincerely believe that they have done enough to protect employers from such a charge. They believe that if an employer provides a training scheme, which would be indirectly discriminatory in the absence of the exemptions provided for in clause 51, the scheme cannot, at the same time, be directly discriminatory. Unfortunately, that is incorrect.

The fallacy of that argument is revealed by the Bill. Clause 47 clearly relates to situations in which a particular practice may be both directly and indirectly discriminatory. In other words, there is an overlap between the two forms of discrimination. That is why the Opposition continue to believe that some form of exemption must be included for direct discrimination as well as for indirect discrimination.

Secondly, in Committee, the Government argued that they also believed that an affirmative action scheme that does not totally exclude members of one or other community could not be considered directly discriminatory. However, the Bill contains no requirement totally to exclude one or the other community to demonstrate direct discrimination. The definition of direct discrimination in clause 47(2)(a) states:

"on either of those grounds he treats that other less favourably than he treats or would treat other persons,"

The test is whether a person is shown less favourable treatment, not whether he is excluded.

The Government have set their face against permitting training schemes that are religiously exclusive. The new clause is explicit on that point. It would make it unlawful for an employer to set out with the intention of setting up a training scheme to exclude members of one or other of the two communities. Therefore, we hope that we have answered one of the Government's arguments relating specifically to religion.

[Mr. McNamara]

There is a need to clear up the Bill so that employers have a clear understanding of what is, and what is not, permissible. The House cannot allow excessive ambiguity to creep in. That would discourage employers from taking action to rectify religious imbalances within the work force.

The new clause has a further merit. It deals with another continuing and vexatious problem—the conflict between clause 51 as it stands, the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 and the European Community's equal treatment directive of 1976. At present the exemptions provided for affirmative action with respect to indirect discrimination are themselves indirectly discriminatory in regard to women. The criteria mentioned, such as age and length of service, could have a detrimental effect on women, and would therefore be subject to challenge in the European Court of Justice. The new clause would prevent such unfortunate circumstances from arising.

The Opposition are convinced that the Government did not intend the effect that the clause will have, but we think that careful consideration should be given to correcting the drafting. I hope that they will look favourably on the new clause, or will give an undertaking that it will result in changes being made in the other place.

Mr. Ashdown: I shall not detain the House for long. Let me say merely that I fully support the new clause, which strikes me as well and carefully drafted. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) said that he hoped that the Government would accept the spirit of the new clause. I think that he and I both know that the hand behind it is that of Dr. Chris McCrudden, a widely respected expert on these matters. I hope that the Minister will be able to accept both the spirit and the vast majority of the words of the hon. Gentleman's cogent argument.

The Government seem to be in a bit of a muddle. There is a clear contradiction between their admirable, laudable and supportable intention to provide affirmation action on the one hand, and their equally admirable aim to prevent indirect discrimination on the other. It is a matter of unfortunate circumstance that, at least in some instances, the one may be able to impinge on the other. Two admirable acts have been so juxtaposed that they may inhibit each other.

The ambiguity needs some clarification, as I hope that the Government will accept. It would be a crying shame if what emerged from Committee as an excellent Bill—as a result of the Government's flexibility and the Opposition's cogent arguments—were to suffer from the Government's feeling that they had made their quota of accommodations and could not make a further one in this instance. The case, I think, stands by itself, and I very much hope that the Government will respond positively.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): I think that clause 51 has a further defect. As drafted, it takes account of only two religious communities in Northern Ireland, completely ignoring others.

Unlike this island, Northern Ireland contains rapidly expanding ethnic communities. Furthermore, we are glad to say that we experience no friction or difficulty in absorbing those communities into the life and business activities of Northern Ireland. I feel that we should extend the narrow definition in the clause, which mentions only Roman Catholic and Protestant communities, making no allowance for others who, as British citizens—and, for that matter, non-British citizens—have a perfect right to enjoy the fulness of life in Northern Ireland.

I am sure that the Minister would acknowledge that many ethnic groupings contribute a great deal to the economy of Northern Ireland. Many are self-employed, but a considerable number are employed, and I feel that it would be a great mistake to exclude them from the provisions of the clause.

5.45 pm

Mr. Viggers: We are dealing with the crucial subject of outreach training carried out in pursuance of affirmation action, which is no simple matter. There is no doubt that such training can play an important role in remedying under-representation, and it is essential that the Bill should make appropriate provision for it. Clause 51 is a genuine attempt to do that, but I accept that the Opposition and, indeed, the Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland are sincerely concerned about it.

The Opposition consider that the circumstances specified in clause 51 could give rise to accusations of direct as well as indirect discrimination against any employer implementing the training permitted under the clause. Protection is, of course, already afforded in relation to indirect discrimination, and the Government are not as convinced as the Opposition of the legal validity of the need for protection against direct discrimination in the circumstances specified in clause 51. They readily accept, however, that the Opposition are motivated by a genuine concern to ensure as much protection as practicable against possible charges of direct discrimination, in addition to the protection against indirect discrimination that is already provided. They also accept that the Equal Opportunities Commission has genuine concerns about the criteria specified in clause 51—unemployment, age and length of service—and consider that they are potentially indirectly discriminatory against women and could invite challenge under not only national but European Community legislation.

The Government's concern is to ensure that the detailed provisions of the Bill, while satisfying the requirements of the Opposition and the Equal Opportunities Commission, do not permit religion-specific training which would be divisive and unfair in Northern Ireland. I respect the action of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) in tabling a new clause that takes account of our strong views, which are based on the position in Northern Ireland as we see it.

New clause 2 looks helpful: it offers a possible solution that could accommodate the genuine objectives of all the parties concerned. It merits serious and positive consideration, which it is receiving. Although I am not in a position to express my acceptance of the precise form of words proposed, I can accept the broad approach in principle. I therefore propose to continue my examination of the new clause with a view to bringing forward an appropriate amendment in the Lords. On the basis of that commitment, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will see his way clear to withdrawing the new clause.

The concern expressed by the Equal Opportunities Commission was on two counts. First, as I have said, the commission feared that the criteria specified in clause 51

might give rise to potentially indirectly discriminatory action against women. We are addressing that point in our consideration of a subsequent Lords amendment. The commission's second fear was that the gender-specific training provided under the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 might be at risk of challenge on the ground of indirect religious discrimination. In Committee I gave a firm committment that nothing in the Bill would weaken the provisions of existing sex discrimination legislation, and that remains the Government's position.

It is likely that the approach suggested in new clause 2 will not answer the commission's second concern. I therefore propose to ensure that the necessary legislation is effected to satisfy the commission's anxiety to protect gender-specific training from any accusation of indirect religious discrimination.

I trust that the hon. Gentleman will recognise that we are seeking to meet the points that he has raised, and will be prepared to withdraw the new clause.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): The Minister made no reply to the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux). Perhaps he would like to comment on the right hon. Gentleman's remarks, and say whether, in considering the new clause, he will make provision for no minority to be discriminated against, and for all to stand on an equal plane of fair opportunity.

Mr. McNamara: No hon. Member on either side of the House wants discrimination to be practised against anyone on grounds of race, colour or creed. I am sure that I speak for the Government as well as for the Opposition.

I found the Minister's reply most encouraging and helpful, and indeed generous, and I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New clause 3

ACTS DONE TO SAFEGUARD NATIONAL SECURITY ETC.

'Subsections (2) and (3) of section 42 of the Fair Employment Act 1976 (certificate that act done for purpose of safeguarding national security, or of protecting public safety or public order to be conclusive evidence of that fact) shall cease to have effect.'.—*[Mr. McNamara.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. McNamara: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

This matter was of considerable concern to our side of the Committee and in particular to my hon. Friend the Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady).

The effect of this new clause is to allow an independent scrutiny by the judiciary of national security notices issued by the Secretary of State, which at the present time cannot be challenged. This is an old argument over section 42. We believe that it is wrong for that decision to remain unchallengeable, first, because it is an anomalous element within the Bill. One of the strange facets of part II of the Bill concerns contract compliance. A contractor can be exempted and awarded a contract by the Secretary of State on the grounds of national security even if he happens to be an unqualified person, that is to say, a person who deliberately discriminates. Therefore, under the normal qualifications, and despite the enormous and very difficult procedures, he is eventually deemed to be not a suitable person to redeem a Government contract or a grant, but such an unqualified person may be given such a contract or grant on the ground of national security.

Under part II of the Bill the Secretary of State's decision in such a matter would be unchallengeable because the courts would be able to exercise judicial review of his decision. Under section 42 of the 1976 Act no such judicial review exists in the case of a person denied employment or a contract by virtue of the Secretary of State's national security certificate. This certificate allows the Secretary of State to prevent an investigation into a case of alleged discrimination on the ground of national security. No provision for any form of appeal or judicial supervision exists to prevent abuses of power in this way.

The other anomaly is that it is not in conformity with the Sex Discrimination Order under which, since an amendment moved by the Government last year, national security certificates are subject to judicial review. That is the case of Johnston *v* the RUC. As a result of this provision, and particularly because the tribunal may at times have both a sex and a religious jurisdiction to carry out, a ludicrous situation arises. An individual can bring a case under the Fair Employment Bill and under the Sex Discrimination Order. If a national security certificate were issued by the Secretary of State, the complainant could seek a judicial review under the Sex Discrimination Order but not under the Bill. That is obviously nonsense.

Secondly, once again, this Bill could be in conflict with international law. The case of Johnston *v* the RUC went to the Communities courts, but under the European convention on human rights there is an insistence that an individual must have redress against an arbitrary use of power. So, again, with regard to the Secretary of State's certificate, there could be an application to the European convention on human rights.

Thirdly, there is widespread concern in Northern Ireland about this issue, as demonstrated by the recent BBC programme "Taking Liberties". The Minister may object by saying that section 42 has been used only in a limited number of cases, and that is correct.

That is wrong for two reasons. If an injustice has been done, a person should be entitled to a correction of that injustice under our system. Secondly, and more importantly, within Northern Ireland itself it is widely believed that the formal use of section 42 is merely the tip of the iceberg. It is widely believed that individuals are often denied access to employment on the pretext of national security when, in fact, the real reason for their exclusion is quite different.

There are two infamous cases of people denied work at Ballylumford. One of them, a scaffolder, could not work on national security grounds in Ballylumford but could be employed in the headquarters of the British Army in Lisburn, Northern Ireland opposite the General Officer Commanding. There is also the case of a person who was denied a job at Ballylumford but nevertheless got an invitation to the garden party at Hillsborough to meet the Queen Mother, together with a map of how to get there.

Our proposal recognises the need for national security exemption. Judicial review provides sufficient flexibility and security to combine proper concerns for national security with protection against the arbitrary use of power. An application to a judge ex-parte in this matter does not necessarily need the person making the appeal to see the evidence and does not have to take place in set premises.

[Mr. McNamara]

The judge concerned can examine the evidence upon which a decision is based at, for example the headquarters of the RUC.

One does not doubt the integrity of the Secretary of State. He has grievous responsibility in making such a decision. He can be led into error, as recent cases before the courts might possibly reveal. Let me give a hypothetical example. Public authority X, where there is an overwhelming majority of one group employed, decides to issue an application for a job or, more specifically, for a contract. Y, a member of the other community, either applies for a job or for the contract and gets that contract. Thereupon the majority work force of public authority X objects because, in one phrase, the person involved came from the borders, which is a polite euphemism for saying that he is a member of the nationalist community.

X's work force now objects to Y getting the job, because they are from the borders. X is in a difficulty with his work force and therefore withdraws the contract on the ground that Y is not competent to carry out the contract. Y then produces evidence to show not only that he is competent to carry out the contract but that he has carried out similar contracts in the past and is in every way well suited to carry out work of that nature. So, X having given way to the pressure from his work force to exclude a person from the contract or the job, seeks another way round and seeks to ensure that section 42 notice is issued by the Secretary of State to say that Y is in fact a potential threat, or a suspected threat, to national security.

I have given that example because it mirrors in many ways the case now before the court.

The effect of that case is that a person has been discriminated against on the ground of religion. There has been an attempt to disguise that discrimination by saying, first that, because a person is not competent, he cannot carry out the task at hand. When the competence is not shown to be a real reason for denying the employment, section 42 is called in to deal the blow.

If the Secretary of State has no reason to give and is not subject to judicial review, we cannot know how or why the decision has been made and whether it has been made fairly.

Many of the decisions are questions of judgment. We acknowledge that immediately. They are important matters concerning the life and safety of the subjects. However, they concern the freedom of the individual, the right to pursue one's chosen vocation without fear of the malicious intent of somebody objecting to one's religion, the malicious use of a confidential telephone call or somebody trying to settle a personal or industrial score. Those are the problems that arise now and we are seeking to overcome them by suggesting that the Secretary of State's complete power of exemption should be looked at carefully. It would be helpful if we had the power of judicial review of decisions made by the Secretary of State.

6 pm

Mr. Viggers: The new clause, which is identical to new clause 6 tabled in Committee, is intended to repeal subsections (2) and (3) of section 42 of the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1976. Subsection (2) provides that a certificate signed by or on behalf of the Secretary of State certifies that an act specified in the certificate was done for a purpose mentioned in subsection (1)—safeguarding national security or protecting public safety or public order. Subsection (3) provides that a document purporting to be such a certificate shall be received in evidence and, unless the contrary is proved, shall be deemed to be such a certificate. The effect of the new clause is to abolish the section 42 certificate procedure, but not the national security defence.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) acknowledged the regrettable but nevertheless clear need to retain the national security safeguard provided in section 42(1) of the 1976 Act. The continuing need for such a provision was noted by the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights and there are few, if any, in the House who would attempt to deny that need. Nevertheless, the real effect of the hon. Gentleman's new clause 3 would be to dismantle the usefulness of the safeguard completely, and I feel sure that that is not his intention. Let me explain what I mean.

An act is done by an employer on the ground of safeguarding national security, but is challenged on the ground that it is in fact an act of religious discrimination. The case comes before the Fair Employment Tribunal. If subsections (2) and (3) of section 42 are removed and the certification schemes abolished, the employer must appear before the tribunal to substantiate his claim that his action was justified on grounds of safeguarding national security, or protecting public safety or public order. Revelation of the kind of information which might have led to an employer forming that sort of judgment could be extremely damaging, not just to the overall security effort in Northern Ireland but, in some circumstances, to the safety of individuals. The House will not expect me to amplify these concerns, but they lie at the very root of the national security safeguard and the certification procedure which is part and parcel of that safeguard.

Mr. Harold McCusker (Upper Bann): I apologise for being late, but I was unavoidably detained. However, I have listened carefully to the Minister and he is giving the impression that employers make judgments on national security and that it is employers who use that excuse to discriminate. In every case that has been presented to me where a person has been denied employment with a construction company at a security base within perhaps the grounds of Stormont castle, and the company has employed, say, a Roman Catholic and submitted the list of names to the Ministry of Defence or the Northern Ireland Office, the complaints are from the employers. They complain about the action taken by the Minister and his right hon. and hon. Friends in discriminating against a person by saying that he is not fit to work on the site. Who is the discriminator in those circumstances, or who is making the excuse of discrimination? Employers do not cite national security. Most employers could not care tuppence for national security. They are concerned only with earning a profit and getting their job done.

Mr. Viggers: The hon. Gentleman is entirely right. Section 42 procedure is used by the Government. The certificate is signed by or on behalf of the Secretary of State and it is for him to say that there are issues of national security involved and that he deems it necessary, in the public interest, that an individual should not be entitled to take advantage of the claim of discrimination which he is alleging,

I do not demur from the point made by the hon. Gentleman, but I am sure that he will accept that concerns have been expressed about section 42 because, by nature of the procedure and because national security is involved, it is not possible to be as clear as one would like about the grounds on which the certificate has been signed. As the House would expect, section 42 certificate applications are taken seriously by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. They are subject to detailed scrutiny.

Mr. Ashdown: We all recognise that this is a complex matter. That was illustrated by the excellent speech made by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara). However, I do not understand why the Minister is suggesting that allowing the Secretary of State's decision to be open to judicial review would be damaging in this case but works perfectly well under the Sex Discrimination Order 1988. If it applies in that case, why can it not apply here?

Mr. Viggers: I shall come to that. It is a detailed point and I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will allow me to proceed with my argument until I reach it.

As I have said, concerns have been expressed about section 42 and we would like to find ways of modifying the system to make it more demonstrably fair. Although those responsible for the administration of the system can see that it is fair, we must seek to make it demonstrably fair.

As I warned in Committee, we were not optimistic about devising modifications that would not risk undermining the entire operation of the national security safeguard. I have to say that, at least for the time being, we are not in a position to make any change to the existing system. That does not mean that we have abandoned our attempt to meet the concerns that have been expressed. We are currently examining the administrative procedures to see whether they can usefully be revised. I am sorry that this is a disappointing response to hon. Members' concerns but we cannot countenance any change that would undermine a vital safeguard.

Mr. Molyneaux: The Minister should be assured that he should not have any qualms of conscience. We are not directing our criticisms solely at Conservative Secretaries of State and Ministers. I am sure that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) would admit that Labour Secretaries of State indulged in that activity with even greater enthusiasm in their day.

Mr. Viggers: We take no pleasure in the administration of the system. The prime concern must be the security of Northern Ireland and its people. However, we are seeking to find ways of demonstrating that the system we operate is fair and can be seen to be fair. That is why we are expressing so much concern about this point.

The right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) asked about the distinction between fair employment provisions and those relating to sex discrimination. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North has made a case for changing section 42 in the same way that article 53 of the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 was changed in 1988—removing the certification system altogether. Despite his pleadings, I am not convinced. The judgment in the Johnston case, which led to the Sex Discrimination (Amendment) Order 1988, was concerned only with equality of opportunity between the sexes. Legislation on religious discrimination is unaffected by that judgment.

He also mentioned the apparently anomalous case of a complaint of religious discrimination under part III of the 1976 Act which also contained allegations of sex discrimination contrary to part III of the 1976 order. I agree that this anomaly exists in theory, but I seriously doubt whether it is ever likely to arise in practice.

The national security issues which might have been relevant in the context of article 53 of the 1976 order are not the same as the issues which would be relevant in the context of section 42 of the 1976 Act. The circumstances when being female could give rise to national security issues are likely to be limited, whereas such issues under the 1976 Act are likely to turn on a person's political opinion or supposed political opinion, and would therefore be uncommon. For those reasons, I urge the House to reject the new clause.

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): I support the new clause so ably proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara). On behalf of my party, I tabled amendments on this matter in Committee, and I think that I elicited some sympathy from the Minister because he undertook to deliberate on the points made to him. I am sure that he honoured that commitment, but I am extremely disappointed that the results of the deliberation are "no change".

For the benefit of people who do not live in Northern Ireland, it is important to understand the context of my anxiety that a safeguard should be given to individuals and companies when national security is invoked. A telephone call on a confidential line can prevent a person from obtaining or taking a job or can result in a person being dismissed. The use of the confidential telephone can prevent a firm from being given a contract or can result in a firm being moved off a site. Of course, that can be done only after the issue of a section 42 certificate.

There have been occasions in my experience, and which I am capable of proving, when a section 42 certificate was withdrawn because it was invalid and not based on adequate evidence. In Committee I tried to achieve a means by which decision making could be challenged in a confidential way. A person or company can be accused, found guilty and "sentenced" without having any knowledge of the reason for the accusation. It was to try to achieve a vehicle by which justice could be seen to be done, to use an often quoted phrase, that we suggested a means of appeal so that the persons concerned could at least be made aware of their alleged transgressions and could be given the opportunity, as justice demands, of presenting a defence. It was nothing more dramatic than that. It was simply to try to introduce an element of natural justice.

I am extremely disappointed that the Minister has come to us again with no progress to report on that matter, although I admit that he has made much progress in many other spheres. On this matter no progress appears to have been made and no hope is being held out. Cases can crop up from day to day. I have seen young apprentices and adult men and women deprived of jobs, and I have seen companies deprived of contracts without apparent justification. After representations from me, some people were reinstated. Every Northern Ireland Member will have similar experiences. That is why it is important for us to

[Mr. Eddie McGrady]

have a means by which the defence of innocence can be made and reconsideration can be undertaken by the Secretary of State. Much of this is done on the basis not of national security, but simply of raw, naked sectarianism.

Mr. Ashdown: I did not intend to intervene in the debate, but the Minister's argument was so tortuous and unconvincing that I wonder whether there is something more at the heart of this that is not being revealed to us. I read the reports of the proceedings in Committee and they seemed to be characterised by a great deal of intelligence and logic and people adopted accommodating positions. The Minister's argument has not been characterised either by such accommodation or by such logic.

The Minister suggested that because an injustice is likely to be small it does not matter. It is the argument about the housemaid's baby. Surely in the special circumstances of Northern Ireland it is more important there than elsewhere to apply justice equally and fairly. We all know that there are quirks and idiocies in the law as it applies in England, and that they take a good deal of time to iron out.

The Government have the opportunity to set in place a law whose application will be manifestly different from those of a similar law which applies to discrimination in other areas. It is clear that there is the possibility of one case running in parallel with another. A person against whom a security certificate has been laid could appeal in a sex discrimination case. That person has the right to appeal to a judicial review, but another person who is claiming discrimination on religious grounds and against whom a security certificate is also laid does not have the right to such an appeal. How could that be fair, logical or just?

The Minister's argument on judicial review rests on two pillars. The first is that there will be relatively few—I think that is what the Minister said—cases of discrimination on grounds of sex which would have national security implications. I do not argue that there will be many such cases, but the Minister must concede that potentially there will be some. Why should they be treated on a different basis?

6.15 pm

The second pillar of the Minister's argument is that providing judicial review will so wholly undermine the process of security certification as to make it worthless. If it does not make it worthless in the case of sex discrimination—and the Government have not taken that view—why should it make it worthless in this case? I do not understand why the Minister is following a course which is so manifestly not equal on both sides and which so obviously does not stand up to logical scrutiny.

I suppose that the House must take refuge in the fact that in the past the Minister has accommodated arguments and when he has told us that he will go away and think further about a matter we must give him the benefit of the doubt that he will do that. I appeal to him to find a mechanism to meet the legitimate grievances that have been put forward. If he does not, he has in his hands a positive and deliberate mechanism to build into the process of the law that he is constructing an inequality which will make the law look like an idiot when it is applied.

Mr. Viggers: Out of a total of 28 section 42 certificates, 17 were signed by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland only after very careful deliberation. That puts into context the problem with which we are dealing. Certificates are not issued lightly; they are issued with great care. A section 42 certificate is conclusive in the sense that it is a statement by the Secretary of State that national security is involved and that, therefore, the merits of the issue cannot be investigated. In some instances the very demonstration of the case in public or to the people concerned, the very explanation of the facts that have been brought together, would be contrary to the national security interest. I cannot elaborate further on what I have said to the House.

Mr. McNamara: I am disappointed at what the Minister has said. Although I do not intend to divide the House on the issue because it may be raised in another place in more detail, I should like to make one or two observations on what the Minister has said. First and most important, he said that merely because Johnston *v.* the RUC concerned women, he did not think that it would be a terribly important precedent. I shall give him an example.

Within a sensitive area, job applications are sought for three clerks. Suppose that there are a number of applications for those jobs, one of which is from a woman, but that they are all filled by men and that the woman is denied one. The woman could bring an action on the ground of sex discrimination because all the other applicants were men and that, on the balance of merit, she should have been seriously considered for an appointment rather than be caught out because of her sex. Alternatively, she could make an appeal to the tribunal on the same basis, and then to the courts.

It could be that that woman applicant is a potential para-military. However, if all the appointees had been women, and the one male applicant had not been appointed in the interests of national security, he would not, under the Minister's proposals, be allowed to appeal against that decision except on the ground of sex discrimination. He would not be able to do that if all the others appointed were men. Equally, a woman applicant could not appeal if there were women among those appointed.

I hoped that the Minister would take a stronger approach to the question of administrative procedures. A number of cases currently before the courts concern situations in which strange decisions have been made. It will be impossible for the Government to defend their position. Someone will inevitably take a case to the European Court citing the European convention on human rights and arbitrary uses of power, with the result that there will be another cause célèbre such as the Grogan case. That would not be good for the Government, and not a happy precedent to set in dealing with the sensitive matter of security in Northern Ireland. It will not help matters if the Government are paraded before the European Court for being insensitive to human rights. Nor will it do our country, or the administration of justice, any good, or help to enhance confidence in legal and civil administration.

I hope that the Government will be able to produce a more persuasive argument when the Bill goes to another place. While I understand the Government's arguments, it is possible under existing systems to provide for a degree

of review by an independent member of the judiciary. A judge can say, "I have considered certain matters where I consider that the Secretary of State's judgment was right, but in other cases it was wrong and an injustice was done." I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 4

CONTRACT AND GRANT COMPLIANCE

'(1) Except in contracts certified in accordance with the provisions of section 39(7) of this Act, all public authorities shall include the provisions of the Code of Practice in every contract hereafter entered into with every person ("the contractor").

(2) The contractor shall include the provisions of the Code of Practice to this Act in every sub-contract so that such provisions are binding upon each subcontractor, unless the sub-contract is certified in accordance with the provisions of section 39(7) of this Act.

(3) Every public authority shall require as a condition for the award of any contract that each prospective contractor or subcontractor shall submit a statement in writing to the effect that he is already implementing the provisions of the Code of Practice.

(4) Every public authority which administers a programme involving financial assistance included in section 41(2) of this Act applies shall require as a condition for the approval of any such grant, that the applicant shall submit a statement in writing to the effect that he is implementing the provisions of the Code of Practice.

(5) The Department shall draw up regulations providing such means of enforcing the provisions of this section as it considers appropriate.'.—*[Ms. Mowlam.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

New clause 4 attempts to point out the inadequacies of the Bill's contract compliance provision. It suggests an alternative concept to that proposed by the Government, who conceive of contract compliance as a last resort to be used as a stick against those employers who deliberately and persistently fail to promote equal opportunity. Our clause involves a carrot approach. Rather than use contract compliance in a punitive way, it enshrines a positive strategy. Employers who promote equality of opportunity would enjoy the advantages of being eligible for contracts and grants. Employers who did not promote it would not. Employers would be required to attain an acceptable minimum standard of fair employment before becoming eligible. Therefore, contract compliance would be used primarily as an instrument to reward good employers, rather than as a last-sanction against persistent discriminators.

That approach was suggested by the Department of Economic Development in its consultative document on fair employment. The Government jettisoned the best feature of that document. The same type of contract compliance was advocated by the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights, and by the Northern Ireland Congress of Trade Unions. The new clause has two other noteworthy features. First, it extends contract compliance requirements to subcontractors, which is important but notably absent from the Bill. Secondly, it ensures that the same procedures apply both to contracts and Government grants. At present, that is not the case, because clause 39 states that a public authority shall not enter into any contract with unqualified persons unless certain conditions are fulfilled, while discretion to award contracts to unqualified persons is given in clause 40. The possibility that public authorities will make grants to persistent discriminators is unacceptable.

Mr. Viggers: The scope of new clause 4 is wide and would involve a substantial change to the Bill. It is superficially attractive, but I urge the House to resist it on the grounds that it is impracticable and unworkable, and that to incorporate it in the Bill as it has evolved would be difficult. It would also be difficult to enforce.

The mechanism proposed in the Bill for the application of important economic sanctions is straightforward, equitable and effective. It strikes when notice of disqualification has been served by the commission. It has none of the complications of inserting provisions into contracts or of auditing conformity with declarations of statements of intent. New clause 4 would introduce all those unnecessary and cumbersome complications. It requires every contract and subcontract to include all the provisions of the code of practice, and it provides no definition of what is meant by a contract. It applies to contracts regardless of their nature and size, and of the financial amounts involved.

New clause 4 falls back on a mechanism that we tried and found inadequate—the submission of statements of compliance. The hon. Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) was right in saying that the Department of Economic Development made such a proposal, but we came to the conclusion that that would not be the best way to proceed. The Bill as drafted incorporates a broadly similar mechanism, which is the declaration of principle and intent. We propose moving on to a system that we are sure will be much more effective, which is a clear trigger mechanism based on a notice of disqualification.

The new clause does not set out coherent or considered proposals for enforcing the provisions it makes but proposes instead to delegate that important aspect to departmental regulations. There is no indication of what those regulations might contain. For the practical reasons that I have described, the new clause would not be helpful and I invite the House to resist it. In doing so, I am not rejecting the concept that the hon. Lady presents, but careful consideration of it has prompted us to move on from the basis suggested in her new clause.

Mr. Molyneaux: The clause appears to deal solely with contractors based in Northern Ireland. I have always found it difficult to understand why contract compliance does not exist in Great Britain, where there is a far greater need for it. From time to time there are clamourings for such a provision, but even right hon. and hon. Members who are the representatives of ethnic communities do not seem to be terribly diligent in promoting their constituents' claims and requests in this House.

What will happen under the provisions of new clause 4 if a company based in England decides to tender for a Northern Ireland contract? There are many examples of that happening. Is it required to certify that it is complying already with the terms of the clause? What will happen if such a contractor comes to Northern Ireland and says, "I cannot sign that certificate because the requirement does not exist in law in England where I am based"?

Perhaps the Minister can clarify whether his Department and those responsible for enforcing the legislation will be content with an English contractor promosing that if he obtained the contract he would

[Mr. Molyneaux]

comply with the codes of practice and all the regulations. How would that promise be enforced if the contract were awarded and the operation were sealed? At what stage and in what manner would the authorities manage effectively to apply the regulations and make certain that they were watertight?

6.30 pm

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): I am sure that many right hon. and hon. Members feel that the legislation is one-sided. People feel that there is massive discrimination in Northern Ireland by Protestants against Roman Catholics. I shall refer to my constituency of Mid-Ulster. I do not think that the Opposition have shown much consideration or care for people, especially the Protestant community west of the Bann. Will the Minister confirm that sanctions will be applied against Roman Catholic companies in my constituency that have no Protestant employees whatsoever? I note that Opposition Members are nodding approval, but I have never heard any Opposition Member referring to the Protestants west of the Bann who are being discriminated against. It appears that many Government and Opposition Members feel that the legislation will apply east of the Bann to remove Protestants from jobs and to deny them jobs rather than being fair across the community.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Does my hon. Friend agree that the employment of Mr. Cooper lends credence to what he has said? Time and again cases have been drawn to the attention of Mr. Cooper and he has refused to investigate. For example, he would not investigate firms in Londonderry which employed no Protestants whatsoever. How can the people of Northern Ireland have any faith in him and believe that he will have a Damascus road experience—or a Dublin road experience—and say that he will now investigate firms that do not employ people from both sides of the religious divide?

Rev. William McCrea: My hon. Friend has made the next point that I wanted to draw to the attention of the House. My biggest problem is that I have consistently made representations to the Fair Employment Agency about the denial of jobs to my constituents, but the agency would not investigate. Will the Minister assure the House —I should like it on record so that I can refer to it in future —that, whenever a Member of Parliament makes representations and requests investigations into firms west of the Bann, such an investigation will take place?

In my constituency, some firms employ a work force that is 98 per cent. Roman Catholic and 2 per cent. Protestant, yet those firms receive handsome handouts in Government aid. Photographs often appear in the newspapers and they are commended for their excellent employment.

I know that my colleagues from Northern Ireland want fair employment, not favoured employment. We are not denying the right to fair employment. I would fight for fair employment, but it seems that there will be favoured employment and I do not accept that that is a proper concept.

The Minister should take into account the fact that a report by Mr. Cooper of the Fair Employment Agency on employment in local government in Magherafelt found the Magherafelt district council guilty of discrimination against Roman Catholics. In the past 16 years, the council was under SDLP control for 12 years, and under Unionist control for only four years. It was interesting that Mr. Cooper's report revealed that the only years of fair employment were the four years when I was chairman of the Magherafelt district council. I found that most interesting. I should be glad if the Government and the Opposition would read that report, as it proves that I believe in fair employment and at that time there was fair employment in the Magherafelt district council and throughout the community.

I am concerned that sanctions appear to apply to Protestant firms and people who own companies. It will be most interesting when I refer to the Minister companies in my constituency that are displaying, in the words of the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady), blatant sectarianism in discriminating against the Protestant community. I hope that the hon. Member for South Down will join me in making representatons for funding to be removed from those firms.

Mr. Viggers: With the leave of the House, I rise only to reassure hon. Members that the legislation we are considering applies equally to Catholics and Protestants. In that sense, it is entirely even-handed. If the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) feels that any case of discrimination is not being pursued and is unable to get satisfaction from the Fair Employment Commission, I hope that he will draw it to my attention and not make allegations in the House which he has not pursued elsewhere. It would be quite wrong for the hon. Gentleman to make allegations which were difficult to substantiate if the Government had not been given the opportunity to pursue them. Subject only to those points, I reaffirm that we do not consider that the new clause would be helpful.

Ms. Mowlam: I wish to make one short point to the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea). If he had read the Standing Committee report in sufficient detail, he would know that hon. Members on both sides of the House gave examples from both sides of the Bann.

Rev. William McCrea: When we referred matters of discrimination to the relevant authorities, it did not work. I have not received an authoritative statement from the body that I was told would look into fair employment. I have requested an investigation into the Department of Health and Social Services, naming the officers and the posts, and after six years I have still to receive an answer from the Fair Employment Agency.

Ms. Mowlam: The hon. Gentleman raised two points and I was replying to the first, so his intervention was irrelevant to my remarks. If he has specific complaints, he should take them up with the Government and not with the Opposition.

The hon. Gentleman seems to use the Fair Employment Agency when it suits him—as he did when he referred to Magherafelt council—and then he makes negative comments in the House against Mr. Bob Cooper of the Fair Employment Agency, when Mr. Cooper is unable to reply.

Mr. Molyneaux: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Mowlam: No, I shall not give way, as those points should be addressed by the Minister. I was simply putting it on record that it was out of order for the hon. Gentleman to raise those points in that way.

I understand the difficulties that the Minister has pointed out with regard to the new clause. It is disappointing that he feels unable to include it in the Bill in a more concrete way than saying that he accepts the concept. I hope that the Minister will not divorce theory and practice in regard to other issues. If he accepts the concept of the new clause, I hope that there will be further developments on contract compliance in another place or at a later stage. We are disappointed, but we accept the Minister's points. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 1

THE FAIR EMPLOYMENT COMMISSION

Mr. Viggers: I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 1, line 16, leave out from 'Commission)' to end of line 19 and insert

'after paragraph (a) there is inserted—
"(aa) promoting affirmative action;".'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this, it will be convenient to consider Government amendments Nos. 64, 65 and 72.

Mr. Viggers: The purpose of Government amendment No. 1 is to give the commission a clear and specific duty to promote affirmative action as well as promoting equality of opportunity and working for the elimination of discrimination. It in no sense changes the remit originally given to the Fair Employment Commission. It merely imposes a clear and specific duty on it to promote affirmative action. For that reason, I hope that Opposition Members and other hon. Members will believe that the amendment is worthwhile.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. Viggers: I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 1, line 19, at end insert—

'(3) References in the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Acts to the Commission include, in relation to any time before the commencement of subsection (1) above, references to the Fair Employment Agency for Northern Ireland.'.

We are moving through many amendments. I am happy to clarify any of the Government amendments, but unless I am challenged, I propose to deal with them briefly.

Government amendment No. 2 makes it clear that any reference to the commission in the Act between Royal Assent and the creation of the commission under clause 1(1) should be construed as a reference to the Fair Employment Agency. It is a simple matter.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 2

CONSTITUTION OF THE TRIBUNAL

Mr. Viggers: I beg to move amendment No. 3, in page 2, line 8, after 'exercised', insert

'by a single tribunal or'.

The amendment seeks to remove the unsatisfactory form of words from clause 2(2) and provides a clearer description of the way in which the Fair Employment Tribunal will operate.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 3

THE PRESIDENT

Mr. Jim Marshall: I beg to move amendment No. 74, in page 2, line 21, leave out 'Department' and insert 'Lord Chancellor'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to consider the following amendments: No. 75, in page 2, line 24, leave out 'Department' and insert 'Lord Chancellor'.

No. 76, in page 2, line 26, leave out 'Department' and insert 'Lord Chancellor'.

Mr. Marshall: I hesitate to slow down the rapid progress we are making on the Bill, but I must address amendment No. 74 and the others in a little more detail than was given to the three previous amendments.

The amendment concerns the person or body who is to appoint the president of the Fair Employment Tribunal. Under the Bill, the president of the Fair Employment Tribunal is to be appointed by the Department of Economic Development. I do not intend to go into a diatribe or a detailed criticism of the history of the Department of Economic Development as this is not the appropriate place or time. The amendment should not be seen as a direct or indirect criticism of the Department of Economic Development.

We seek to remove the power of the Department to appoint the president and to vest that power in the Lord Chancellor. Our reason is to emphasise the independence of the tribunal. As the Minister knows from Committee, we believe that if the president of the Fair Employment Tribunal is seen to be appointed by the Department of Economic Development, it could call into question the independence not only of the president himself, but of the tribunal.

All parties are agreed that it is vital that the tribunal is both seen to be and is in practice impartial and independent of the Government. The Bill shows that the Government themselves partially recognise that problem. Once the president of the tribunal is appointed, he is appointed for life. Once he is appointed, there is no further need to genuflect either to Ministers or to the Department of Economic Development. The Government should go the whole hog and remove any nexus between a Government Department, such as the Department of Economic Development, and the president of the tribunal.

6.45 pm

Before the Minister tells me that that would create a precedent and might create problems for appointments in the future, I must point out to him that there are precedents that support the basis of our amendment. I will highlight two of them. The Lord Chancellor appoints the president of the industrial tribunals for England and Wales. More importantly, the Lord Chancellor also makes appointments to bodies whose remit is within the confines of Northern Ireland Departments. The president of the Social Security Appeals Tribunal for the north of Ireland, for example, is appointed by the Lord Chancellor. There

[Mr. Marshall]

is support for the amendment from all parties in the Chamber. I urge the Government to accept the amendment.

Mr. Viggers: I must point out to the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) that the president of the Fair Employment Tribunal is not appointed for life. He is appointed until the age of 72 and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will join with me in wishing Mr. Maguire a long and happy retirement after the age of 72.

I cannot accept the hon. Gentleman's suggestion that the appointment would be made better by the Lord Chancellor than by the Department. I understand the hon. Gentleman's desire to emphasise the similarities between the functions of the president and those of a judge. There are considerable similarities, but there is one important difference. Industrial tribunals, fair employment and the regulation of employment practices and employment matters generally are transferred matters, which in the event of devolution would be the responsibility of a devolved Administration. We had a similar discussion in Committee when it was suggested that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State should have direct responsibility for fair employment matters, rather than most of the statutory responsibilities resting with the Department of Economic Developments.

Mr. Molyneaux: That is a vital point. The Minister said that if devolved government were achieved that would be one of the responsibilities of the devolved Government. That is something new and we are encouraged by it. But the Anglo-Irish Agreement does not say that. It says that, in the event of agreement being reached under article 4, certain matters may be devolved, but not the transferred matters. That is an advance and I am grateful for it.

Mr. Viggers: What I have said is clearly understood. I am certainly not enunciating a new principle. If the right hon. Gentleman thinks that I am, perhaps we need to discuss why that should be. I assure the right hon. Gentleman that I was enunciating simple and clear principles.

In the event of devolution, it would be inappropriate for the Lord Chancellor to have responsibility in transferred matters. It would be open to a devolved Administration and a devolved assembly to make whatever changes they thought fit in employment law. It would be strange if the Lord Chancellor and a devolved Administration were involved in the same area and it would only cause confusion. I ask the House not to accept the amendment.

Mr. Jim Marshall: As the Minister knows, we discussed these matters in Committee. We put similar arguments and the Minister has given virtually the same replies as he gave in Committee. Perhaps we are at a stand-off. Before gracefully withdrawing the amendment—*[Interruption.]* We will continue to make our point in another place and in this House again, if the Bill returns amended from the House of Lords. We seek to emphasise the absolute independence of the tribunal both from Government Ministers and from specific Government Departments, such as the Department of Economic Development, in the north of Ireland. A method of doing that has still to be found.

We regret very much that the Government are not prepared to accept the Lord Chancellor instead of the Department in that role, but perhaps the Minister will reconsider the problem. When the issue is raised in another place, perhaps the Minister who replies there on behalf of the Government could respond to this point as sympathetically as the Minister has just done. Perhaps with a little more understanding and co-operation we could seek to bring about the change that we desire. I shall withdraw the amendment.

Mr. Beggs: I raised this matter in Committee and was grateful for the support that was given to me then. I should be opposed to the amendment being withdrawn.

Rev. Ian Paisley: It would be more helpful if the House knew about the deals between the two Front Benches and if we knew which amendments were to be withdrawn and which put up for barter because what we are doing now is a charade. We shall press the amendments for all the reasons that were given by the Opposition Front Bench spokesmen who have appealed to hon. Members from Northern Ireland. We realise that there is reason, but I should have thought that it would be far better if the Lord Chancellor made the appointment because that would remove this issue from politics and from a Government Department. The appointment would then be removed from a Government Department and from accusations of Government patronage. I should have thought that that would be a good way to proceed. The Opposition should hold on to their amendment and seek to divide the House.

Mr. Jim Marshall: I should like to make two points in response to what the hon. Gentleman has just said. I must emphasise to the reverend gentleman that there is no agreement in terms of timetabling the remaining stages of the Bill—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) seems to find this amusing.

Rev. William McCrea: I certainly do.

Mr. Marshall: Of course, and I understand the reasons. His ignorance of this matter was obvious in our previous discussions. If he had had discussions with his hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) he would know that this matter was discussed fully in Committee and that we were heavily defeated.

That brings me to my second point, which is a political point. If we were to seek to press the amendment to a Division now and if we were to suffer a heavy defeat of around 170 votes to 15 or 20, it would hardly enhance our ability to ensure that a change was achieved in the Bill in the other place. For that and other reasons. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Hon. Members: No.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 26, Noes 101.

Division No. 217] **[6.52 pm**

AYES

Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Haynes, Frank
Beggs, Roy	Ingram, Adam
Bermingham, Gerald	McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Boateng, Paul	McNamara, Kevin
Corbyn, Jeremy	Madden, Max
Dixon, Don	Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*	Michael, Alun
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*	Molyneaux, Rt Hon James

Mowlam, Marjorie
Paisley, Rev Ian
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Ruddock, Joan
Skinner, Dennis
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. William Ross and
Rev. William McCrea.

NOES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Atkinson, David
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Body, Sir Richard
Boswell, Tim
Bright, Graham
Burns, Simon
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Curry, David
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gow, Ian
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McCrindle, Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Paice, James
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Stephen Dorrell and
Mr. J. M. Taylor.

Question accordingly negatived.

Amendment made: No. 4, in page 2, line 32, leave out from 'provide' to end of line 38 and insert

'for specified functions of the President (including functions under sections 6 and 17 of this Act) to be exercised in specified circumstances by a person appointed, in accordance with the regulations, to a panel of chairmen'.—*[Mr. Viggers.]*

Clause 4

REMUNERATION AND ALLOWANCES

Amendment made: No. 5, in page 3, line 1, leave out from beginning to 'and' in line 2.—*[Mr. Viggers.]*

Clause 5

TRIBUNAL PROCEDURE

Mr. Viggers: I beg to move amendment No. 6, in page 3, line 28, leave out paragraph (j).

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 7.

Mr. Viggers: The amendment honours a promise that I made to the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) in Committee. It had always been our intention that the Fair Employment Tribunal would be expected to announce reasons for its decisions. The hon. Gentleman suggested that it should be specifically made a burden and responsibility for the tribunal. We are happy to include that in the Bill.

Mr. Jim Marshall: It is not my intention to delay the House. I thank the Minister for tabling the amendments. We are grateful that the guarantee that he gave in Committee has been translated into amendments.

Mr. Ashdown: I have no wish to detain the House either, but I should be grateful for a word from the Minister. Perhaps this is the appropriate time to ask a question. The Minister will recall that, when the Government published the White Paper, they said that people of standing in the community would be on the tribunal. I note that that has not been carried forward specifically into the Bill. A word of reassurance from the Minister might be helpful.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): These are interesting amendments. I listened carefully to what the Minister said. He told the House that he was fulfilling a promise made in Committee, but that it was always the intention of the Government that reasons would be given by the tribunal. The Minister was extremely brief. When the tribunal is giving its reasons, I hope that it will not be as brief.

Reasons could be given in one sentence, or they could take up half a book. On many occasions, brief explanations will suffice, but on many other occasions a fuller explanation will be needed. No doubt there will be cases under the legislation where the tribunal has to pass judgment. I hope that it will give a full explanation. That is not spelt out on the face of the Government amendments. Perhaps the Minister will go further and will open the door for a more expansive amendment to be moved in another place, specifying the sort of information that will be given, how full the explanation of the various reasons will be, what factors have been taken into account and whether the tribunal will be guided only by the evidence given to it or whether it will carry out further investigations which may change its opinion.

In Northern Ireland, many rumours fly about. We would not want decisions to be taken on unsubstantiated allegations. When the tribunal is giving reasons, they should be soundly based in law and should be sufficiently detailed for everyone to understand why the tribunal reached its decision. We will not be put off by a bit of jiggery-pokery in the corner. We want the background to be explained and the tribunal to make it clear why it has come to a particular conclusion on each item.

If tribunal members are divided in their opinion, the tribunal should have a duty to provide for minority reports

[Mr. William Ross]

so that the dissenting voice may be heard. This is a small amendment, but the Minister has treated it too lightly, as have Her Majesty's Opposition. If the amendment is tossed in out of the blue to meet a commitment, surely the Minister should give more than two sentences of explanation. We want a full explanation of what sort of written reasons will be provided for the public to assess and to take into account when the next case is coming before the tribunal.

Mr. Viggers: It is important that there should be broad public confidence in the tribunal and the justice it provides. In setting out its reasons, the tribunal will provide a body of coherent and consistent case law which will build up and be available to employers and employees alike to work upon so that they may understand the workings of the tribunal.

The right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) asked about representation on the tribunal. We will seek broad representation from both employers and unions. I reaffirm that we will seek people of substance to sit on the tribunal.

Rev. William McCrea: As the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) said, there is concern in the hearts and minds of people in the Province. In the past, many tribunals were appointed by the Government, and they usually had one political affiliation—the Alliance. It would be in the interests of the right hon. Member for Yeovil to ensure that matters continue in that way, because of his close association with that party. I hope that the Minister will assure the House that there will be wide political representation on the tribunal. If not, there will be favoured representation, as has happened in the past. I hope that the right hon. Member for Yeovil will associate himself with my remarks, because he would not——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I hope that the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) will not press the matter any further. It is clearly outside the scope of the amendment.

Rev. William McCrea: Your remark is interesting, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That was the substance of the remarks of the right hon. Member for Yeovil, and he was not called to order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) is quite right; I was not quick enough. I will bear in mind what the hon. Gentleman is saying should a similar occurrence arise again.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 7, in page 3, line 36, at end insert—

'(2A) The Tribunal shall give reasons for its decisions.'. *—[Mr. Maclean.]*

Mr. Viggers: I beg to move amendment No. 8, in, page 4, line 30, leave out from 'above' to end of line 36 and insert—

'(a) is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale, and

(b) if without reasonble excuse the failure continues after conviction, is liable on a second or subsequent summary conviction to a fine not exceeding one tenth of level 5 on the standard scale for each day on which the failure continues.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Government amendments Nos. 19, 21, 73, 37 to 41, 46 to 50 and 52 to 56.

Mr. Viggers: The amendment introduces a new mechanism whereby any incremental fine will apply only from the date on which an employer is convicted of an offence rather than the date of the offence itself. We believe that to be fair.

Mr. Jim Marshall: This is one occasion on which I join other hon. Members who wish that the Minister had spoken at greater length and in greater detail. If he had done so, I could have related my comments more closely to what he said.

Contrary to the other Government amendments that have been passed, which, on the whole, we have supported, we regret that the Government have sought to introduce this series of amendments, which substantially weaken the Bill. I do not recall any hon. Member asking for such amendments at any stage of our proceedings. Why were the amendments put down, and from what quarter did the request come?

7.15 pm

An employer who fails to provide a monitoring return is subject to a per diem fine until he or she meets the requirements of the legislation. Government amendment No. 8 would restrict the per diem fines until after second conviction. That is a retrograde step, as the amendment would remove the immediate incentive for an employer who has committed an offence to comply with the law. If there is a breach of the legislation, employers should quickly compy with any demands placed upon them. The amendment would weaken that aspect of the Bill. I am sure that the Minister recognises that it will inevitably offer the opportunity for some employers to prevaricate, and also place a greater burden on enforcement bodies.

We ask the Government to think again. It will surprise the hon. Members for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) and for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) that, contrary to their belief that there is bipartisan agreement, it is our intention to oppose Government amendment No. 8.

Mr. William Ross: This is an important series of amendments, and it must be explored at some length. If we are to support the amendment, it should state rather more than the bland

"not exceeding one tenth of level 5".

Will the Minister be kind enough to translate that into pounds, shillings and pence—that reveals my age—so that we know what we are talking about?

A firm going to Northern Ireland may transgress the law for any one of a hundred reasons, possibly as a result of ignorance of the demographic and religious spread of the population. That firm could find itself guilty of—

Mr. Beggs: Bankrupt.

Mr. Ross: As the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) said, it could find itself bankrupt. The hon. Gentleman jumped the gun.

We are trying to attract firms of all sizes to invest in all sorts of matters. People go along to the Industrial Development Board and they are given glossy promotional material, and are told of all the help that will be available. I wonder whether the complications that could arise from the legislation are sufficiently spelt out for

incoming investors. Are officers in Government Departments in the IDB presently engaged in rewriting the glossy brochures? If not, it is about time someone started the job. In the interest of fairness, people should be informed not only of grants and help for firms investing in Northern Ireland, but of the pitfalls created by the Bill. They should be told exactly what position they will find themselves in.

Suppose a small firm decides to set up a branch in Northern Ireland to do a vital part of its manufacturing process or to distribute its products in Northern Ireland, and it has nine employees of one religious denomination. The word "denomination" is incorrect. We are not talking about denominations; we are talking about one denomination—the Roman Catholic denomination. All the others are lumped together. A few are labelled "others". Presumably they would be of non-Christian extraction or non-practising Christians. If one who is born in Northern Ireland becomes an atheist, agnostic, Hindu or whatever, it is of no matter. Under the Bill, if one is born a Prod, one will remain a Prod until the day one dies. It is no good saying that one has changed one's religion. That will not wash. One will be labelled a Prod for the rest of one's days. There are children in my children's primary classes—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I see nothing in the amendments that has anything remotely to do with what the hon. Gentleman is saying. We are discussing fines.

Mr. Ross: I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You are a little too quick off the mark. We are discussing the consequences of the legislation. I am talking about a firm setting up a branch in Northern Ireland and employing 10 people. A week later it finds to its horror that nine of the 10 are adherents of the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley). The firm, having employed those people in good faith, finds that, out of ignorance, it has transgressed the law.

Much of the problem is due to the fact that we are not told what location is taken into account when the case reaches the tribunal or the Fair Employment Agency. It seems that geographical area will be established at the time of those proceedings. Contractors come to Ireland from England and hire workers from all over the place.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is difficult to see what that has to do with the terms of the amendment, which is concerned with levels of fines. I hope that the hon. Member will address his remarks to the terms of the amendment.

Mr. Ross: I am grateful for your guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was simply trying to protect investors in Northern Ireland from being fined.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member will have to do that on a suitable later amendment. He cannot do it on the one that is now before the House.

Mr. Ross: I am giving the Minister notice that, when people come to Northern Ireland to invest, they must be helped to avoid committing the offences of which we are speaking. The Minister will have to give them careful advice, drawing their attention to the consequences of this legislation. That must be done before they get a foot through the door. They, or those employing people on their behalf, could find themselves in prison or be fined "not exceeding level 5". I do not know whether the courts, in taking account of the circumstances, would impose a fine not exceeding level 1.

Firms coming in, before employing people, should be given a sort of health warning—a bank account protection warning—and perhaps the Minister will give an assurance that such a warning will be placed on all relevant literature. People must be made aware that, if their work force is out of balance, they will be fined or pursued by one section of the community or another.

Rev. Ian Paisley: The amendment contains the phrase "if without reasonable excuse", which I should have thought related to the argument that the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) adduced. Some hon. Members think that all jobs in Northern Ireland are open to all classes of the community. The roofing industry in Belfast has been in the hands of Roman Catholics for years. Is the House saying that in future those engaged in roofing must sack a certain number of Roman Catholics and employ a certain number of Protestants? *[Interruption.]* I have carefully read the *Official Report* of the Committee proceedings. For example, the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) pointed out at that stage that not all things were equal because of the geographical structure and because certain types of employment were in the hands of certain religious people. In the old days in the shipyards——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member is going very wide of the amendment. I hope that he will address his remarks to the level of fines as mentioned in the amendment.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I draw your attention, with respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the fact that we are talking about people having a reasonable excuse.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member is using the phrase "without reasonable excuse" to apply to matters which are not the subject of the series of amendments before the House. The "reasonable excuse" provisions relate to specific matters, of which he is going wide. I hope that he will now address his remarks to the terms of the amendment and not to matters outside it to which the phrase "reasonable excuse" might apply.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Employers coming into Northern Ireland and breaching this law will be fined. It is reasonable not to proceed against such people immediately but to give them an opportunity to try to rectify the situation. Is it being suggested that firms coming to Northern Ireland will not be told anything about the fair employment laws applying there? Will they simply be told, "Go ahead and recruit your labour"?

The Government have a duty to ensure that every prospective investor knows what he is up against so that he can make his decision on that basis. If people breach the legislation, they should be given an opportunity to put matters right. They should not be proceeded against immediately.

That is what the amendment is about, and I am sorry to find myself on the side of the Government. I do not like to be on their side. This is reasonable because I want to see more employment in Northern Ireland. We do not have enough jobs. If we were overflowing with employment we would not need this legislation. The fact that there is a lack of jobs makes it necessary. The more jobs the better, and

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

if employers come and put money into Northern Ireland, the Government must not act in a dictatorial manner against them. They should be given an opportunity to rectify what has gone wrong.

Mr. Molyneaux: I support the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) because he and I in our respective parties play a modest part in persuading investors and companies to come to Northern Ireland, in my case from this side of the water and in his case from across the Atlantic. We would have it on our consciences if we brought them into a trap without prior warning.

That is why the Minister must provide what my hon. Friend the Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) called a health warning—I would call it an early warning —to alert them in clear and unambiguous language to the difficulties that they could face. That will enable them to take advice and decide, on commercial grounds, whether they can comply with the legislation. If they cannot comply with it, we will all be disappointed, but at least we will not feel that, through negligence, we have persuaded people, for the best of reasons, to walk into a trap that they had not foreseen.

Mr. Viggers: I was brief in moving the amendment. Perhaps with some further explanation I will be able to persuade the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) and his hon. Friends not to vote against the amendment; it is a reasonable amendment.

The intention behind the amendments is to make provision for imposing on a defaulting emloyer an incremental fine for each day in which he fails to discharge the offence of which he has been convicted, and "convicted" is an important word in this context.

A similar provision was included in the Bill at the appropriate places, but on carefully considering the matter, we in the Department decided that, in the interests of natural justice, the basic mechanism which had been provided was unfair. The general formula that we were using was on the lines set out in clause 35(8), where the incremental fine was applied for each day of non-compliance following the date stipulated by the commission in a notice of requirement—not a conviction, but a stipulation by the commission in a notice of requirement.

In practical terms, therefore, an employer who failed to comply by the specified date and who, in the genuine belief that he had a reasonable excuse for his failure, wished to plead the defence provided by clause 35(9) could, if unsuccessful in that defence, find himself confronted with a large, even a massive, incremental fine the size of which owed more to the timing and duration of court proceedings than to the seriousness of the original offence.

We are saying that interest should follow a conviction, and not the date stipulated by the commission. Mention was made of a "second conviction". There will be only one conviction. A date will be stipulated by the commission in the notice of requirement, but the matter will not appear before the court and will not be adjudged by a court until it comes up following an appeal against a notice by the commission.

I hope that the hon. Member for Leicester, South will feel that it is right that interest should follow the date of a conviction in a court and that an individual employer should not be penalised from a date stipulated by the commission. There could be genuine reasons for a delay between a date stipulated by the commission and a notice of requirement.

7.30 pm

Mr. Jim Marshall: The hon. Gentleman has referred to paragraph (b) in amendment No. 8, which says:

"if without reasonable excuse the failure continues after conviction, is liable on a second or subsequent summary conviction to a fine".

Are we talking about conviction on two separate failures or is it two convictions in the same case, where the person has been convicted once, he has failed to comply and is convicted again on the same case?

Mr. Viggers: There are, of course, two completely different sets of circumstances. There is the employer who has not been stated to be in default by the commission and who is before the courts for the first time, and an employer who has had a previous conviction. The employer who, following a conviction by the magistrates court, wilfully remains in default of his obligations will be liable to further proceedings in the magistrates court and, if convicted, will be penalised by the total of the daily fines which have occurred since the date of the original conviction.

Further failures in compliance will be penalised in the same way by subsequent convictions until the employer finally discharges the offence. That mechanism is similar to that which applies to offences under companies legislation. It appears to be both consistent and appropriate to extend it to the offences created by the Bill. In this case, we have modelled ourselves on the similar legislation applying to companies, where the firms concerned could have substantial funds and it is necessary to have a substantial prospective fine available to ensure that companies comply with the law.

On the matter of the first set of circumstances, we do not think it right that an employer, who has not at this stage been convicted, should be at penalty to a daily fine following the date stipulated by the commission in the notice of requirement. I hope that I have made that point clear. I hope that the hon. Member for Leicester, South accepts that it is reasonable that we should regard individuals who have not been held guilty by a court as not being subject to daily penalties.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) asked about the level 5 fine, which is currently £2,000, with a maximum fine per diem of £200. We are therefore talking about quite substantial amounts.

Hon. Members have raised the question whether we advise prospective incoming investors about the fair employment legislation. I can tell them that we are scrupulous in doing so.

Mr. Jim Marshall: The Minister said that he thought that he had made the position clear. I am sure that he has made it clear, but it is unfortunate that it is not clear to me. Perhaps my position would be better if I could say that I would consider the Minister's remarks and come back to him at a further stage. However, obviously that is inappropriate on Report.

We indicated that, if a Division was called, we would vote against the Government amendment. However, in view of the Minister's response, I would say that it is not our intention to divide on the amendment, but we intend

to consider the Minister's reply very carefully and, if necessary and possible, to pursue our argument in another place.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 9, in page 4, line 43, leave out 'the reasons for the decision' and insert 'for communicating the reasons for the decision to any person to whom the Tribunal is required by the regulations to communicate them.'.—*[Mr. Viggers.]*

Clause 6

COMPLAINTS INVOLVING MATTERS WITHIN THE JURISDICTION OF INDUSTRIAL TRIBUNAL

Amendment made: No. 10, in page 5, line 19 leave out from 'matters' to end of line 22 and insert

'which would otherwise fall to be determined by an industrial tribunal could appropriately be heard and determined by the Tribunal, he may direct that those matters shall be so heard and determined'.—*[Mr. Viggers.]*

Clause 7

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE PROMOTION OF EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

Amendments made: No. 11, in page 5, line 37, leave out 'the promotion of' and insert 'promoting'.

No. 12, in page 5, line 43, leave out 'Fair Employment'.—*[Mr. Viggers.]*

Clause 13

VOLUNTARY UNDERTAKING

Amendments made: No. 13, in page 9, line 11, leave out 'the promotion of' and insert 'promoting'.

No. 14, in page 9, line 25, at end insert—

'(5) Subsection (3) above does not apply in relation to an undertaking given by any of the authorities specified in subsection (1) of section 54 of the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1976, but where an undertaking given under this section by such an authority is not complied with the Commission shall send a report of the circumstances of the failure to comply with it to the person to whom a report under subsection (2) of that section following an investigation relating to the authority would be sent.'.—*[Mr. Viggers.]*

Clause 16

ORDER OF TRIBUNAL TO ENFORCE UNDERTAKING OR DIRECTIONS

Amendment made: No. 15, in page 11, line 11, leave out from beginning to end of line 12 and insert

'An application for the enforcement of directions shall not be made'.—*[Mr. Viggers.]*

Clause 17

FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH ORDER OF TRIBUNAL

Amendment made: No. 16, in page 12, line 42, at end insert—

'(5A) If it appears to the Department that there has been a change in the value of money since the relevant date, it may by order substitute for the sum for the time being specified in subsection (3)(b) above such other sum as appears to it to be justified by the change.

(5B) In subsection (5A) above 'the relevant date' means —

(a) in relation to the first order under that subsection, the commencement of this section, and

(b) in relation to each subsequent order, the last occasion when the sum specified in subsection (3)(b) above was altered.'.—*[Mr. Viggers.]*

Clause 21

INTERPRETATION OF PART I

Amendments made: No. 17, in page 15, line 42, leave out 'its promotion by means of' and insert 'the promotion of'.

No. 18, in page 15, line 43, leave out 'the promotion of' and insert 'promoting'.—*[Mr. Viggers.]*

Clause 23

EMPLOYERS TO APPLY FOR REGISTRATION

Amendments made: No. 19, in page 16, line 43, leave out from 'above' to end of line 48 and insert—

'(a) is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale, and

(b) if the failure continues after conviction, is liable on a second or subsequent summary conviction to a fine not exceeding one tenth of level 5 on the standard scale for each day on which the failure continues.'.

No. 20, in page 17, line 18, leave out '34' and insert '35'.—*[Mr. Viggers.]*

Clause 24

RECTIFICATION OF THE REGISTER

Amendments made: No. 21, in page 17, line 27, leave out from 'offence' to end of line 31 and insert—

'(2A) A person guilty of an offence under subsection (2) above—

(a) is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale, and

(b) if the failure continues after conviction, is liable on a second or subsequent summary conviction to a fine not exceeding one tenth of level 5 on the standard scale for each day on which the failure continues.'.

No. 22, in page 17, line 40, leave out '34' and insert '35'.—*[Mr. Viggers.]*

Clause 26

CERTAIN PUBLIC AUTHORITIES TO BE TREATED AS EMPLOYERS

Amendment made: No. 23, in page 18, line 34, leave out '34' and insert '35'.—*[Mr. Viggers.]*

Clause 27

MONITORING RETURNS

Amendments made: No. 24, in page 19, line 20, leave out 'in respect of that year'.

No. 25, in page 19, line 28, leave out '34' and insert '35'.

No. 26, in page 19, line 33, leave out 'in respect of any year'.

No. 73, in page 19, line 37, leave out from 'offence' to end of line 42 and insert—

'(4A) A person guilty of an offence under subsection (4) above—

(a) is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale, and

(b) if the failure to submit the monitoring return continues after conviction, is liable on a second or subsequent summary conviction to a fine not

exceeding one tenth of level 5 on the standard scale for each day on which the failure continues.'.—*[Mr. Viggers.]*

Clause 28

REGULATIONS AS TO MONITORING

Mr. Viggers: I beg to move amendment No. 27, in page 20, line 23, after 'regulations', insert
'made after consultation with the Commission'.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 28 to 30.

Mr. Viggers: These four amendments all relate to different aspects of monitoring. In brief, amendment No. 27 fulfils a Committee stage undertaking to require the Department to consult the commission before making the monitoring regulations. Amendment No. 28 reflects a technical difference in the period of time to which monitoring returns dealing with employees and applicants relate. Amendment No. 29 allows the regulations flexibility to provide for different modes of monitoring classifications for different categories of employees. Amendment No. 30 provides that regulations may contain a requirement for an employer to use methods of monitoring other than the indirect "schools" question or the direct question.

It is appropriate to give a few words of explanation on this group of amendments, especially amendment No. 30 which makes specific provision for an employer, when compiling a monitoring return, to use such sources of information as will enable him to compile a return with the greatest degree of accuracy. As drafted, clause 28 makes no reference as to how monitoring is to be conducted, or the sources which should be used. As was explained in the Department's "Guide to Effective Practice", and confirmed in the fair employment White Paper, the Government's preferred method was for employers to use an indirect method of obtaining information about a person's community background for purposes of monitoring. The advantages of using information about the schools attended by each employee were put forward in that connection. I need not rehearse again the benefits of this method in terms of making available to an employer a broad source of objective and verifiable information, but the Government's confidence in this method is undiminished.

Nonetheless, it was also recognised that an employer might wish to use a direct approach to establishing community background, or might wish to have recourse to any other method which appeared appropriate and justifiable in the circumstances. The important consideration was to produce a monitoring return in whose accuracy he could have a high degree of confidence. For that reason, the Bill specified the objective of monitoring, but not the methodology to be used.

Concerns were expressed in Committee, however, that the Bill did not make specific provision in this regard. To set the matter beyond doubt, therefore, we are bringing forward amendment No. 30 which does three things. It creates two classes of method—principal and residuary. It provides for a certain relationship between them, that is that the employer shall first use one of the two principal methods, and, if that does not lead to a determination, may use either the other principal method or a residuary method; and it gives, as it were, a worked example of how the regulations may set out principal and residuary methods. The amendment thus meets the point made by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) that it is essential for an employer to be able to use a back-up method to supplement the classifications arrived at by the principal method.

This is an important point and one on which I am happy to meet the Opposition's concerns. In the unique circumstances of Northern Ireland, factual information such as home address, membership of clubs or societies, the name and occupation of any referee used in connection with an application for employment and even sporting pursuits may all provide very strong inferential evidence as to the community background of an individual. Amendment No. 30 makes specific provision for such information—now referred to as "the residuary method" —to be taken into account in the compiling of monitoring returns. This is a complicated matter, but I hope that I have set the scene for the discussion of the amendment.

The Opposition have raised some concern about the draft of the amendment tabled on residuary monitoring. In brief, their concern is that it is not clear from the wording whether an employer who obtains misleading information from his work force about the extent to which they are Catholics or Protestants through the use of the direct question will be able to fall back on the residuary methodology to provide a more accurate monitoring return. In fact, the amendment does not allow for this. While the residuary method may be used where the work force provide a response to the direct question which suggests that they are "Christian", "Moslem" or "Other", this is not possible where they falsely declare themselves to be either Protestant or Catholic. In the former case, the information provided does not allow the employer to make an adequate determination and he may therefore fall back on either the indirect question or a residuary method to fulfil his obligation to make a monitoring return. In the latter case, however, he can only make assumptions about the accuracy of the attribution of "Catholic" or "Protestant" thrown up by the responses from the work force and he does have a "determination" as required by the legislation. It would be extremely difficult to provide in the Bill for the exercise of judgment by the employer as to when he might utilise the residuary method in such circumstances.

We do, therefore, recognise that the Opposition have a point and we believe that it might be addressed by providing for the commission to investigate dubious returns and to substitute their assessment for the return if the doubt is confirmed. The code of practice, moreover, might encourage employers who have doubts about the accuracy of their returns to bring these to the attention of the Commission.

This is a difficult issue and we are conscious of the need to ensure that monitoring returns are as accurate as possible. Therefore, consideration is being given to the matter and, if appropriate, an amendment will be brought forward in the other place.

Mr. McNamara: I am obliged to the Minister for the amendment and for his comments on residual monitoring, which was a matter of concern to us. As I understand it, it was originally hoped that the regulations would deal with the monitoring, but it was always possible that the regulations would be ruled ultra vires. Therefore, I am

extremely grateful to the Minister that we can put this matter behind us as we now have adequate monitoring provisions. We will also have suitable methods to ensure that there can be no dubiety about the returns made.

Until amendments were tabled, the original system placed an intolerable burden on the employer. An employer was compelled to make a return, but he might have done so knowing that it was false, but to make a false return also carried a penalty. Therefore, he was in a Catch 22 situation. I believe that we have now properly sought to protect the position of the employer in such cases, and that is important.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) moved an amendment to ensure that the commission was also concerned about the nature and the draft of the regulations, and we supported that amendment. My hon. Friend the Member for South Down may wish to make his own contribution, but I want to say that I am obliged to the Government for what they have done.

Mr. William Ross: The hon. Gentleman keeps on referring to his "hon. Friend the Member for South Down". It would be relevant to our discussions if the hon. Gentleman told us whether he considers the hon. Member for South Down his hon. Friend on religious grounds, Irish nationalist grounds, or Socialist grounds.

Mr. McNamara: I would hope on all three grounds. I also welcome him as my hon. Friend on the ground of being humankind. I would like to think that all people are my friends and my brothers and sisters. I was merely illustrating that my hon. Friend the Member for South Down moved an amendment with which I agreed. On occasions the Government have moved amendments with which I agreed, but other than being brothers in kind I certainly do not believe that they are members of the Socialist International and, therefore, my brothers. There were occasions this afternoon, however, when the Secretary of State was answering questions on the Anglo-Irish Agreement and I thought that I had almost recruited the right hon. Gentleman to that group.

7.45 pm

Mr. McGrady: I should like to record my thanks to the Minister for honouring his promise to consult with the commission when drawing up the rules and regulations for the code of conduct.

Mr. Ashdown: The Minister will be aware that we expressed on Second Reading some concern about monitoring. I am delighted that the Government have taken account of those concerns and, in what is clearly a thoughtful conclusion to those deliberations, have produced something with which it would be difficult to disagree.

The Minister has said that he believes that the system proposed in amendment No. 30 will be accurate and fair, but it is also important to make it flexible. There is no doubt that other developments will take place in Northern Ireland and with, I hope, the development of integrated schools, the school attended by the prospective employee will not necessarily be a guide to his or her religious background. It is commendable that the Government have done much to encourage the development of such schools, but as that system grows apace, judging people's religious background on the basis of the school attended may no longer be appropriate.

I hope that the Government will keep a close eye on the monitoring so that they will be able to fine-tune it to respond to the new developments which we hope to see. How will such monitoring affect those who come from the growing number of integrated schools in Northern Ireland?

Mr. William Ross: The working people of Northern Ireland have described this system to me as the most offensive demand that has ever been put on them by an employer. If the Ministers of the Northern Ireland Office or the would-be Ministers on the Opposition Front Bench do not believe me, they should talk to the ordinary worker on the factory floor or any other employee in Northern Ireland and ask them what they think about the snooping into their private religious lives. Those workers will tell them that they consider it extremely offensive, as each and every Member of this House would so consider it if they were in a similar position. The Government appear more than willing to ignore the workers' feelings.

We are now being told that if an employer cannot easily find out to which religious grouping—it is either Roman Catholic or "Other"—an employee belongs, he must then make careful private inquiries as to what church he attends or what he attended as a child or was baptised in. Presumably employers will not be allowed to inquire whether the individual is still a practising member of the faith. In Great Britain, church-going is not as popular as it once was. Church attendance and the level of commitment to any Christian church in Northern Ireland vary enormously from area to area. I suspect that that intensity of commitment is not equal in any religious denomination.

There are many people in Northern Ireland, as elsewhere, who grow up and leave their church to become agnostics or atheists, non-believers, or become members of other religions, pagan religions, but for all their life they will be labelled nice and neatly Protestant or Roman Catholic. That label will be attached to them whether or not they still adhere to that religion, whether or not they practise that religion and whether or not they change their religion. It is very offensive to me and, as I have already said, it is very offensive to most of the work force of whatever religion in Northern Ireland.

There is a demand which runs like a river right through this legislation that the perception of the religious grouping to which an individual belongs shall be the label that is attached to that individual. I want merely to say to the House—not that it will do any good—that that label is permanent and is not necessarily accurate. In this as in so many other matters, the reality may be different from the public perception.

It is easy where I live, in a mixed rural community, for me to identify the religious denomination to which many people belong. I do not have to ask. I know where they live, and I know their fathers, their grandfathers and their children. Some of those people have names which make them look as if they should be Irish Roman Catholics but they turn out to be Anglican Catholics. They have names which might well indicate, since they are English, Scottish or Welsh names, that they should belong to one of the many Protestant denominations. But they do not because their forefathers come to Ireland—*[Interruption.]* Would

[Mr. William Ross]

my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev William McCrea) agree with me that one would hardly believe that someone with the name Adams was the leader of the Provisional IRA? The same, of course, is true of McGuinness. Morrison is clearly a Northern Irish name.

Rev. William McCrea: Or Ashdown

Mr. Ross: Yes, and no doubt there are Ashdowns there yet—and I hope they have better politics than the right hon. Member for Yeovil. This is a nasty, double-sided piece of legislation. If the right hon. Gentleman does not understand that, he has forgotten far too much about Northern Ireland and should go back to his roots and make some inquiries of those who still live there.

We are about to move fully and firmly into the process of head-counting by perception of religious denomination, of enforcing an arrangement on the basis of some unknown criteria as to what the work force distribution between those religions should be in every place of employment in Northern Ireland. We shall be labelling people with a religion which they may have deserted or may no longer practise. We shall be labelling people by politics, which they may have changed. We talk here of community, not religion, but the reality is that we are talking about the religious adherence, or the perception of the religious adherence, of each worker.

One of the methods to be used to try to determine the religion is based on sporting affiliations. I find that strange because I know that the Gaelic Athletic Association, for instance, labels soccer a foreign game. I do not think that opinion is widely shared among the community which normally plays GAA games, where one sees many young Roman Catholics play soccer. It is probably the favourite sporting recreation in Northern Ireland, as it is elsewhere in these islands.

Rev. William McCrea: But they behave themselves.

Mr. Ross. I think their behaviour in international matches on that side of the water is of a standard which many football clubs over here could aim for but which few of them achieve.

Sport is supposed to be a healing function, something that draws a community together into one great, happy group. Here we are proposing to find out that somebody plays soccer so he is a Prod from the Shankill or he would not play soccer.

Rev. William McCrea: Or a Prod from the Bogside.

Mr. Ross: He could very well be; they have a very successful team in Londonderry at the moment. He could even be from South Armagh; he could be from any place in Northern Ireland, and he could be of any religion or of none.

I fail to see how any sane person or group of persons could be so misled as to present this legislation as being healing or helpful. It is exactly the opposite, and the fact that the Government have chosen to introduce it only illustrates how vast is the canyon between their perception and the reality of life in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: Three specific points have been raised during this short debate.

The right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) asked whether the monitoring arrangements would be flexible. Detailed arrangements for monitoring will be made by regulations and will be capable of amendment in the light of experience.

The right hon. Gentleman also asked about integrated schools. Integrated schools are not classified as either Catholic or Protestant in the guide. If, as he suggests and indicates that he hopes—as I do—there are larger numbers of integrated schools in the future, account will be taken of that and it will have a significant effect on the monitoring in due course.

Mr. Beggs: One factor that has never been stressed and made absolutely clear is the degree of integration that has already taken place in voluntary grammar schools. Many pupils in voluntary grammar schools throughout the country could be mislabelled. That must be made clear and corrected, if possible.

Mr. Viggers: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) criticised the monitoring regime very well, but it is not difficult to criticise arrangements such as those we put forward because it is not easy to create a formula that is conducive to an improvement in the relationships between Protestants and Roman Catholics as far as job opportunities in Northern Ireland are concerned. But I have the opportunity of moving around Northern Ireland a great deal and talking to a large number of employers and employee representatives and, although there are many who are apprehensive and concerned about our proposals, the best employers regard the proposals in the Bill as totally containable within good personnel practice. They see no difficulty in implementing the monitoring regime. Many of them have done so already and they can live with it. I congratulate them and am sure that many will follow them.

Rev. Ian Paisley: We are dealing with a matter of great seriousness—the investigation of a person's religious beliefs and the attempt to put a person into a particular category. There has been a degree of deception already by employers in producing a document with at the head of it, "as approved by the Fair Employment Agency" and in the demand in that document that one fills in one's religion. The Minister knows that under European law no Government have any right to say that a person must tell them his religion, so we have in this amendment a way round that. The way to breach it is to try to find a way to assess a person's religion.

The Minister put out a booklet which was widely circulated and in which Roman Catholic schools appeared as Protestant state schools. What would happen if an employer looked at that booklet and said, "He belongs to that school, he must be a Protestant," but the pupil was a Roman Catholic? There are Roman Catholic schools within the state system. That booklet is still being used by employers in Northern Ireland.

8 pm

The leader of the Democrats had better know that it will be a long time before the vast majority of children have been educated in integrated schools. The Roman Catholic Church has its own view on that, as it is entitled to do. It wants its children to be brought up in that faith. My view is different. I believe that if the Government were acting properly, they would say that it was all right for anyone to run his own school, but he must pay for it, and

that the one state school would be an integrated one, at which anyone was welcome. Of course, there are divisions about that in Northern Ireland. This Government, or any Government, would not have the guts to take such a decision, and, therefore, we must leave that issue.

We are entering a different realm—not involving schooling—in which someone is to snoop around to find out what a man does after he goes home and has his supper, what club he goes to and in what recreation he engages. Who is going to do that? Will employers have to employ a sort of private detective to ascertain the religion of their employees? In Northern Ireland, nothing will lead to friction on the work floor more quickly than such a policy, which would not be tolerated on this side of the water. If such legislation were being introduced on this side of the water, what uproar we would have from both sides of the House. However, hon. Members are now saying that the employer must go further.

What about the employer who does his very best, carries out all his duties, but, at the end, is deceived? An employer might put down a number of workers as Protestant when they were Roman Catholic, or as Roman Catholic when they were Protestant. What happens then? Will he be liable for that? That is the question that the Minister should answer tonight. If the employer gets it wrong, having done everything to get it right, will he be penalised? That is an important point, which, in all fairness the Minister should answer. It is difficult to distinguish by names.

What are the quotas for people who do not term themselves Roman Catholic or Protestant? Are they to be left out in the cold? Where do they fit in to this scheme of employment if they are outside the Protestant or Roman Catholic grouping? The Minister must tell us how the difficulties are to be counteracted.

Mr. William Ross: The hon. Gentleman is skirting around the edge of another problem involving the wide diversity of opinion that exists in the Protestant community. How does the hon. Gentleman feel about being lumped in with the Feakle clergy, and as being within the same large Protestant group?

Rev. Ian Paisley: The hon. Gentleman knows my attitude on that point.

If the Government get it wrong by giving out literature which says that Protestant schools are Roman Catholic and that Roman Catholic schools are Protestant, what will happen to the poor employer who goes by those guidelines? The Government will wash their hands clean and take it out on the employer. Those matters are relatively unimportant to the Minister, who merely wipes his hands and gives us a brief answer. However, we will have to reap the results of the legislation.

Mr. Beggs: There is very real concern in work places in Northern Ireland that, for the first time, sectarianism has been directly introduced in the workplace. The Minister could testify to the excellent working relationships in industry and commerce that have existed during the 20 years of troubles in Northern Ireland. He could testify to the fact that irrespective of their religion, or from which part of the Province they travel to work, people have got on amicably; goods have been delivered on time and there have been good relations all round.

Regrettably, there is now a danger that, with such close monitoring, individuals will start head counting and looking closely at promotions and how they are taking place. The irony is that, because of the legislation, one Minister will be seen to be guilty of introducing sectarianism, while his colleague endeavours to promote daily the expansion and further development of integrated education.

For the sake of all employers in Northern Ireland, I hope that the Minister will recognise that both the Confederation of British Industry in Northern Ireland and the Retail Consortium, representing many employers in Northern Ireland, are not opposed to the fair employment legislation or the Bill's overall objective. However, they have concerns about monitoring. The Retail Consortium has said that it wants the Fair Employment Commission, which is to be established by the Bill, to play a constructive and understanding role in co-operating with, and assisting, employers to meet their monitoring obligations. It also states:

> "Moreover, it must produce guidelines that are fair not only to job applicants, but also fair to employers. The agency should, therefore, seek to achieve a balance between the circumstances of the job applicant and the needs of the reasonable fair-minded employer. The benefits enjoyed through an enterprise economy are too valuable to be risked by unclear or unreasonable obligations upon employers, and if this was to happen it would be all the community in Northern Ireland that would suffer."

I hope that the Minister will be able to say that further consideration has been given to representations made by the CBI in Northern Ireland which wants the Bill to make it the commission's duty to monitor the labour market as a whole, not simply employers. Can the Minister say what steps will be taken by the commission to give employers confidence by ensuring that its own employees act professionally at all times, the leaking of confidential information will be prevented and, when investigations are carried out, there will not be unusually long delays in publishing their results because they have simply failed to prove that there was no discrimination against Roman Catholics?

I know that, for example, at the GEC factory in Larne, many inquiries have been carried out by the Fair Employment Agency. People have been waiting for months and months for the outcome of the report. The results will probably be too good to publish. They will probably show that there is no discrimination in my area either, as was pointed out by the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea).

Will the Minister persuade the Government to extend the scope and life of the fair employment support scheme and reduce the burden on business of the fair employment legislation? It would show the commitment of Northern Ireland employers if the Minister could say how many Northern Ireland companies have registered for the scheme, and are likely to be assisted with the costs of the first round of monitoring of returns and employers' reviews, as required by the Bill.

Rev. William McCrea: Some hon. Members are sitting here rather smug. That is probably why they have not much to say about the Bill: they are not much concerned about what will be seen in Northern Ireland as legitimised sectarianism. This is a serious departure from the British concept of democracy—worthy of Soviet Russia rather than the Government of the United Kingdom. It is proposed that our employers should play the role of Mr. Snoopy—or Miss Snoopy.

[Rev. William McCrea]

In the town where I live, which is shared between my constituency and that of the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross), is a school known as the Rainey Endowed school, which has had an excellent education record for many years. A couple of years ago the Roman Catholic Church decided that its children should no longer be educated at a school which, although it was not described as an integrated school, was integrated in reality: Roman Catholics and Protestants worked side by side, and came out with an education second to none. Many went on to Oxford or Cambridge, and indeed further, carrying the flag of Magherafelt across the world.

Despite the decision of the Roman Catholic Church, a number of Catholic parents decided not to take their children away; but the Minister's document will call the Rainey Endowed a Protestant school, and anyone who writes on the form that he went there will be regarded as Protestant. That is what the statistics will say: the Government have legitimised something that is not true.

My child goes to that school, and I know that a number of Roman Catholics have decided that Protestants and Catholics can be educated together without animosity. But, according to the Minister, when a pupil of that school comes to seek employment and is asked what school he attends, the Minister's document will tell the employer that he is a Protestant, because he has written on the form that he went to the Rainey Endowed school. That is not only misleading but completely untrue—and the stamp of approval has been put on that untruth by the Department of Economic Development in the Northern Ireland Office.

Other children at the school have Pakistani or Indian backgrounds, but according to the Minister's document they belong to the Protestant community because they attend a Protestant school—not a school where everyone is welcome and a number of faiths are represented, along with those who desire to belong to no faith.

Can a person not decide for himself whether he wants to belong to a faith? Can someone brought up in a Church of Ireland home and sent to a certain type of school not decide, when he is of an age to find a job, that he does not want to belong to the Protestant faith? Have such people no rights? They may have no desire to be connected with a particular religious persuasion. The legislation is a complete denial of people's right to make decisions for themselves.

8.15 pm

Mr. William Ross: Would not my hon. Friend be wiser to concentrate on the Model school in Londonderry, which is a primary school? I fear that the Minister will try to get out of the case that my hon. Friend is making by pointing out its reference to secondary rather than primary schools. The Model school is a primary school whose religious make-up is about 50:50.

Rev. William McCrea: That is an excellent example of what the Minister and his Department will call a Protestant state school, although 50 per cent. of those who attend it are Roman Catholic. They have a right to attend. The state schools are not Protestant schools; they are open to everyone to gain an education with no religious tag attached.

The form will also ask what sport the applicant plays. What the Department is really trying to find out is which foot he kicks with. Depending on what sport he plays, he is a right footer or a left footer.

Ministers will give a smug answer to many of the harsh realities that I have uttered, but I hope that much of what has been done to the community in Northern Ireland will come home when the ethnic communities on this side of the water wake up to what legislation can do for them. Perhaps neither the Government nor the Opposition Front Bench will be white then. Chickens will come home to roost; and no one will enjoy it more than the people who have suffered at the hands of those who are trying to force sectarianism on the people of Northern Ireland.

The hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) knows the truth about workplaces in Northern Ireland. So does the Minister: he said that he had been talking to employers. Will he tell us whether they agree that Protestant and Roman Catholic work side by side to achieve a quality of production that many firms on this side of the water long for?

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 103, Noes 4.

Division No. 218] **[8.19 pm**

AYES

Amos, Alan	Howells, Geraint
Arbuthnot, James	Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*	Hume, John
Ashby, David	Ingram, Adam
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy	Jack, Michael
Atkinson, David	Janner, Greville
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Beith, A. J.	King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Bermingham, Gerald	Kirkwood, Archy
Boateng, Paul	Knapman, Roger
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia	Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Bright, Graham	Lawrence, Ivan
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*	Lightbown, David
Burns, Simon	Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Butterfill, John	Lord, Michael
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Carrington, Matthew	McCrindle, Robert
Chapman, Sydney	McGrady, Eddie
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*	MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*	Maclean, David
Cope, Rt Hon John	McNamara, Kevin
Cran, James	Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*	Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Devlin, Tim	Maude, Hon Francis
Dixon, Don	Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Dorrell, Stephen	Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Dover, Den	Mowlam, Marjorie
Durant, Tony	Pike, Peter L.
Dykes, Hugh	Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Favell, Tony	Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*	Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Fishburn, John Dudley	Skinner, Dennis
Forman, Nigel	Stern, Michael
Forth, Eric	Stevens, Lewis
Freeman, Roger	Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan	Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*	Summerson, Hugo
Gregory, Conal	Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*	Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Hague, William	Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Hanley, Jeremy	Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*	Twinn, Dr Ian
Harris, David	Vaz, Keith
Haynes, Frank	Viggers, Peter
Hayward, Robert	Waddington, Rt Hon David
Heathcoat-Amory, David	Walden, George
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*	Waller, Gary
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*	Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*

Wareing, Robert N.
Wells, Bowen
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tom Sackville and
Mr. Michael Fallon.

NOES

Beggs, Roy
McCrea, Rev William
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Paisley, Rev Ian

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Peter Robinson and
Mr. William Ross.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 28, in page 20, line 38, leave out

'the period to which the'

and insert

'the date or period to which any'.

No. 29, in page 21, line 23, leave out from second 'different' to end of line 24 and insert 'cases'.

No. 30, in page 21, line 25, leave out 'but this subsection does' and insert—

'(3) The regulations may authorise or require the employer to determine which community if any a person employed or applying for employment in the concern is to be treated as belonging to for the purposes of monitoring by applying the principal method, or one of the principal methods, prescribed or, where that method does not enable him to make that determination or, as the case may be, none of those methods enables him to make that determination, by applying the residuary method, or one of the residuary methods, prescribed; so that, for example—

(a) where an applicant—

(i) has stated that he attended a particular primary school, being a school classified in any list maintained by virtue of subsection (2)(h) above as a school attended mainly by members of a particular community, or

(ii) has stated that he belongs to a particular community,

the employer may be required to determine that he is to be treated as belonging to the community concerned, and

(b) where, in any case not within paragraph (a) above, the employer has information about the applicant, being information which the employer is authorised by the regulations to take into account as tending to show that the person to whom it relates has a connection with a particular community, the employer may be required to determine the community to which the applicant is to be treated as belonging by reference to that information.

(4) Subsections (2) and (3) above do'.—*[Mr. Viggers.]*

Clause 30

PERIODIC REVIEWS BY EMPLOYERS

Amendment made: No. 31, in page 22, line 11, leave out from 'concern' to end of line 15 and insert—

'(1A) In a case where it appears to the employer in the course of the review that members of a particular community are not enjoying, or are not likely to continue to enjoy, such participation, he shall as part of the review determine the affirmative action (if any) which would be reasonable and appropriate.

(1B) In a case where the employer determines in the course of the review that affirmative action would be reasonable and appropriate he shall as part of the review—

(a) consider whether, assuming the action is taken, it is practicable to determine, by reference to one or more periods, the progress towards fair participation in employment in the concern that can reasonably be expected to be made by members of a particular community, and

(b) if he considers that it is practicable to determine such progress, determine the period or periods concerned and, in respect of each period, the progress that, in his opinion, can reasonably be expected to be made by members of the community concerned in relation to the composition of—

(i) those employed in the concern in Northern Ireland or those whose employment in the concern in Northern Ireland begins after the determination, and

(ii) those applying for such employment.'.—*[Mr. Viggers.]*

Clause 31

ENQUIRIES BY THE COMMISSION

Amendments made: No. 32, in page 22, line 45, leave out from 'review' to end of line 4 on page 23 and insert—

'(b) as to any determination under subsection (1A) of section 30 of this Act, and

(c) in a case falling within subsection (1B) of that section, as to his consideration of the matters referred to in paragraph (a) of that subsection and any determination under paragraph (b) of that subsection.'.

No. 33, in page 23, line 5, leave out

'any such matter as is referred to in subsection (3)(b) above'

and insert

'that members of a particular community are not enjoying, or are not likely to continue to enjoy, fair participation in employment in the concern'.

No. 34, in page 23, line 7, at end insert

'and as to the matters referred to in subsection (1B)(a) of section 30 of this Act and any determination under subsection (1B)(b) of that section.

(4A) Where the employer discloses to the Commission under this section a determination to take any affirmative action, the Commission may from time to time require him to give the Commission such information as it may specify as to the affirmative action that he has taken or proposes to take, but the Commission may not require an employer to give any information under this subsection before the expiry of the period of six months beginning with—

(a) the date of the disclosure, or

(b) if he has previously been required to give any information under this subsection, the date on which he was last required to do so.

(4B) Where the employer discloses to the Commission under this section any determination under section 30(1B)(b) of this Act, the Commission may from time to time require him to give the Commission such information as it may specify for the purpose of determining the extent to which the progress that the employer determined could reasonably be expected to be made in any period has been made on the date of the requirement, but the Commission may not require an employer to give any information under this subsection before the expiry of the period of six months beginning with—

(a) the date of the disclosure, or

(b) if he has previously been required to give any information under this subsection, the date on which he was last required to do so.'.

No 35, in page 23, line 12, leave out 'a' and insert

'the reference in subsections (4A) and (4B) above to the date of the requirement is to the date on which the notice was served.

(5A) A'.

No. 36, in page 23, line 13, leave out 'that' and insert 'any'.

No. 37, in page 23, line 17, leave out from 'time' to end of line 18.

No. 38, in page 23, line 19, leave out from 'offence' to end of line 20 and insert—

'(6A) A person guilty of an offence under subsection (6) above—

(a) is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale, and

(b) if the failure continues after conviction, is liable on a second or subsequent summary conviction to a fine not exceeding one tenth of level 5 on the standard scale for each day on which the failure continues.'.

No. 39, in page 23, line 21, leave out from 'under' to second 'to' in line 22 and insert 'subsection (6) above'.

No. 40, in page 23, line 24, leave out

'that requirement by that time'

and insert

'the requirement by the specified time'.

No. 41, in page 23, line 30, at end insert—

'(8) A person required to give any information under this section who knowingly gives any false or misleading information is guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale.'.—*[Mr. Viggers.]*

Clause 35

NOTICES ABOUT GOALS AND TIMETABLES

Amendments made: No. 42, in page 25, line 23, leave out from 'under' to 'or' in line 28 and insert

'Part I of this Act to take any action,

(b) he has been directed under that Part to take any action'.

No. 43, in page 25, line 31, leave out from 'action' to end of line 32.

No. 44, in page 25, line 33, at beginning insert

'being action appearing to the Commission to be affirmative action'.

No. 45, in page 26, line 3, leave out from 'him' to 'the Commission" in line 7 and insert

'the notice shall cease to have effect—

(a) if the Tribunal makes an order for the purpose of giving effect to the undertaking or directions or, in the case of directions, the Tribunal or the Commission substitutes for them or any of them other directions, or

(b) in the case of directions, if they, or such of them as the notice relates to, are quashed or otherwise cease to have effect, or

(c) in the case of an undertaking, if it, or such part of it as the notice relates to, ceases to have effect,

but without prejudice, in a case within paragraph (a) above, to any power to give a new notice.

(4) Where a notice about goals and timetables has effect'.

No. 46, in page 26, line 24, leave out from 'time' to end of line 25.

No. 47, in page 26, line 27, leave out from 'above' to end of line 32 and insert—

'(a) is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale, and

(b) if the failure continues after conviction, is liable on a second or subsequent summary conviction to a fine not exceeding one tenth of level 5 on the standard scale for each day on which the failure continues.'.

No. 48, in page 26, line 33, leave out from 'under' to second 'to' in line 34 and insert 'subsection (7) above'.

No. 49, in page 26, line 36, leave out

'that requirement by that time'

and insert

'the requirement by the specified time'.

No. 50, in page 26, line 42, at end insert—

'(10) A person required to give any information under this section who knowingly gives any false or misleading information is guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale.'.—*[Mr. Viggers.]*

Clause 39

RESTRICTION ON EXECUTION OF WORKS, ETC.

BY UNQUALIFIED PERSONS

Amendment made: No. 51, in page 30, line 13, leave out from beginning to 'Northern Ireland' and insert 'by the Secretary of State, by the Department or, after consultation with the Department, by any other'.—*[Mr. Viggers.]*

Clause 43

ADDITIONAL POWERS OF COMMISSION

TO OBTAIN INFORMATION

Amendments made: No. 52, in page 31, line 43, leave out from 'time' to end of line 44.

No. 53, in page 31, line 45, leave out from 'offence' to end of line 46 and insert—

'(3A) A person guilty of an offence under subsection (3) above—

(a) is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale, and

(b) if the failure continues after conviction, is liable on a second or subsequent summary conviction to a fine not exceeding one tenth of level 5 on the standard scale for each day on which the failure continues.'.

No. 54, in page 32, line 1, leave out from 'under' to second 'to' in line 2 and insert 'subsection (3) above'.

No. 55, in page 32, line 4, leave out

'that requirement by that time'

and insert

'the requirement by the specified time'.

No. 56, in page 32, line 10, at end insert—

'(4A) A person required to give any information under this section who knowingly gives any false or misleading information is guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale.'.—*[Mr. Viggers.]*

Clause 44

PROCEDURE IN CASE OF DEFAULT BY CROWN BODIES

Amendments made: No. 57, in page 32, line 21, after '31' insert '35'.

No. 58, in page 32, line 22, at end insert—

'and, accordingly, sections 32(3), 33 and 40 do not apply in relation to such a public authority.'.—*[Mr. Viggers.]*

Clause 45

INTERPRETATION OF PART II

Mr. Viggers: I beg to move, amendment No. 59, in page 33, line 18, at end insert—

'(1A) The Department may by order amend the definition of "employee" in subsection (1) above by substituting for the number of hours for the time being specified in paragraph (a) such other number as is specified in the order.'.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Government amendments Nos. 67 and 68.

Mr. Viggers: The amendment empowers the Department to vary the number of hours in the definition of "employee" by order exercisable by statutory rule subject to affirmative resolution procedure in the Northern Ireland assembly and, thus, to negative resolution at Westminster during direct rule. This is in response to an undertaking I gave in Committee and I hope that the House will support it.

Ms. Mowlam: I should like to put on record the fact that we are pleased that the Government have met the request that we made in Committee. This is a particular problem in relation to part-time workers, the majority of whom are women. We are pleased that the Minister listened to our arguments.

Mr. McGrady: I should like to thank the Minister for making the provision capable of revision. It is vital to a substantial number of employees in Northern Ireland, such as home helps in the Health Service, hospital cleaners and part-time farmers. A considerable amount of the employment in Northern Ireland is short term. I hope that there will be careful monitoring by the Department of the requisite number of hours—16. I hope that that will be revised if it is found that many people who may be subject to discrimination are outside the scope of the Act simply because they work only 12 or 15 hours. I hope that the Minister will undertake to bring about a speedy revision if it is found to be necessary.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 47

MEANING OF "DISCRIMINATION"

Mr. McNamara: I beg to move amendment No. 83, in page 35, line 11, leave out 'requirement or condition' and insert

'requirement, condition, policy or practice'.

This matter arose in Committee and it is important and technical. Our arguments can be found by hon. Members if they look at the appropriate point in the Committee proceedings.

The purpose of the amendment is to tighten the provision dealing with indirect discrimination to deal with the problems thrown up by recent developments in case law in anti-discrimination legislation. At present, a complainant can prove a case of indirect discrimination only if he can show that the barrier that has prevented him from securing the post in question is a "requirement or condition". That could be interpreted by the courts in such a way as to include "policy or practice", thus rendering the amendment superfluous.

However, case law suggests that the courts interpret such provisions in a narrow way. Two well known cases —Meer and Pereira—have been dealt with in the Court of Appeal. In both cases a narrow interpretation has been applied by which, in order to show indirect discrimination, the complainant must show that the behaviour of the employer against whom he is complaining constitutes an absolute bar to the complainant's employment. Anything less is not indirect discrimination.

In practice, that means that an employer could decide to exercise a preference in favour of people who are not residents of west Belfast, east Belfast or Magherafelt. As long as the preference was not an absolute ban on the employment of people from those places, it would be legal. The amendment would ensure that such preferences were included in the definition of indirect discrimination.

A further point must be made which was not made in Committee. When the Court of Appeal was discussing the Meer case it made its decision on the understanding that legislative change would be forthcoming. The case was partially argued on the basis of forthcoming legislative change and the court stated that the case required Parliament to act.

The Government's main objection to the amendment is that it would change the definition of indirect discrimination and, therefore, has obvious implications for Britain's sex and race legislation. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the Government have promised to introduce an amendment which, while not changing the definition of indirect discrimination, will assist the Fair Employment Commission in dealing with employers who adopt dubious practices which fall short of indirect discrimination.

The full argument on that case is contained in paragraphs 623 and 624—pages 57 and 58—of SACHR's report. I will not weary the House by quoting that extensively. However, the case law is well argued and can be seen. I would be happy to introduce it into the debate if I felt that it would command the attention of my hon. Friends and other hon. Members.

It will be nonsense if we have a phrase in the code of practice saying that certain practices must not be used in terms of employment when seeking to engage new workers which, if challenged before an industrial tribunal, would have to be upheld on the basis of Court of Appeal decisions. That is not what the Government or the Opposition want. Therefore, I hope that the Government will consider the matter carefully. It would be terrible if, as was once said by one of my hon. Friends, the barrel of honey was ruined for a penn'orth of tar.

Mr. Viggers: I will not rehearse the arguments that have been the subject of discussion and correspondence between the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) and myself. I understand the point he makes. We are contemplating the possibility of introducing an amendment which would operate on the following lines. It would place a duty on the commission to follow proceedings of all individual cases before the tribunal. It would give the commission the discretion to form an opinion, following its analysis of an individual case, that the respondent might fail to afford equality of opportunity. It would give the commission a discretionary power to inform the respondent concerned of its opinion that he should take action to promote equality of opportunity and provide, as with clause 13, that any person so informed may give a written and voluntary undertaking to the commission to take the appropriate action.

This proposal, which responds to suggestions by the Opposition, is still being considered and it is a very technical matter. It seems to have the merit of placing the key function of recommending action in the area of equality of opportunity on the commission rather than running the risk of compromising the tribunal's appellate role in pattern and practice cases by placing it on the tribunal. Moreover, the result is the same in that the employer is placed on notice that in the opinion of the commission certain action is necessary to promote equality, irrespective of the outcome of the individual's discrimination case.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept that this matter is being considered and that we will take full account of the points that he has just made. We shall seek to bring forward some words which will take account of this fact if we are able to meet the points in the other place.

Mr. McNamara: I am obliged to the Government. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 48

COMPLAINTS OF UNLAWFUL DISCRIMINATION

Mr. Viggers: I beg to move amendment No. 89, in page 38, line 13, leave out from 'exceed' to end of line 15 and insert '£30,000'.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider Government amendments Nos. 90 and 91.

Mr. Viggers: There has been concern that the limit of £8,925 on compensation payable by the tribunal in individual cases of religious discrimination is too restrictive and a flaw in the Bill. By way of response to these concerns, the Government's amendment increases the limit that the tribunal can order from £8,925 to £30,000.

As hon. Members will be aware, the new Fair Employment Tribunal is modelled closely on the existing industrial tribunal structure and, as such, it attracted the maximum level of fine for discrimination available under the industrial tribunal mechanism—£8,925. However, it was pointed out in Committee that such a figure, particularly since it represented a maximum level of compensation, could well deter individuals from bringing cases of discrimination given the unique sensitivities which attach to the issue of religious discrimination in Northern Ireland.

We therefore considered uprating the £8,925 limit to a level equivalent to that already set in the Bill for failure to comply with orders of the tribunal. I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) for putting this idea forward. I am pleased to say that I accept the rationale of the amendment. The other two amendments provide for the Department by order to change the figure of £30,000 to take account of a change in the value of money.

Mr. William Ross: We seem to be increasing the sum in the amendment while leaving aside the sums in article 37 of the Industrial Relations Order 1976. I am not clear about whether those sums will be increased by a like amount.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 90, in page 38, line 46, at end insert—

'(9) If it appears to the Department that there has been a change in the value of money since the relevant date, it may by order substitute for the sum for the time being specified in subsection (4) such other sum as appears to it to be justified by the change.

(10) In subsection (9) "the relevant date" means—

(a) in relation to the first order under that subsection, the commencement of section 48 of the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1989, and

(b) in relation to each subsequent order, the last occasion when the sum specified in subsection (4) was altered.

(11) A statutory rule containing an order under subsection (9) shall be subject to negative resolution; and section 41(6) of the Interpretation Act (Northern Ireland) 1954 (meaning of "subject to negative resolution" shall apply as if the power to make the order were conferred by a Measure of the Northern Ireland Assembly.'.

No. 60, in page 39, line 47, leave out subsection (4).

No. 61, in page 40, line 9, leave out subsection (1) and insert—

'(1) Where a prospective complainant requests the Commission in writing for advice in relation to prospective proceedings under this Part, the Commission shall give him such advice unless it considers that the request is frivolous.'

No. 62, in page 40, line 32, leave out 'and'.

No. 63, in page 40, line 38, at end insert

'and

(e) any other form of assistance which the Commission may consider appropriate.'.—*[Mr. Viggers.]*

Clause 51

PROVISION OF TRAINING

Amendment made: No. 64, in page 42, leave out lines 9 to 11.—*[Mr. Viggers.]*

Clause 52

MEASURES TO ENCOURAGE APPLICATIONS ETC. FROM UNDER-REPRESENTED COMMUNITY

Amendment made: No. 65, in page 42, line 26, leave out '(within the meaning of the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1989)'.—*[Mr. Viggers.]*

Clause 54

REGULATIONS AND ORDERS

Amendments made: No. 66, in page 42, line 39, after '9(10),' insert '17(5A),'.

No. 67, in page 42, line 39, leave out 'or 39(3)' and insert '39(3) or 45(1A)'.

No. 68, in page 42, line 42, leave out from 'regulations' to 'has' in line 43 and insert

'under section 23(8) or 28 of this Act or order under section 45(1A) of this Act shall be made unless a draft of the regulations or order'.

No. 69, in page 43, line 2 after 'section' insert '17(5A),'.—*[Mr. Viggers.]*

Schedule 2

MINOR AND CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS

Amendments made: No. 70, in page 45, line 40 at end insert

'or section 2 of the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1989'.

No. 71, in page 47, line 47 leave out

'section 12(2) to (5) and sections' and insert 'sections 12(3),'.

No. 91, in page 48, line 10, leave out from 'subsection (2)' to 'and' in line 11 and insert

'for "an order under section" there is substituted "regulations under section 28 or an order under section 26(9) or".'.

No. 72, in page 48, line 13 at end insert—

'(za) after the definition of "advertisement" there is inserted—

"'affirmative action' has the meaning given by section 55 of the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1989;",'.

No. 92, in page 49, line 7, at end insert—

'29. In Article 38(2) of that Order for "court" there is substituted "the Fair Employment Tribunal for Northern Ireland".'.—*[Mr. Viggers.]*

Order for Third Reading read.

Mr. Viggers: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

Fair employment is a matter of concern to every individual in Northern Ireland, irrespective of religious affiliation or political opinion. It follows that legislation must be fair to all. It must be objective, balanced and capable of impartial application. We believe that our Bill

meets these criteria. It maintains the centrality of the merit principle at the point of selection, it ensures the freedom of employers to choose the best man or women for the job, it prohibits reverse discrimination and the operation of quotas in employment.

At the same time, the reality is that employment opportunities in the Province must be made available more equitably between the two communities. That is fully justifiable. *[Interruption.]* We need more jobs and the Government are working hard to attract more.

It is also justifiable on social, economic and political grounds. Denial of equal opportunity in employment deprives individuals not just of one opportunity but of many. Jobs and their remuneration confer status, social mobility and self-esteem. The lack of opportunity to compete for them on an equal basis with others has very damaging repercussions on every individual so deprived. It is personally frustrating, but, worse than that, it wastes talents and abilities that could otherwise be usefully and constructively deployed, not only to the benefit of the individual, but to that of society in general. Therefore, equality in employment opportunity has a strong social justification.

It can also be justified, and just as powerfully, in economic terms. We have often stressed that the promotion of equality of opportunity should be seen, and is best and most effectively delivered, as an integral part of good personnel practice. Employers want freedom of choice to select the best man or woman for the job. It follows that it is in their interests to ensure the widest possible pool of competing applicants. Sound employment procedures are fully consistent with that basic economic objective. They complement systematic and qualitative selection techniques, while leaving the employer free to exercise choice on the basis of ability, aptitude and potential for the job in question.

Politically, it is self-evident that a more equitable distribution of economic opportunities between both communities in the Province will contribute to a greater degree of social cohesion and stability. That, in turn, will help to promote higher levels of mutual respect and appreciation between both communities without any compromise of traditional identities. Strategically, the promotion of equality of opportunity is complementary to the range of broader initiatives that the Government are already undertaking in the community relations field.

These principles are all reflected in the philosophy underlying the Bill. They are, of course, optimistic principles, and we make no apology for that. The Bill offers hope and expectation, but it is also realistic. It recognises that, for that hope and expectation to be fulfilled, both tough legislative provisions and effective implementation are necessary. The Bill is certainly strong. Its compulsory monitoring and review, criminal penalties, and economic sanctions all testify to that.

Our new legislation must now be effectively implemented. That is the next challenge, and good progress is already being made with the help of employers and trade unions.

Voluntary monitoring is gathering considerable momentum within Northern Ireland, with more than 420 private sector companies taking advantage of the Government's fair employment support scheme. Given that scheme's importance in the promotion of monitoring practices throughout the private sector and the response of employers to it, I am pleased to inform the House that the Government propose to extend it for a further year.

In the public sector, voluntary monitoring is now already under way, or being prepared for introduction, across a broad spectrum of undertakings including the Civil Service, the court service, the Housing Executive and health and education boards. I am encouraged by the fact that employers' organisations such as the Confederation of British Industry, Engineering Employers Federation and Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce and Industry and trade unions co-operated with the Government in educational initiatives. The Confederation of British Industry has, in addition, organised seminars for its own members, and the Engineering Employers Federation and the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions recently published a joint declaration of protection for the important engineering sector.

Those are all encouraging and commendable developments. The Government recognise that their continued momentum depends to a considerable extent on the commission and employers working closely and co-operatively together. It also recognises that the commission will wish to operate to the very highest standards of professionalism, impartiality and objectivity; and to do so in a clear and consistent manner. Employers should also feel able to turn to the commission for confidential advice and guidance without the need for formal investigation or scrutiny.

Accordingly, the Government expect the commission not only to draw up and publish its own rules of procedure but consult employers' organisations and other interested parties in doing so.

In our White Paper we committed ourselves to progressive evaluation and formal review. I have already said that I will consult at regular six-monthly intervals with the chairman of the Fair Employment Commission and that the formal review will be undertaken by the central community relations unit. In doing so, it will take the broadest possible approach. Clarification was sought on that point in Committee. I am pleased to provide it. I consider it essential that the unit's views should be closely informed by interested parties outside Government and particularly by those bodies who contributed so constructively and influentially to the framing of the legislation. Accordingly, in reviewing this legislation the unit will seek observations from outside bodies such as the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights, employers' organisations, trade unions, the Equal Opportunities Commission and, of course, the Fair Employment Commission.

As already indicated in Committee, the outcome of the unit's report will be published so that all interested parties are fully informed of the consequential action proposed. That is important, because there is no doubt that in preparing for the new legislation the Government have been greatly assisted by the voluntary initiatives of individual employers, employers' organisations and trade unions. Our thinking has been constructively influenced by the various submissions on fair employment matters received over the last few years not only from such bodies but from the Fair Employment Agency and the Equal Opportunities Commission, various Churches and other interest groups and the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights, in its very influential report.

Mr. Ashdown: Will the Minister allow me to intervene?

Mr. Viggers: Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will forgive me, but those matters were debated at length in Committee. The right hon. Gentleman will have another opportunity to raise further points.

The Government are grateful for the enterprise and initiative of all concerned, and they look forward to sustained co-operation between such bodies and the Fair Employment Commission in helping to ensure the effective implementation of the legislation.

The post of chief executive in the commission will shortly be advertised, and in preparation for the transition from agency to commission a group representative of Government and the agency has been set up to make all the necessary plans and arrangements for the transition. Appointments have already been announced of those designated to assume the key roles of chairman of the Fair Employment Commission and of president of the Fair Employment Tribunal. Work is also going forward on the subordinate legislation that will be consequent on the passage of this Bill, and work is also in hand on preparation of the draft code of practice on which there will be subsequent consultation with all interested parties.

Mr. William Ross *rose*——

Mr. Viggers: The hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) had the opportunity on Report to make a number of contributions, and I am sure that he will have another opportunity to speak during this debate. It will be more appropriate to deal with further points at the end of my remarks.

I assure the House that, having anticipated the passage of this legislation, the Government are gearing themselves to ensure that the measures are in place and fully effective as soon as possible. I pay tribute to my fellow members of the Standing Committee and to our Chairman, my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw). I also express my appreciation for the constructive and positive suggestions made by the official Opposition and by other parties during consideration of the Bill, whether in Committee or on Report. I am sure that the Bill that I now urge the House to approve is sharper and more effective as a result of our deliberations. That is important, given the strong commitment of all parties in the House to the principle of fair employment and its effective implementation in Northern Ireland. I invite the House to approve the Bill.

8.54 pm

Mr. McNamara: Northern Ireland occupies an unusual position in the United Kingdom, both in terms of its constitutional status and of its attitude to Northern Ireland business within this House. One of the assumptions that has permeated thinking on Northern Ireland is that the normal cut and thrust between Government and Opposition should not apply, summed up in the term bipartisanship.

Underlying that assumption is the belief that it is the Opposition's duty loyally and uncritically to support the Government in their Northern Ireland policies. That view confuses two things. No one should neglect to recognise the difficulties and personal sacrifices involved on the part of those right hon. and hon. Members who serve and have served in Northern Ireland. Ministers are entitled to sympathy and understanding on that score. But to proceed from that view to the argument that the best interests of Northern Ireland are served by an uncritical approach on the part of the Opposition is a serious error of logic. Even if the Government and Opposition did not have substantial differences about Northern Ireland's long-term future, an uncritical approach would still be inappropriate.

Our experience of progress with the Bill confirms my long-held belief that a constructive and critical perspective on the part of the Opposition is the best policy. The Bill was substantially amended in Committee and on Report, and is now a better Bill than it was when first laid before the House at the end of last year. Given today's undertakings, it will be far better still when it returns from another place. I am certain that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland agree that the Bill has benefited from the long, arduous and tortuous discussions in Committee. I pay tribute to the Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, who was the only person who sat in his place for the whole of the Committee's proceedings. That was a considerable physical feat, apart from the fact that he had to suffer all of us. We commend him for it.

It is the duty of a responsible Opposition not to keep their views to themselves but to present them as forcefully and as cogently as possible. The improvements made since Second Reading reflect very favourably on the ability of the Secretary of State and the Minister to listen to reason as expressed by right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House. I may say en passant that that quality is in short supply among the other members of the Government. However, the Department's sensible attitude shows the importance that we all attach to the role of human rights, particularly in Northern Ireland, and the need to ensure that the Bill is as proper and correct as it can be.

What is more important about that give and take on both sides is that it helps to demonstrate the validity of reason as a political weapon in the context of Northern Ireland—and that makes a valuable contribution to taking the guns out of Northern Ireland politics. The normal exchange of political ideas is of much greater benefit than an artificial unanimity within the House.

Let us briefly examine the progress that has been made. The Bill has been amended in several important respects. Goals and timetables have been added and provision has been made to change the definition of "employee" by empowering the Government to lower the 16-hour limit by Order in Council. The unacceptable provisions relating to compensation for individuals deemed to be victims of discrimination have been altered to permit more realistic payments. The arrangements concerning monitoring have been amended to make the process less amenable to sabotage. Amendments have been introduced to permit advertising calculated to encourage applications from members of under-represented groups and to improve the administration of the enforcement mechanisms, and to some extent the conflict between affirmative action and discrimination has been tackled.

We have also had assurances today that the Government will be taking action to deal with the weaknesses of the definition of indirect discrimination and some of the conflicts between the Bill and sex discrimination and European legislation. I also understand that employers will be permitted to take

unemployment into account and that the Government consider exclusive recruitment from the job market to be lawful.

I also welcome the Government's decision, in correspondence to me, to introduce procedures to ensure that information supplied to the Department from the commission will be governed by strict rules as to the use to which such information is put. We all welcome today's decision to extend the voluntary monitoring system for another year. I should have liked it to be extended indefinitely as it is an important inducement to employers. The Minister's statement today about the role, work and methods of dealing with the central community relations unit is also important. In short, most of the points which the Secretary of State claimed were mischievous on Second Reading have become orthodoxy on Third Reading.

Until tonight, the matter of affirmative action still had to be satisfactorily resolved. We discussed the issue earlier this evening and there is no point in going into detail now, but the action that the Government intend to take in that regard will remove many of our remaining fears about the effect of the legislation. It is not a question of the Government's integrity or desire; it is a question of the Bill's competence to meet the Government's intentions and desires. The proposals that the Government are thinking of implementing will be extremely important if they are carried through. Therefore, the conflict between clause 51 and the European Community equal treatment directive will also be eliminated.

However, we still have reservations about the Bill. The issue of clause 42 must be tackled. We have discussed some of its difficulties, but the essential element is the unacceptability of including a provision which violates individuals' rights in an arbitrary way, particularly in legislation which is designed to secure and extend human rights.

We do not believe that the Government have adopted the correct approach to contract compliance. By making it difficult to exclude from Government contracts employers who practise discrimination the Government are putting out the wrong signal. Although I appreciate what the Minister said earlier, we would not have fashioned the Bill in that way. However, we welcome the points that the Minister has made and we do not doubt the Government's commitment to equal opportunity.

I regret that the Government have refused to respond to the challenge of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights report on fair employment, which called upon the Government to set their own goal and timetable for the elimination of the differential rate of Catholic and Protestant unemployment. I understand the difficulty, but, as we had to point out, and as the Government eventually had to accept, goals and timetables are not in themselves affirmative action but are a way of measuring affirmative action. As the Government are such an important employer, it would have been a fine thing, and let us hope that it happens in areas where the Government have considerable influence.

That leads me to the question of political will, which is another wider problem. Northern Ireland desperately needs more employment as well as fair employment. To attract inward investment—a subject close to the hearts of the Secretary of State and of the Minister and on which they have worked very hard; we support them in their endeavours—it is necessary to convince North American investors that equality of opportunity is being provided. In some ways we do not like the American concern, although we understand it, but it would be foolish not to realise that it exists. Investors have the right, if not the duty, to ensure that their money is employed only or socially acceptable purposes in a socially acceptable environment. Ethical investment is not a purely American phenomenon, as has been shown by its growth in Britain. It is real and should be encouraged. Therefore, I hope that North American friends of Northern Ireland, when looking at this legislation, will turn their attention to its implementation, to seek and encourage investment in firms in which there is investment possibility and fair employment and that the Government have methods of monitoring it and enforcing it with fair remedies which now appear to have real potential as a result of the Bill.

To rectify the historical patterns of inequality which have so disfigured the Province, effective equality of opportunity must be provided in Northern Ireland. That is necessary to assist in the process of establishing a genuinely democratic system in Northern Ireland. The Government must realise that the essential passage of the Bill to the statute book is not the end of the matter; it is a means to an important end. If we were to take that misguided attitude, the effort put into the Bill by the Government and the Opposition would be wasted.

The Government should not leave the matter solely in the hands of the bodies set up by the Bill. They must openly and persistently demonstrate their commitment to equality of opportunity. The Bill now provides a strong, potential legal foundation for an equality of opportunity policy. Much building work remains to be done. We have to monitor the implementation of the policy, for example. The Government must ensure that their own house is in order, given the limited applicability of the Bill to the public sector. They must ensure that their industrial policy, especially with respect to the location of employment, takes on board the concept of equality of opportunity. I hope that the Government are aware of the necessity of following through the legislation if their own noble objectives, which they have laid down for themselves today and in the Bill, are to be achieved.

This is not the Bill that a Labour Government would have introduced. It is not even the Bill we were considering introducing under Standing Order No. 58, if the Government had not amended the Bill. We would have been prepared to introduce a Bill that would have been based more strongly and more specifically on the report of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights and on the reasonable proposals of the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions.

As I have said before, we still have reservations. We continue to hope that some of the defects will be rectified, as we have been promised this evening. Nevertheless, we have been given some idea of the way in which the Government intend to proceed. They have given us firm undertakings about what will happen in the other place, and we have made considerable progress since Second Reading. The Bill is now potentially strong and workable, which was not the case in January. In those circumstances, if the Bill is challenged on Third Reading, I will recommend to my right hon. and hon. Friends that they should in confidence go with the Government into the Lobby tonight.

9.7 pm

Mr. Peter Robinson: The final words of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) have come as no surprise to hon. Members, especially those of us who served in Committee. It comes as no surprise that the Labour party are toeing the Government's line this evening. There were two incidents in Committee that persuaded many of us that the Labour party was simply putting up a front and was not intending seriously to challenge the Government on any of their measures. I can recall that, on the second day in Committee, Labour Members, sticking their chests out, tabled an amendment which would have required the Fair Employment Tribunal to be statutorily fair and impartial, and to deal with its business according to a set time schedule.

However, the Minister had only to utter the weakest of assurances and the stiff opposition of the Labour party melted away. Labour Members sought to withdraw their amendment, which would have required the tribunal, by law, to act fairly and impartially and which provided that it could be taken to a judicial review if it did not act in that manner. When I refused Labour Members the right to withdraw their amendment, I watched the sorry spectacle of Labour Members voting against their own amendment —so much for the Labour party's opposition in Committee. As we have seen in this stage of the Bill, that party's opposition to the Bill has disappeared entirely.

The second event that I can recall most closely was when I tabled an amendment in Committee. In passing, I should add that I believe the measure to be so flawed and defective that no amendment would make it a satisfactory piece of legislation. Moreover, having listened to the debates in Committee, I was eventually persuaded to table one amendment which was——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I should be much obliged if the hon. Gentleman would relate his remarks to Third Reading. He is making quite a lot of what took place in Committee, but we are now on Third Reading. I ask him to relate his remarks to the Bill.

Mr. Robinson: I hear what you say, Madam Deputy Speaker, and recognise that that is the view by which you should like me to abide.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am asking the hon. Gentleman to abide by the Standing Orders of the House.

Mr. Robinson: Of course, but all that I am doing is what others have done before me, which is to paint a backcloth against which we can consider this Third Reading. I am sure that no one would seek to deny me rights that others have enjoyed before me.

I was concluding my reference to the amendment that sought to establish that the Fair Employment Commission itself, which the legislation establishes, should be bound by law to abide by the very regulations that it would seek to force employers in Northern Ireland to accept. However, in Committee both Government and Opposition Members voted against that proposition. I cannot understand how people who really want to ensure that there is fair employment in Northern Ireland could find it offensive that a body that is to carry through fair employment principles in the Province should not be bound by the same strictures that it would seek to have regulated in Northern Ireland. However, the Government and the weak Labour Opposition did not decide to go down that road.

Of necessity I must advise the House, lest its view is believed, that much of the argument of the Labour party is that discrimination is essentially against one section of the community. I do not see it that way. Indeed, that is not the history of Northern Ireland. Discrimination that any hon. Member would find offensive occurs in both sections of the community, but happily it does not occur to the degree that a debate such as this might suggest and it is not as rampant and as widespread as this measure might suggest.

Protestants are discriminated against just as much as Roman Catholics have been discriminated against. It does no good if people pretend that there has not been any discrimination in Northern Ireland. All hon. Members should want to end discrimination in Northern Ireland. Indeed, there is no difference in the House on that.

During the Bill's passage through Committee and the House a number of reports have been issued that suggested that discrimination is still taking place. I can recall that, much to the embarrassment of the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady), the council in his area was found to have an imbalance in its work force that favoured the Roman Catholic section of the community and discriminated against the Protestant community. Indeed, Protestants were again discriminated against in Strabane, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) and, much to the embarrassment of the Minister and of Mr. Bob Cooper, the Fair Employment Agency itself had to confess that it was discriminating against Protestants—although I am sure that those are not quite the words that it used in its admission.

Discrimination does take place, and it is not confined to one section of the community. The question therefore is what we do to eliminate or at least to reduce it. The Government had a choice. They could have brought forward a measure with a stick-and-carrot approach, with heavy penalties for those found to have discriminated, and encouragements to employers to ensure that they advertised in such a way as to allow all sections of the community access to interviews for employment, and that they used the recruitment procedures of the various schools in the Province. That is the approach that I would have favoured.

I said in earlier debates that I would have been happier to see even bigger penalties than the Bill recommends, provided they were to be used against those who discriminated and we did not have what the Government call affirmative action, which is, in effect, reverse discrimination. Earlier, the Minister said that they would prohibit reverse discrimination and the use of quotas. The truth is that the Government have encouraged reverse discrimination. Through goals and timetables, they have set up a system of quotas. I was about to say that it is the thin end of the wedge, but quotas and reverse discrimination are well up the wedge.

The Government are giving a clear signal to employers in Northern Ireland that, if their books do not balance as to the ratio between Protestants and Roman Catholic employees, they will have to make them balance, whatever has to be sacrificed. If employers have to sacrifice the merit principle, so be it. The clear message from the Government is that employers should have the right balance.

The Protestant community feels that the Government do not want the right balance Provincewide but only in certain parts of the Province. The Fair Employment Agency is not as concerned when it finds an imbalance which favours the Roman Catholic section of the community. I and others have gone to the Fair Employment Agency to ask for reports on various employers. If the discrimination is believed to be against Protestants, the same enthusiasm has not been evident in the agency. It was because of the lack of trust, faith and confidence in the Fair Employment Agency that I felt it essential that it should be bound by the same measures as it was seeking to impose upon others in relation to employment practices.

Mr. Beggs: Does the hon. Gentleman also agree that the Fair Employment Agency should have been using the same, consistent, procedures in all its investigations and should not have gone through all sorts of contortions in order to try to prove its point?

Mr. Robinson: Yes. In many ways the Fair Employment Agency was seen by the Protestant community to be touting for business from one section of the community. It is in the interest of the Government that all sections of the community should have confidence in fair employment procedures in Northern Ireland. They will not get that confidence if they refuse to make the Fair Employment Commission and the tribunal answerable to the same regulations that they are imposing upon employers.

The other essential point is that the public must have confidence in those who are in control of the Fair Employment Commission. People have no confidence in Bob Cooper, because they know his background. They know that he is a political animal and a political reject; they know where he stood before. They have seen how he acted in his role as chairman of the Fair Employment Agency, and they have no confidence in him because of that. By making that man chairman of the new Fair Employment Commission, the Minister could not get the commission off to a worse start. Whatever pressures were applied to the Minister, he made a bad choice that will damage the working of the legislation.

The legislation will not be used just by the hon. Member for South Down. I have seen enough over the last few years as an elected representative to know that I will use the legislation on behalf of my constituents, just as the hon. Gentleman will use it on behalf of his.

Rev. William McCrea: Will my hon. Friend seek an assurance from the Minister that, when matters are referred to the agency, there will be a proper investigation into discrimination against Protestants? Until now, it has been absolutely impossible to do so.

Mr. Robinson: The Minister will have heard my hon. Friend's plea, and he will have an opportunity to respond to it. If the legislation had required the tribunal to act in a fair, balanced and impartial way, other legal measures would have been available. As the legislation stands, the tribunal can pick and choose and decide for itself. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) is shaking his head. We will see what happens.

Mr. McNamara: The hon. Gentleman will recall that, in Committee, the Minister gave an undertaking, and has since introduced an amendment, to enable any individual to apply to the commission, thereby placing an obligation on the commission to give correct and proper advice to the individual.

Mr. Robinson: Any individual could go along to the Fair Employment Agency today and get advice. Practice will show whether people get a fair deal from the Fair Employment Commission. As the person who has failed the community is part of the leadership of the Fair Employment Commission, the community and I have little confidence that they will get a fair deal from it.

In Committee, I started by not believing that the measure could be redeemed. I have seen the proceedings in Committee and the close relationship between the Labour party and the Government in the House this evening. However, there is no doubt that the measure—all hon. Members knew that it could probably have been sent by post—will become law. It will not do the job, if the job is to get fair employment in Northern Ireland. I fancy that the job is something else and that the Government did not do what they knew was right or best in fair employment. The Government did what was demanded of them in the Anglo-Irish Conference by their partners in the Republic of Ireland. Their own documentation shows that this measure was pressed through the intergovernmental conference. It is the product of Dublin rule in Northern Ireland. No wonder it is militating against the Province and the community in Ulster. I hope that people will see it for what it is.

9.22 pm

Mr. Ashdown: One of the depressing aspects of dealing with Northern Ireland, either its politics, studying it, living in it or, from time to time, having to do such things as keeping the peace in it, is that, again and again, one is visited by the same old sad, sour predictability that hon. Members have heard in the speech by the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson). Not a word of it would have been of surprise to anybody who has studied or lived in Northern Ireland for the past 20 or 30 years.

I was brought up in the north of Ireland. I hope that I do not stray from the Bill, but this matter has a bearing on discrimination. I was brought up as the child of a Protestant Northern Irish mother and a Catholic southern Irish father. I was brought up in Comber. I remember, as a boy aged 13 or 14, walking the streets of Belfast and being absolutely certain that, coming at us like a dark spectre, was the evil of upsurge, rebellion and disruption as a result of the discrimination, deprivation and poverty that I saw visited against a section of that society. Again and again, we are now blighted—cursed—in Ireland by a group of people who remember everything dating back to the battle of the Boyne but have learnt absolutely nothing.

I welcome this legislation. I do not pretend that it will be perfect. It will not be, and there will be imperfections. Hon. Gentlemen who wish it evil from the start will no doubt be able to pick out strange rulings and so on, but the key question is whether the measure will add to the sum of fairness and justice in Northern Ireland.

Rev. William McCrea: For whom?

Mr. Ashdown: For the population as a whole. Will it be an instrument to bring peace, reconciliation and some ordinary common form of living our ordinary lives? It will not achieve that by itself, but we must ask whether it will

[Mr. Ashdown]

add to the instruments that are available to us to produce that kind of society. Those who have sought to block it all the way down the track are only seeking to plunge back into a system which has blighted a great people and a great Province with a great capacity to contribute.

I support the Bill. In many ways it lived up in Committee to all the hopes I had of it when I spoke and voted for it on Second Reading. At that time the Labour party decided to vote against it, and while I believe that its judgment was wrong, I wish at this stage to pay tribute to Labour Members. I also pay tribute to the Minister because he and the Government generally have shown great wisdom in the way in which they were prepared to accommodate the two matters that were brought before them. I pay tribute to Labour Members for the work they did in introducing, arguing and getting some amendments accepted. While I am paying tribute, I do as the Minister did and pay tribute to others who have been involved in the framing of the legislation, those outside the House such as SACHR and others who gave advice.

I strongly dissent from the miserable, blighted and mean words of the hon. Member for Belfast, East about Bob Cooper. I accept that Bob Cooper would not be welcome to everybody. Any person who stands up to the kind of evil and bigotry to be found in Northern Ireland will make some enemies somewhere. One cannot win new liberties and new justice in Northern Ireland in the face of what one experiences in that unhappy Province without making some enemies. But Bob Cooper's contribution, in his previous political life in the Alliance party and through his previous appointment, has been great, including his contribution to the Bill. I greet with great warmth the fact that he has been appointed to be head of the commission.

I said that in any legislation such as this there would be some imperfections. I agree with the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara). This is not necessarily the legislation that I would have brought forward. But in body and in sum, this is legislation the credit of which is worth more than its debits.

If I were to pick out two areas of the measure about which I remain unhappy, one would be in respect of legal aid which will not now be available. The FEC will be made into something like a case work organisation, offering advice to those who seek it about whether their proposals are trivial or worth putting forward. Let us imagine that the FEC says to a Protestant or a Catholic, "You have a good case. You should be taking it forward." I dare say that many of the poor in Northern Ireland will say, "But I do not have the financial means to take it forward." That is bound to create bitterness and dissatisfaction. For want of a ha'porth of tar—because it would not cost much—the Government have taken a decision which will, I fear, undermine the effectiveness of the Bill.

Secondly, the Minister will realise that there is still some confusion over the case of the ecumenical and religious organisations and charitable organisations in respect of the way in which the Bill will apply to them. I understand that legal advice has been taken by organisations that, naturally, would wish to employ people who were religiously sympathetic to the views of the charity or ecumenical organisation. It would be helpful if the Minister would announce that he will be issuing guidelines to clarify their position, for I feel sure that it is not the intention of the Government to include those sort of organisations within the precise legal ambit of the Bill.

Of course the Bill will not be perfect. No Bill dealing with the difficult matter of intervening, on the one hand, in the free market, and, on the other, in the freedom of the individual will always be able to strike a perfect solution, but that is not the question before us. The question is whether, in sum, the Bill well help to alleviate some of the problems of discrimination that have occurred on both sides. I accept the point of the hon. Member for Belfast, East. Although I believe that, if we were to ask him where the weight of discrimination has lain, if he were to speak to himself honestly, he would know the answer, as I would.

I believe that in sum the Bill is a decent measure which should be given a fair wind. It has been improved, because of the work done both in and outside of politics in the Committee stage. I am glad and proud that I voted for it on Second Reading, and, with all its imperfections—there are not many but there are some—I shall vote in favour of it for the same reason tonight.

9.30 pm

Mr. McGrady: This is a unique occasion for the community of Northern Ireland, because it is the third, and I hope last, requirement of what was the civil rights campaign some 20-odd years ago. The three prongs of that campaign were: one man, one vote; a house on need; and a job on merit. The Bill before us is not the Bill it was when it started out. On Second Reading, I was extremely critical of it, and I laid down the benchmarks by which my party would measure the success or failure of the Government to provide a meaningful piece of legislation whose intent was the eradication of discrimination in Northern Ireland.

In listening to some hon. Members, I was reminded of an old saying from my part of the country—that one cannot hide behind a bush and shake it at the same time. We have heard hon. Members say that discrimination does not exist, and then the same hon. Members have given examples of where discrimination does exist. I want to put clearly on record—as I did in Committee—that I and my party are completely opposed to discrimination from whatever source and upon whomever it is visited. It is unjust, it is wrong and it cannot be countenanced, no matter where it may originate or who suffers it.

As a Member new to a Committee considering such a Bill, I found it an eye opener. The Bill was complex and contained many phrases which were emotive and required great interpretation. I must endorse what other hon. Members have said—that the Minister and, presumably, his Department had an open ear to the arguments and debates in Committee. The Minister did not always respond in the way in which one would have wished, but there was a strong indication—we now have the proof—that the Minister often took on board the arguments and the suggestions in Committee. I record my party's appreciation of the Minister's attitude to the Bill.

One of our great worries at the start was that we would have a repetition of the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1976, which was a pious hope that by persuasion and gentle coaxing the dramatic sectarian affliction of Northern Ireland, in terms of jobs, could be eradicated. I believe that, with the changes in the Bill on

affirmative action, goals and timetables, substantial progress has been made to make it an effective weapon against that injustice.

As the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) has shown, the Bill has a certain weakness. The Minister gave me an assurance in Committee that he would table an amendment that would enable individuals to have more meaningful assistance from the Fair Employment Commission. That hope has not been fulfilled, because the individual has only been promised advice.

I hope that the Fair Employment Commission in the other paragraphs of that section will be liberal in its interpretation, so that the case of an individual may be considered as a "policy matter", or of a "substantive nature", which would enable the commission to take that case—not at the individual's expense—to the tribunal. We are grateful that the Fair Employment Commission will be consulted before the code of practice is published and that the compensatory sums are more substantial than they originally were.

There are, however, a number of disappointments about the Bill. We have already spoken about section 42 orders and national security, which I believe are causing sectarian injustice in terms of jobs. I shall not pursue that argument, however, because we have already discussed it.

We fail to convince the Minister that, under clause 27, firms with fewer than 250 employees should be subject to annual monitoring. The economy of Northern Ireland is largely based on the small employer and the vast majority of its work force are employed in places with fewer than 250 employees. Those firms will escape such monitoring.

I am also disappointed about the 16-hour rule on short-term or casual employment. Because of the numerous economic problems of Northern Ireland, many people take on part-time employment, but they will not be covered by the Bill. Unfortunately, those people are generally the least well-off and the lowest-paid in our society. With the endemic unemployment of Northern Ireland, employment prospects are limited, so such part-time jobs are greatly sought after. I asked the Minister to consider reducing the 16-hour rule to 12 hours if experience proved that the present rule was defective. The Minister either did not hear my question or chose not to respond, but I hope that he will refer to it later on.

The other grave area of concern relates to contract compliance. I do not mean contract compliance in the sense referred to by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), but the withholding of Government grants and aids from firms which are found guilty of operating discriminatory practices. The clause of the Bill relating to this is purely permissive; it says that the Government "may" withhold grants from the offending employer or firm.

I find it almost inconceivable—I hope that the Minister shares my disbelief—that the Government would pay grants or monetary benefits to firms found guilty of discrimination. Although the Minister rejected my attempt to make the permissiveness mandatory, in the circumstances I hope that public funds will not be used to perpetuate discriminatory employment practices. Allied to the general contract compliance provisions, such funding is a matter of great concern to me.

The Bill can be applied across the board. Hon. Members representing the Democratic Unionist party have suggested that its application will be one-sided. I cannot see how or why it should be one-sided, because the legislation is obviously available to everyone who wishes to take it up. I certainly support the concept that, whether it be Catholic or Protestant discrimination, it is equally reprehensible and should be equally amenable to the law which we hope will be passed under this Bill. I have never made any secret of that.

I do not want to pick out examples, but one was thrown at me tonight, which it was alleged embarrassed me in Committee, about the Newry and Mourne district council. To set the record straight, the Fair Employment Agency did not find Newry and Mourne guilty of discrimination. It found that it had not discriminated in appointments but it did say there was an imbalance and that therefore it should be more attentive to promoting an outreach programme which would encourage members of the under-represented community to apply for jobs.

This is an area that has been called bandit country, and there is a concept abroad that it is dangerous for Protestants to work there. This is nonsense, but it is the concept that is promoted. Therefore, it is not surprising that there is a lack of response to advertising.

We are at a stage now at which the proof of the pudding will be in the eating. It is up to the Government, when the Bill goes through—we shall certainly be voting for the Bill in its present form, although we have some reservations about weaknesses in it and some caveats to enter about some of its provisions—to make this legislation meaningful in Northern Ireland. That means that they have to devote appropriate resources, in both finance and manpower, to the Fair Employment Tribunal to enable it to do the work more speedily perhaps than, according to criticism, the Fair Employment Agency has done in the past. It is up to the Government also to give a lead from their own departmental employment resources and show the way forward to proper recruitment, employment and promotional prospects. Great strides have been made, but many areas have yet to be properly looked at and adjusted.

When the Minister opened the debate, he mentioned a series of bodies, state and semi-state, which are to be engaged in voluntary monitoring. My ear may not have caught it, but it seems to me that one area which he did not mention—and it causes me great concern that it has not been addressed—is the whole area of local government in Northern Ireland, in both its district council and its area board sense. I hope that the Minister will say whether I am wrong about this and did not pick him up correctly or whether, indeed, none of the health area or education area boards or the 26 district councils has yet tried to engage in voluntary monitoring, as have the 400-odd firms in the private sector, which is very welcome.

I echo the sentiment of other hon. Members that, at the end of the day, the great problem, after solving that of the injustice of discrimination, is to try to provide jobs for everybody in Northern Ireland. I like to think that the Bill will not discourage investment from abroad, but will be an encouragement, showing that there is an earnest endeavour to create a fair and just society in which remedies for injustice can be obtained.

I do not fear that, as the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) suggested, this will scare off firms across the Atlantic. My experience, little though it be, is that firms across the Atlantic are used to much more severe penalties for discrimination against ethnic minorities than those contained in the proposed legislation. American firms are well used to the necessity to monitor, and even provide quotas for, ethnic groups, and do not see anything wrong

[Mr. McGrady]

with that, for some peculiar reason. Therefore, there would be no problem with investment from America coming to Northern Ireland. Hopefully, it will be a source of new investment.

The crux of the matter is to provide jobs for as many people as possible in Northern Ireland. I hope that the legislation, rather than preventing them, will enable firms to come to Northern Ireland confident in the knowledge that the discrimination problem, which is so widely known abroad, has been addressed and is in the process of being eliminated. That will give firms the confidence to come forward to set up their new investment and job creation ventures in Northern Ireland.

I compliment the Minister once again on having a mind open to argument and persuasion, and for tabling many amendments which will make the Bill much more meaningful than it was on Second Reading.

9.47 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley: It is quite evident that the opinion exists in this House that discrimination is limited to discrimination against Roman Catholics. The leader of the Democrats became heated about the sad, dark wave of hatred that he experienced as a child. If that was so, why is the worst housing in Belfast not in the Falls road, but in Sandy row?

A leading Member of the House who was appointed to the Northern Ireland Office and who is now chairman of the Labour Party organisation in the House said to me when he came to Northern Ireland, "I have got my eyes open and here in this citadel of Protestantism, Sandy row, you have the worst and most deplorable houses in the whole of Northern Ireland".

Therefore, it is absolutely wrong to paint a picture showing the Protestants as the ones who have everything and the Roman Catholics who have nothing. I remember being at a press conference in Los Angeles where that view was put to me, and I asked the simple question, "How can you run a successful rents and rates strike if you don't have property?" There was no answer to that.

There was, has been, and may even continue to be discrimination between both sections of the community. The hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) finished his speech with the point that across the world it was viewed that there was discrimination, but that at long last it was being put right. Across the world the picture is painted that Protestants discriminate against the Roman Catholics, and that is it.

It is interesting that during the past few days the United Nations has produced a document saying that there is more discrimination against minorities in the Irish Republic than in any other country that it had studied. We have only to look at the population in the South. There was a time when the Protestants comprised 10 per cent. of the population, but now they form only 3 per cent. We are told that in a few years there will be such a breeding of Roman Catholics that Protestants will be in a minority in the North. I always remind people that Protestants also breed, so that will not happen.

The legislation going through the House tonight makes an employer not merely an employer but a snooper who looks into the religion, the recreation and the schooling of those whom he employs. The Big Brother approach advocated in the Bill will not be at all healthy; that is what the opposition to the Bill is all about.

It is regrettable that people with legitimate cases cannot be helped to fight them, although they are entitled to the money that they need to do so. Under the old system, a member of my Church who was discriminated against received the largest settlement that the Fair Employment Agency was able to obtain. And the Government say that Protestants are not discriminated against.

Mr. Bob Cooper has been praised to the heights for the work he has done. I once obtained a document which showed that a certain contractor was obtaining all the work commissioned by a certain Government Department —and he employed only Roman Catholics. I took the document to the Fair Employment Agency and showed it to Mr. Cooper personally. I said, "Bob, I want that investigated." Then I went home.

I had hardly crossed the doorstep when the police arrived. They asked me where I had obtained the document. I said, "That is my business. What did Mr. Cooper do?" The police said that he had called them in immediately. He had said, "This document must have been stolen. I want you to go and put pressure on Ian Paisley." I told the House about it at the time.

I referred the police to Mr. Speaker. I said, "If Mr. Speaker requests me to hand over the document, the police will get it." Needless to say, Mr. Speaker said that what I had received, given my parliamentary standing, I was entitled to use to the best advantage of my constituents; and there it stopped.

What faith could I have in the head of the Fair Employment Agency, who was brought evidence and immediately referred it to the police? And we are told about fair employment. Mr. Cooper is known throughout Northern Ireland as someone in whom Protestants will not put their trust; nor, indeed, will many Roman Catholics. For some time an organisation opposing him was run by Roman Catholics who had no faith in what he was doing.

The Bill will take us back to a time when people in Northern Ireland had no faith in the organisations. The Minister has told us that he will ensure that all cases are investigated. Well, we shall see. I trust that, when the public representatives knock at the door of a firm to find the evidence gone and an investigation is requested, a proper investigation will take place with immediate publication of the results.

Rev. William McCrea: Does my hon. Friend not find it strange that when members of investigating bodies are appointed there seems to be a continual leaning towards a particular political party? Is it not odd that the Minister can only find members of the Alliance party to appoint? Is that why the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) seems to have such a tremendous relationship with Mr. Bob Cooper—because he happens to be a member of the Alliance party?

Rev. Ian Paisley: Under the review that we heard so much about today, Dublin will have a say in who will be appointed. Not only that, but the review says that the little power that the local councils have now will have to be clipped as well so the majority section of the community will have very little representation. We will see who is appointed.

It is interesting that we have had a lot of talk about the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights. Why is it that there is no nomination for that commission of an Official Unionist—the majority party in Northern Ireland? Why is that there is no nomination from the Democratic Unionist party? Why is it that there are no members of the Alliance party?

The Minister has to face up to those issues. Public bodies should cover the spread of the community. Of course there will be various views put by the Unionists on that point, but perhaps that will be helpful.

I do not agree with all that is said by SACHR, but it says a lot of good things and it does not always side with the Government. Let us have fair appointments. If we do, some confidence can be instilled into the Community. I hope that the people of Northern Ireland will take courage from the fact that the Opposition Front Bench and the Government Front Bench are saying, "This is for you." The Protestant employees must study it, and use it well and wisely. Perhaps then we will see whether there is fairness from the Government and those who have said that they want fairness for both communities.

9.57 pm

Mr. William Ross: The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) picked up some remarks made by the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) and accused him of being willing to pick out cases to illustrate his point; he described them as trying to caricature the real position. I had always thought that one of the outstanding characteristics of a caricature was that one recognised the individual portrayed. Had the hon. Gentleman thought of that point, he would not have been so anxious to use that analogy, because the caricature that is created in the minds of people about cases that are picked out reveals the reality of the situation.

When I first came to this House, a very old long-standing Member said, "Whenever the two Front Benches are in agreement"—the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) has made it perfectly plain that there is an enormous amount of bipartisanship between the two Front Benches—"watch out; it is bound to be wrong." It was true then, and it is true today, and it was never more true than it is over this Bill.

The Government do not like to hear this. One of the things that has made me particularly sad today is the fact that the Minister thinks he has done a good job. God help him, and God help Ulster, which has to put up with the consequences of the legislation which the House will undoubtedly pass into effect this evening.

Moving the Third Reading, the Minister described the Bill as fair, objective and balanced. It was so balanced that, from the moment the Bill appeared, there has been no concession whatsoever to the Unionist point of view. It has been ignored. In fact, I was interested in the treatment given to the questions that have been put time after time today. We saw a galactic black hole in operation on the Government Front Bench. Things went into it, but nothing came out, or at least nothing that was of any use in explaining the effects of the Bill.

It has been an interesting but sad day. If the Minister stays in the Northern Ireland Office, he will live to regret the day that he, with the help of the Opposition, piloted this legislation through the House. It has come to the House for its final stages just before we rise for a recess and, unfortunately, few hon. Members have taken an interest. I wish more had done so. If they had, perhaps some——

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, at this day's sitting, the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. John M. Taylor.]*

The House divided: Ayes 85, Noes 20.

Division No. 218] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Amess, David	Howells, Geraint
Amos, Alan	Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Arbuthnot, James	Irvine, Michael
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*	Jack, Michael
Ashby, David	King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy	Kirkwood, Archy
Atkinson, David	Knapman, Roger
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*	Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Lawrence, Ivan
Beith, A. J.	Lightbown, David
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard	Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Bright, Graham	Lord, Michael
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter	Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*	MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Burns, Simon	Maclean, David
Butterfill, John	Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	Maude, Hon Francis
Carrington, Matthew	Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Chapman, Sydney	Moynihan, Hon Colin
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*	Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*	Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Cope, Rt Hon John	Stern, Michael
Cran, James	Stevens, Lewis
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*	Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Devlin, Tim	Summerson, Hugo
Dorrell, Stephen	Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Dover, Den	Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Durant, Tony	Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Dykes, Hugh	Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Favell, Tony	Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Fishburn, John Dudley	Twinn, Dr Ian
Forman, Nigel	Viggers, Peter
Forth, Eric	Waddington, Rt Hon David
Freeman, Roger	Walden, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan	Waller, Gary
Gow, Ian	Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*	Wells, Bowen
Gregory, Conal	Winterton, Mrs Ann
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*	Winterton, Nicholas
Hague, William	Wood, Timothy
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*	
Harris, David	Tellers for the Ayes:
Hayward, Robert	Mr. Tom Sackville and
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*	Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory.
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*	

NOES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Beggs, Roy	Mowlam, Marjorie
Bermingham, Gerald	Pike, Peter L.
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Dixon, Don	Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*	Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Haynes, Frank	Skinner, Dennis
Ingram, Adam	Wareing, Robert N.
Janner, Greville	
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*	Tellers for the Noes:
McNamara, Kevin	Rev. Ian Paisley and
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*	Rev. William McCrea.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question again proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

Mr. Ross: When I was interrupted, I did not imagine that I would have such a long rest to think more carefully about my remarks. I was pointing out that, during the Bill's passage, no concession whatsoever was made to the Unionist point of view. During one period— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Right hon. and hon. Members must either enter the Chamber or leave quietly.

Mr. Ross: Sadly, some right hon. and hon. Members have voted on a subject about which they know little, and they show even less desire to learn because they are never present in the Chamber to listen. If they were, they might know more about the issues on which they vote. However, that would lead them to oppose the Government, which would not be liked very much either. It is in the interests of the Government Whips, as well as my own, that they leave the Chamber as soon as possible.

In Committee, the question was raised of persons employed by charitable bodies and by churches. It was pointed out that they should fall outside the terms of the Bill because such posts require a certain commitment from the people who fill them. The example given concerned a religious commitment. The Minister's reply on that occasion showed that he did not have a clue as to what is meant by a religious commitment in Northern Ireland terms, thus confirming—as he has done time and again during the passage of the Bill—that he did not have a clue about the situation in Northern Ireland and that it is beyond his comprehension.

I find the Bill offensive. I remarked earlier that it is offensive to work people, who dislike being asked about their religious affiliations. It is insulting also to the ability, integrity and intelligence of employers, because it implies that they recruit people on the basis of the religion to which they belong. It may be that an employer can draw many high-quality workers for a large establishment from one religious community. The probability is that he could not do that, and therefore the legislation is accusing employers of employing people of lesser competence. If that is the case, they will not be in business for very long. Every business man and every employer is looking for the best quality employees that he can find, but he will not be allowed to do that under the Bill.

The Bill will turn employers into pernicious snooping policemen. It will find out whether an employer believes that he is providing equal employment, and it will then demand that he takes affirmative action, which is reverse discrimination. An employer will even be asked to anticipate the possibility that one section of the community might be under-represented and take action before that occurs. If an employer is found guilty of having an imbalanced work force, he will be given six months to correct that imbalance.

Jobs are scarce in Northern Ireland; if someone has a nice, safe, secure job, he will not leave in six months. Therefore, the possibility of a company having a meaningful turnover in six months is nonsense.

I turn to the question of merit which was so clearly enunciated at the Dispatch Box by the Prime Minister; she said that people should be employed on merit alone. I found it interesting that, when the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) spoke about merit, he qualified it. He said that people should be employed on merit and according to need, and that people should be employed because they needed a job. In my experience, anyone who does not have a job is looking for one, so by implication they need a job. If anyone can suggest a cohesive and sensible way of combining merit, the need for a job and a fair spread of religious denomination within the catchment area—whatever that may be—I will be pleased to listen, but I have not heard it yet and I do not expect to hear it from the Minister this evening.

How should one determine discrimination or imbalance in a work force? We have never been told the criteria. No effort has been made to tell us what should be taken into account. The basic problem is that one has to determine a geographical area around a factory. I have read many reports of investigations carried out by the Fair Employment Agency. I found shifting sands of criteria. One has only to read the reports of Londonderry to see the verbal contortions used by Mr. Cooper, who has featured so prominently in this Third Reading debate, and other writers of those reports to avoid the truth. I believe that Protestants suffer fairly grievously from discrimination in many firms in that area and no efforts have been made to expose those firms to anything like the extent that efforts were made when firms that are owned and run by Unionists are under investigation.

We shall also find that the Government will try to avoid giving the advice that I asked to be given to incoming employers so that they can be made aware of the dangers they will face if they transgress criteria that have not yet been explained to any hon. Member or anybody in Northern Ireland. Those criteria will not be explained clearly and factually to any incoming investor or employer. We have not been told what the time scale will be for the reports that have to be prepared on individual firms or all the firms, or on the cases that may be brought to the attention of the investigating body in Northern Ireland.

I could go on, but we have wasted the time of the House in useless argument and in useless proposals—useless not because they lack merit, but because the Government are determined not to listen to anything that Unionist Members say to them about Northern Ireland. If one looks at Northern Ireland today, after 10 years of this Government and nearly 20 years after the House assumed responsibility for the governance of that Province, one can only conclude that those who have been running Ulster have made a mighty poor job of it in those 20 years.

One of the reasons for that poor job—indeed, the principal reason for the present unhappy condition of the Province which I have the honour to represent—is the fact that we who represent the majority community and who won another election only last week, thereby showing the support we enjoy in the community, have had our voice and our advice ignored not only by this Government, but by successive Governments. While that continues and while this Government listen to, accept and implement the advice given by enemies of the Union, the condition of Ulster will not improve. Those who sit on the Government Front Bench and those who sit in No. 10 Downing street bear the ultimate responsibility for the condition of the Province and for the murders, deaths and violence there. They alone are the people who will answer one day at the bar of history. I am a professing Christian and a committed Christian, which the Minister does not understand. I believe that one day they will all answer before the throne of the returning judge on judgment day.

10.22 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): You are no doubt, sceptical of such statements, Mr. Speaker, but I will try to be brief. I welcome the improvements and strengthening in the Bill and the suggestions that there will be further improvements of it in another place. The right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) earlier criticised Labour Members for adopting a different position on Third Reading from the position they adopted on Second Reading. He might reflect on the fact that it is because we adopted a different position on Second Reading that it was possible, in a desire to obtain a more bilateral response, to achieve an improved Bill.

The argument of the hon. Members for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) and for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) that Protestants are discriminated against in many areas in Northern Ireland is correct. I made that point myself when we were discussing the White Paper that led to the Bill. It seems to be an argument for saying that this Bill is the type of legislation that is required. It can be of benefit to the Protestant population as well as to the Catholic population in Northern Ireland. The hon. Gentlemen should have applied their minds in Committee to the way in which the Bill will operate so that they could strengthen its provisions to protect the interests of the Protestant community in the areas they represent.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), I have reservations about the Bill. It would work at its best if it was working in a fair weather economic situation in Northern Ireland, where there were plenty of jobs already. If we were talking about youngsters coming on to the job market and about who would get the chance of what job, or if we were talking about people changing jobs or promotion or about people moving, it would be much easier to operate such provisions. Even in the current circumstances, if we had a vastly improving economic system, with new jobs emerging all over the place, such legislation could operate to balance out discrimination and to introduce a fairer work mix in Northern Ireland. However, there is economic conflict in Northern Ireland and it must be added to the terrorist conflict and the sectarian politics of the Province and it cannot help. Conflicts between capital and labour, and capital and capital in search of markets, cannot assist in circumstances of high employment.

The fact that some hon. Members representing Northern Ireland have spoken in favour of an enterprise culture seems to run up against the type of provisions in the Bill and the other economic and social circumstances that should be seen as the context of such legislation. The privatisations of Harland and Wolff, of Short Brothers and of the electricity industry and the destabilisation of the health and social services are vast problems that affect the legislation working as fully as it should.

Northern Ireland is in great need of an extension of democratic provisions, of devolved power and of a Bill of Rights to protect everyone in the different minority positions in the different sections of the Province. If we were to have a Full Employment Bill and a Democracy Bill for Northern Ireland, we might have all the different elements that would enable us to begin to work together to improve the position. We now have one part, or at least a nudge towards one part, of those three elements and perhaps it will be of some assistance; but a Full Employment Bill and a Democracy Bill would be of far more importance.

10.26 pm

Mr. Viggers: With the leave of the House, I shall seek to respond to some of the points that have been made in the debate.

The House is nearing the end of a long road on this fair employment legislation. It started when my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd), then the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, ascertained in July 1985 that the 1976 legislation had not been as successful as was hoped in rectifying the imbalance in employment in Northern Ireland. In September 1986 we published a consultative document which was followed by the guide to effective practice, then the White Paper, then the Bill. There has been wide consultation and I know from my discussions with individuals that we have the good will of many employers in Northern Ireland and of employer and, I trust, employee representatives as well.

For the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) to say that the Bill is a product of Dublin rule in Northern Ireland is ludicrous and does not square with the facts. Yes, I have been to Dublin and have discussed the legislation with those in Dublin, but we have had many other discussions as well——

Mr. Peter Robinson: Why?

Mr. Viggers: It has been helpful to have those contributions and saying that the Bill is the product of Dublin rule does not square with the facts.

I welcome much more the contribution, in so far as he made this point, of the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) who said that the legislation exists and urged people to use it. I echo that. The legislation is there to be used and I urge all people to use it. Indeed, I urge the hon. Gentleman and others to promote participation in this legislation, in industrial matters and in matters relating to Government generally.

I assure the House that the legislation is even-handed, but we must face the fact that, despite the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1976, male Catholics are still two and a half times more likely to be unemployed than Protestants. That is unacceptable and to that extent there is an imbalance, which we are seeking to rectify. The legislation is even-handed.

Mr. Peter Robinson: Get them jobs.

Mr. Viggers: The hon. Gentleman says, "Get them jobs", but that is exactly what we are seeking to do, and with a level of success. I say with great pride that since I have held my current post unemployment in Northern Ireland has fallen from 134,988 to 107,625. I know those figures well and am proud of them. We are working hard to improve employment, and I urge all hon. Members to do all they can to improve the position.

The hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) referred to the 16-hour limit for part-time employees and asked for an assurance that if it appeared that the limit was causing injustice we would rectify that quickly. If an employee works for less than 16 hours per week he will not be covered by the Bill. In Committee I gave an assurance that we would take powers to vary the 16-hour limit, so I can give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that he seeks.

[Mr. Viggers]

The hon. Gentleman also asked about participation by public bodies and local authorities in the monitoring procedures. Progress is being made in encouraging monitoring and setting up procedures. We hope that more work will take place on that when the legislation becomes law.

The right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) asked specifically about Church bodies and their concern that they might be debarred from selecting people who shared the faith which they seek to promote. I made a long speech on the subject in Committee. We have included an exemption from the anti-discrimination provisions for those jobs whose "essential nature"—those being the important words—requires them to be done by persons holding or not holding a particular religious belief. The test is deliberately tightly drawn because we are anxious that there should be no wider loophole for exemption. We think that the provision is fair. It is parallel with the provision in the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1976.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) alleged that the legislation will not be fair in that it breaches the merit principle and will mean that the best man or woman will not be appointed to the job. I assure him that our guiding principle in the legislation is that the best man or woman should be appointed.

The right hon. Member for Yeovil made a moving speech based on his personal experience of growing up in Northern Ireland. He said that from his experience and knowledge the legislation was right. He said that he supported it on Second Reading and that he would support the Third Reading. The right hon. Gentleman approached the legislation from his personal experience of Northern Ireland.

I approach the whole subject from a different viewpoint —that of one who is reluctant to add any new burden to industry and who believes that the principles on which the Conservative Government have been operating are right and that we should be slow to impose any extra burden on industry. I recognise that the legislation will impose extra burdens, although I believe them to be light. I believe that they will be acceptable to good employers. All we are asking them to do is to engage in good personnel practice.

Approaching the legislation from a different viewpoint from that of the right hon. Gentleman, I am convinced that it is appropriate and right in the context of Northern Ireland. On that basis I commend it to the House.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 96, Noes 4.

Division No. 228] **[10.33 pm**

AYES

Amess, David	Ashby, David
Amos, Alan	Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Arbuthnot, James	Atkinson, David
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*	Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Ingram, Adam
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Irvine, Michael
Beith, A. J.	Jack, Michael
Bermingham, Gerald	King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard	Kirkwood, Archy
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Knapman, Roger
Bright, Graham	Lawrence, Ivan
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter	Lightbown, David
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*	Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Burns, Simon	Lord, Michael
Butterfill, John	Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	McGrady, Eddie
Carrington, Matthew	MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Chapman, Sydney	McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*	McNamara, Kevin
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*	Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Cope, Rt Hon John	Maude, Hon Francis
Cran, James	Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*	Mowlam, Marjorie
Devlin, Tim	Moynihan, Hon Colin
Dixon, Don	Pike, Peter L.
Dorrell, Stephen	Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Dover, Den	Sackville, Hon Tom
Durant, Tony	Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Dykes, Hugh	Skinner, Dennis
Fallon, Michael	Stern, Michael
Favell, Tony	Stevens, Lewis
Fishburn, John Dudley	Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Forman, Nigel	Summerson, Hugo
Forth, Eric	Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Freeman, Roger	Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan	Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Gow, Ian	Twinn, Dr Ian
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*	Viggers, Peter
Gregory, Conal	Waddington, Rt Hon David
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*	Walden, George
Hague, William	Waller, Gary
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*	Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Harris, David	Wells, Bowen
Haynes, Frank	Winterton, Mrs Ann
Hayward, Robert	Winterton, Nicholas
Heathcoat-Amory, David	Wood, Timothy
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*	
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*	Tellers for the Ayes:
Howells, Geraint	Mr. David Maclean and
Hume, John	Mr. John M. Taylor.

NOES

McCrea, Rev William	
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James	Tellers for the Noes:
Paisley, Rev Ian	Mr. Roy Beggs and
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*	Mr. Peter Robinson.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

MAGISTRATES' COURTS

That the draft Magistrates' Courts (Remands in Custody) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 3rd May, be approved.—*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

Question agreed to.

National Engineering Laboratory, East Kilbride

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

10.43 pm

Mr. Adam Ingram (East Kilbride): I wish to make it clear at the outset that this Adjournment debate is decidedly not the best way to discuss the issue of the future of the national engineering laboratory, which is in my constituency and which is recognised throughout the world as a major national asset to this country.

I am grateful for the time that I have been allocated, but the issue should have been handled in an entirely different way, with the Minister coming to the House to explain his original decision. It was absolutely outrageous that the decision to privatise the laboratory was announced by way of a written answer to a question planted by the Minister with the aid of a compliant Tory Back-Bench Member who probably knew neither where the NEL was situated nor anything about the work done there. It is interesting to note that the hon. Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) is not present in the Chamber to participate in or even to hear the debate.

The Department of Trade and Industry did not even pay me the courtesy of formally notifying me that the decision was to be announced or that it would result in the loss of nearly 200 jobs—a third of the work force. The way in which it was done exhibits a nervousness on the part of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and the responsible Minister. It was a clear attempt to avoid accountability on the issue.

The lack of real interest in the work and worth of the laboratory is shown by the fact that the Secretary of State has visited the site only once, and that was a year ago, six weeks before he announced his initial abortive bid to off load the laboratory to the private sector. His visit lasted less than one hour. The Minister's own indifference to the work done at the laboratory is shown by the fact that he has likewise visited the laboratory only once, and that was after last week's announcement. It is almost as if his decision to visit was an afterthought and a trouble to him.

In a letter the day after the announcement, the Minister told me:

"I have arranged to visit the National Engineering Laboratory . . . as I felt it was important to give everyone there the opportunity to hear the Government's view and for me to hear their reactions to our announcement."

The truth is that the Minister spoke to no more than a handful of senior civil servants at the laboratory and, like the Secretary of State, he stayed for less than an hour. So much for his express wish to give everyone the opportunity to hear the Government's view and, I would have thought more importantly, for him to hear the reactions of the work force to the announcement. He gave me that assurance in his letter, but he did not stand by it.

Those actions showed sheer, utter contempt for the work force, many of whom have worked there for 10, 20 or 30 years, and who have given so much to make the NEL a world leader in its field of engineering and industrial research.

The Prime Minister is rightly described as an ambulance chaser for the way in which she exploits for publicity purposes every disaster in this country. The work force at the NEL has a not dissimilar view of the Secretary of State and the Under-Secretary of State at the DTI. The NEL staff view them as being the undertakers. I noted that even the Secretary of State for Scotland issued a statement welcoming the decision to privatise the laboratory. As if he really cared about the matter! He has not even visited the laboratory since taking office. The work force at the NEL is expecting him, however, to turn up at the burial.

It is important to put the announcement to privatise NEL in its recent historical context. In February last year the permanent secretary at the DTI notified the trade unions that all four of the industrial research establishments were to be reviewed and that the report was to be completed within a month. The review of the NEL by the DTI's central policy unit appeared to comprise a half-a-day visit by two people.

Last May the Secretary of State dropped in by helicopter. He stayed for just under an hour and told the press that he had been impressed by what he saw. Later in the month, he announced that he intended to privatise the laboratory and that the other three industrial establishments were to be given agency status. Only the NEL was targeted for privatisation.

In August, after much encouragement had been given to the private sector to take over NEL, the foreign-owned YARD company was given the green light to investigate the laboratory and to submit a bid. In October, despite promises of massive state aid, YARD pulled out of the bid.

Undaunted, the Secretary of State pushed ahead with a dogmatic determination to privatise the establishment. He appointed the firm of Touche Ross—at a cost calculated to be in excess of £100,000—to carry out an evaluation of the laboratory and to report to him in April of this year.

The year since the first announcement last May has been a period of great uncertainty at the NEL. More than 40 key members of staff have left, 10 of them among the best and the brightest of the scientists employed at the establishment. The blight that has been placed on the NEL, first as a result of the original announcement and now as a result of the decision to push ahead with the privatisation, is suicidal. It is and will prove to be highly damaging to the morale of the work force at the NEL and to work which is done there at the forefront of industrial research and development. It is and will continue to prove damaging to the needs of many hundreds of small companies in Scotland and in Britain which rely upon the laboratory's services. Because of those factors, the Government's announcement has been almost universally condemned in Scotland.

I am sure that the Minister would agree that the key to the success of his decision would be the co-operation of the staff and, in particular, the scientific personnel who determine the quality of the research work undertaken at NEL. That support, however, is not forthcoming.

I want the Minister to respond tonight to the decision taken yesterday at a mass meeting of the Institution of Professional Civil Servants at the laboratory. A resolution passed at that meeting decided:

"That the IPCS should resist strongly any attempt to legislate for the compulsory transfer of staff from NEL to the proposed NTC"—

the national technology centre—

"and that IPCS should alert and ally support from other Civil Service unions to resist the legislation."

In the timetable given for the implementation of the decision no reference is made to the required legislation

[Mr. Adam Ingram]

relating to it. Can the Minister say when the necessary legislation to effect the decision will be introduced and what form it will take?

At the IPCS meeting another resolution was passed that stated:

"The management have acted deviously in initiating immediate staff selection for the NTC without consultation with the staff side after giving the impression at a previous meeting that a timetable of October 1989 and a plan for redundancy in 1990 would be adhered to. The joint NEL unions should seek the immediate postponement of this selection procedure until full consultations have taken place."

I urge the Minister to respond positively to that request and to postpone the compulsory transfer of staff until those full discussions and consultations have taken place with the staff unions.

Another key to the success of the proposed NTC is the attitude of those customers who currently use NEL facilities and who would be expected to continue to be the customer base for the new organisation. Touche Ross, in its discussions with the laboratory's current customers, found that considerable resistance was shown to the idea of ownership by an industrial organisation. That is, of course, likely to be the eventual outcome of privatisation.

The Touche report stated:

"Much of the work currently carried out is dependent in whole or part on the Laboratory being seen to be independent. A number of potential buyers might also be seen as competitors to other potential customers. There is a view in some quarters that it would be inappropriate for National Standards to be in the hands of a commercial organisation that might be interested in acquiring knowledge of any equipment being calibrated against primary standards."

Therefore, although the consultants appointed by the DTI expressed industry's objections to privatisation, the Government have ignored that view and advice and pressed on regardless.

The report prepared by Touche Ross also stated:

"We would agree with the view of the NEL management that a DTI Laboratory with, say, £9 million of DTI underpinning funding and the ability to trade and compete freely would be preferable to the private sector laboratory from the point of view of its management and staff. However, nothing we have been told by DTI staff leads us to feel that there is any significant chance of such funding or freedoms being made available. We have therefore not made detailed financial projections for such an option."

Therefore, industry that uses the NEL is against its privatisation, but the independent analysis by Touche Ross on the need for a properly funded establishment, unfettered by commercial considerations, has been ignored by the Government. It is little wonder that it is considered that the decision on the NEL has been rigged to satisfy the Secretary of State's obsession with privatisation. There certainly is no evidence to show what has been decided will improve the range and quality of the scientific research carried out by the establishment.

The NEL has served this country well for more than 41 years of its existence because the staff employed there have been able to undertake when necessary innovative and thorough research work, driven by the desire to know rather than by the profit motive.

Under the disciplines of the "near market" philosophy favoured by the Government, that expertise and innovative pride could well be lost to the country.

Over recent years the laboratory has provided a vital back-up research facility for many small businesses within the industrial sector. Many of those businesses simply could not afford to pay the commercial rates for the work done. It is likely that that essential support given to the small business sector will cease, again to the detriment of the industrial economy within this country.

The decision to restructure and privatise NEL does not have the support of public opinion in Scotland. I need only quote from Scottish newspapers at the time of the initial announcement. *The Scotsman* said:

"In this instance, the dogma of privatisation has taken priority over everything else."

The *Glasgow Herald* said:

"We have learned better than to expect the Government to pay much attention to Scottish sentiment in such matters."

The *Evening Times* said:

"Events prove he"—

that is, the Secretary of State—

"lied to the people of Scotland and the 650 NEL staff."

Public opinion within Scotland is not convinced that the announcement is any different from that original announcement.

The decision to restructure and privatise NEL does not have the support of industry and it most decidedly does not have the support of the people who work at NEL, 200 of whom will lose their jobs, while those who remain will lose pension rights and conditions of service.

In the run-up to 1992 the Government should be trying to invest in industrial research, not divesting itself of a key asset critical to industry's future. I ask the Government to think again about the proposals and to give serious consideration to retaining NEL within the public sector and providing it with sufficient funding and freedom of action to allow it to serve the industrial and engineering research needs of British industry.

I am most grateful for the support tonight of my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray), who I understand wishes to make a few comments on this issue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): The hon. Gentleman has the consent of both the hon. Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram) and the Minister.

10.57 pm

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): I rise on behalf of the Opposition, perhaps a bit unusually, but this is a key issue both for our strategy towards the engineering industry and for Scotland in particular, to give our full support to the case which my hon. Friend has put. This is a quite extraordinary example of damage to, and ignorance of, the dynamics of the engineering industry. The idea that the engineering industry could take over a major research facility, entirely changing the research strategy of a major part of its activities in a short time, and come up with an efficient solution is quite absurd, and so it has proved very quickly.

We ask simply that the damage should be minimised by affording the maximum transitional period, realistic funding and a clear mission for what is still a major national resource which has a great part to play in the future.

10.58 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Eric Forth): I start by congratulating the hon. Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram) on obtaining this Adjournment debate. The House will recognise the very understandable concern that

he has expressed so eloquently on behalf of his constituents and others at the very major changes which are in the process of happening to the national engineering laboratory.

I acknowledge the sense of the comments made by the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) as well.

I do not hesitate in acknowledging the great uncertainty that has obtained for quite a long time among the staff of this most important resource. That is something that is always to be regretted because uncertainty tends to breed unhappiness and difficulty.

I accept some of the criticisms that the hon. Gentleman has made about the method and timing of the announcements made recently. I state here and now that at the very least they could have been more felicitously organised. I offer the hon. Gentleman an apology for that, which was due to the speed at which the announcement had to be made. In retrospect, we could have announced it in a different and better fashion. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept my apology for that.

Before I give a more extensive background to the Government's position, I shall seek to answer directly two of the important questions posed by the hon. Gentleman. First, it is, at the very least, unlikely that any legislation would receive Royal Assent before this time in 1990 at the earliest. I would not be giving away too many secrets if I said that it was unlikely to meet even that time scale.

As the hon. Gentleman will recognise, the time scale for the necessary retructuring and investment in the site given in the Touche Ross report spans a period of many years. We have made no secret of the fact that it is unlikely that the process described in the Touche Ross report, which we have substantially underwritten and agreed to, can take place in less than a period of some years. Therefore, we are not talking about something which is to be done hastily. It will, of necessity, take some time.

In answer to the hon. Gentleman's second point, I have been told that assurances have already been given to the staff on the site at East Kilbride that there will certainly be no redundancies during this calendar year. They have been told that there will be no staff reductions before consultations with them have taken place in accordance with the procedures agreed with the trade unions involved. We do not intend to take any peremptory or hasty actions. I expect that the fullest possible consultations on the agreed and understood basis will be undertaken in order that any adjustments may be made in the proper way.

Mr. Ingram: I accept those assurances, but will the Minister say whether there are likely to be redundancies, and if there are, how are they to be effected?

Mr. Forth: We have made it clear throughout that we hope that any changes in staffing levels will be made, as far as is humanly possible, through either early retirement or voluntary redundancies. That would be our hope and aim. At this stage it is too early to judge whether further redundancies will have to be made.

When I made my brief—and I acknowledge that it was brief—visit to the site last week, the limited number of people with whom I was able to speak gave a mixed response to the announcement which had only recently been made. In some laboratory departments, and among some of the management, there is a degree of enthusiasm for what has been suggested.

It is too early fully to judge the likely impact. Until further information is available, further consultations have taken place and the way in which the suggested changes will affect the staffing levels is known, I remain optimistic. I hope that the impact will be more easily managed and will involve the minimum unhappiness—I hope that there will be no unhappiness—among those involved. However, that remains to be seen, and I hope that everyone will enter into consultations in as positive a spirit as possible, even though they will appreciate the background which the hon. Gentleman has outlined.

We must acknowledge that the laboratory, whoever owns it, is, and will remain, a major national resource. It has facilities which are unique in this country and, in some respects, in the world, for large-scale mechanical testing of structures and components, earthquake simulation and, as I saw, the world's most comprehensive facilities for measuring the flows and pressures of oil, air and water, and mixtures of them.

The reason why our objective is the privatisation of the laboratory has been made clear. However, I shall put it on record again because it has been challenged again in the debate.

Mr. Ingram: The Minister has said that the laboratory would remain a national resource. Will he give an assurance that it will remain a British-owned national resource?

Mr. Forth: In all honesty, I feel that it is too early to embark on such assurances, for reasons that the hon. Gentleman well understands—although I think I know why he has asked his question. The process is at an extremely early stage. Touche Ross has made some comprehensive and, in some ways, exciting proposals, which we have largely accepted. Until we know much more clearly where further investment in the site will go and what emphasis it will be given, and what the science park section will mean, I do not think that it would be sensible for me to give the undertaking for which the hon. Gentleman has asked. I am sure that this is not the last time that we shall hear his point; he has got it on the record and we shall take it into consideration.

My right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry told the other place on 7 June 1988 that the review of the Department's research establishments had shown that

> "Roughly three-quarters of the work at NEL currently falls into the category of industrially relevant R and D. The principal beneficiary is industry, not Government, and strong signals from industry are needed in guiding the development and direction of the work. This 'market pull' is more easily provided and understood when the R and D is carried out in an organisation whose progress depends directly on its success in providing services to industry."—[*Official Report, House of Lords,* 7 June 1988; Vol. 497, c. 1398.]

That remains the fundamental justification for our policy. The announcement made last week about the more detailed means of carrying it into effect—involving restructuring, a more commercial approach and, indeed, further investment—is now clearer to all concerned with the publication of the various forms of the Touche Ross report. My right hon. and noble Friend has made it clear that the considerable skills that will remain at the laboratory are best provided in a framework that gives opportunities for commercial drive and commercial expansion where possible. That, we believe, will best be achieved through the routes announced in the last week.

[Mr. Forth]

The laboratory must be developed so that its work is increasingly orientated towards meeting its market demands. Its skills and facilities are second to none, and we want to give them the opportunity of succeeding in the market place. I emphasise, however, that the Government are, and will remain, an important customer, on the basis that the laboratory will pay for the work that the NEL can do to support necessary Government objectives—for example, underpinning statutory, regulatory and policy work.

I would be very sorry if the House failed to see last week's announcement of our aim to establish a national technology centre as a very positive factor in the future of the laboratory and of the site as a whole, thus benefiting East Kilbride, Scotland and the national economy. The announcement was made after the most careful study of all the options, and careful consideration of the strengths and, indeed, weaknesses of the arrangements at the laboratory. We are not rushing into hasty decisions.

The original announcement was made some time ago. It has been refined and developed; it has been looked at by Touche Ross experts who made comprehensive proposals based on the facts and figures. I do not believe that there is any reason for pessimism or doubt about the future, provided that all concerned view positively the proposals made by the Department of Trade and Industry and the Government and through the Touche Ross reports.

Mr. Ingram: Does the Minister accept the uncertainty identified by Touche Ross? There is a possibility that, if the NTC is transferred to the private sector, the competiting private companies and industries will not view it as an independent consultancy giving free advice—that it will be run for profit and not for the quality of the research that it funded.

Mr. Forth: Again, I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern, but I am sure that that will not happen. I believe that we can develop an approach that will combine the fact of private ownership, in whatever form it may emerge—it is too early to form a complete judgment about that—with retaining the status and reputation of the facility as a respository of national standards. I see no contradiction in that sense and I believe that the two can be managed together. That will be one of our principal objectives. We will have that in mind as we develop the policies in detail. We shall also provide funds for the restructuring and refurbishment of buildings and facilities as appropriate. Although the plans are at an early stage they are being developed rapidly. The Touche Ross report said that refurbishment totalling £3 million over three years would be required. We shall be ready to provide the necessary funds to help management to achieve the required improvements. In addition, the site will be developed as an attractive location for incoming industry. The restructuring programme will be directed towards matching the work of the laboratory with real customer requirements, whether the customers are in the private sector or the Government. I believe that the laboratory has a lot to offer.

The hon. Member for East Kilbride rightly emphasised the likely reduction in employment. It should be noted that an alternative approach consistent with Government policy on the research establishment might have been to reduce the size of the laboratory to that needed to meet the work necessary to meet the Government's needs and to keep that reduced size laboratory within the Civil Service. However, as was revealed by the Touche Ross report, doing that would have involved reducing staff numbers to 226 as opposed to the present proposal which involves keeping some 400 jobs. The Government have therefore opted for an approach which will seek to maximise the opportunities for the laboratory, the site and the staff. I have already said that reductions in staff will not be carried out hastily. The intention is that they will largely take the form of transfers within Department of Trade and Industry transfers to other Government Departments and retirements, including some early retirements. Furthermore, some staff may set up small companies operating within the science and technology park. This part of the restructuring exercise will take place during 1990. As I have said, at the same time work on developing the site as a science and technology park and in preparing staff to meet market challenges will proceed as quickly as possible if, as we hope, the park is a success there should in due course be more jobs on site than there are at present. I am sure that that will be an increasing possibility as we develop our plans.

As regards staff who will not be working in the national technology centre, my Departments will do everything possible to assist and advise them in dealing with the changes in their careers and circumstance. The legal position is that the transfer of civil servants to the new company—the National Technology Centre Ltd—would be covered by the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981. They provide that transferred staff would enjoy terms and conditions having the same effect as those which staff currently enjoy, apart from occupational pension schemes. Any legislation in connection with the transfer could facilitate the transfer, including making provision to enable responsibility for redundancy compensation to be taken over by the new company.

We expect to find ways for NEL staff to be able to share in the financial rewards which will arise if the restructuring leads to successful privatisation.

In the short time available, I have tried to answer as many of the hon. Gentleman's questions as possible. I hope that I have gone some way to reassuring him and, through him, all those involved at NEL, that, in spite of the considerable changes that the Government are seeking to bring about on the site, we and the management of NEL are approaching this in the most positive light. Within the framework of the policy—which we are not prepared to change—we believe that there are considerable grounds for optimism, provided that everybody on the site will come together with the Department and management who are keen and enthusiastic, to take the opportunities of the investment available to seek to make the future of the site the best possible. I am confident that that can be the case and I hope that that message can go from the House to everyone involved on the site in the hope that, in spite of the changes involved, something real and positive will come out of this for the future of NEL and the national technology centre.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at thirteen minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 26 May 1989

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

National Health Service (Northumberland)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

9.34 am

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I am very glad to have this opportunity to raise in the House and to draw to the attention of the Minister some of the implications of the Government's health proposals for the county of Northumberland and in particular for my constituency. Many arguments are raging about the proposals, and there is a great deal of concern among doctors, nurses, the various health professionals, community health councils and, above all, patients. Some of the arguments are at a high political level, questioning the Government's commitment to the National Health Service. Today I want to focus on the applicability of the proposals to a county with Northumberland's problems and on some of the aspects of the proposals which I believe will cause severe difficulty there.

In doing that, I am bound to refer to the report of the Select Committee on Social Services which was published yesterday. The report's concluding paragraph states:

"If the Government's proposed timetable for introducing the vastly greater changes to the health service proposed in the White Paper is adhered to, we have serious fears that the stability of services and continuity of patients care may suffer during the years of transition to a new, untested system. As we said in our Report last year: 'the strengths of the NHS should not be cast aside in a short-term effort to remedy some of its weaknesses'.

That remains our considered view."

That is certainly the view of many health professionals in Northumberland. It precisely echoes their concern that there is a case for reform and change, but many of the proposed changes are untried, untested, and uncosted, and, if implemented wholesale, they could prove quite disastrous, especially if they are implemented hastily. Many people would share the view expressed by the Select Committee.

Far more decisive and strong views have been expressed in other ways. A ballot was conducted by consultants and junior hospital doctors in the Newcastle hospitals, which are the main hospitals used by patients from the Northumberland area. More than 400 hospital doctors voted on the proposition:

"We believe that the White Paper is flawed in its fundamental principles. It puts financial considerations before patient care and will eventually destroy the NHS. We oppose the White Paper."

Three hundred and fifty-five of the hospital doctors in those Newcastle hospitals voted for the proposition, 31 voted against and 29 abstained.

On another proposition—

"The creation of self governing hospitals will lead to a fragmented Health Service, create a two tier system of health care and destroy the comprehensive nature of the NHS"—

361 of the hospital doctors voted in favour, 28 voted against, and 26 abstained. Those are very strong views from those who are most directly concerned at the hospital end of patient care in my area. The Minister must consider those views seriously.

The community health councils expressed themselves very strongly in carefully argued representations from the local community health council in my area and from the community health councils' national organisation. They concluded in their report:

"Although there are a number of proposals which will undoubtedly be beneficial to the users of the NHS, the main themes of the White Paper do nothing to strengthen the position of patients or to improve patient choice. Indeed, the overall effect of the White Paper will be to promote cost containment at the expense of a high quality service that is responsive to the needs of those who use the service. . . . Despite the rhetoric of the White Paper, the NHS of the 1990s will be dominated by managers, cash limits and marketing. There can be no guarantee that the interests of patients really will come first and, indeed, their interests are likely to be ignored totally unless the user's voice is heard clearly at every level of the NHS."

The Select Committee on Social Services stated that the Government would be wise to take account of their critics. Instead, the Government's initial reaction was to insult their critics by suggesting that family doctors were reaching for their wallets, motivated only by personal interest when they had deep and genuine fears about the effect of the proposals on their patients.

Family doctors know infinitely more about the reality of caring for the sick than do the handful of advisers and officials who concocted the White Paper in the seclusion of Whitehall. That view is shared by the public. The general public have a great deal more confidence in their doctors than they have in Ministers or Members of Parliament. The Government must show more respect for those whose practical knowledge of the working of the Health Service is so much greater than that of the people who are advising them.

In talking about Northumberland, I shall take family practitioners as my starting point. Northumberland has an outstandingly good family practitioner service and very good family doctors. There are reasons for that. It is an attractive area in which to live and work. Furthermore, in recent years general practice has become attractive and popular among the postgraduates of the medical schools —if anything, slightly to the detriment of hospital consultancy, partly because of the difficulties of developing a career as a hospital doctor and the initial hardships that are involved. We all remember the recent row about the long hours worked by junior hospital doctors.

Another major attraction is the element of self-management and personal responsibility that is involved in general practice. Whatever the reasons may be, it is fairly obvious that, particularly in areas such as the one I represent, we have benefited from the tendency of some of the best graduates to go into general practice where they try to raise the standards of general practice as high as possible. These young doctors are firmly committed to providing the best possible standard of service. They are well aware of the deficiencies in the general practice service, some of the worst of which are to be found in the inner-city areas. They are in no way blind to the possibility of reform, change and new ideas, but their worry is that the

[Mr. A. J. Beith]

Government have got it wrong in a number of key respects which will adversely affect the work that they are trying to do to raise the standard of general practice.

One of the most powerful attractions of an area such as Northumberland is the prospect of working in GP-run hospitals. In the hospitals at Berwick, Alnwick and Rothbury the medical services are provided by and are under the leadership of local general practitioners. That is a positive recruiting attraction. Many medical graduates want a combination of direct patient services and family care and the ability to exercise their skills within a hospital. Keeping that balance and enabling that pattern to continue, thus ensuring that hospitals continue to exist in that form, is crucial to the continued success of general practice in areas such as mine. They have had enormous backing from the local community. We are fighting a permanent battle to keep our hospital services.

There was a vivid example of that recently when the health authority decided to withdraw the maternity services provided by the Hillcrest maternity unit in Alnwick. It told my constituents that in future they would have to go to Ashington for maternity services. The community rose in revolt—but positive and constructive revolt. They devised alternative plans that would save the Health Service money in running costs, and they went on to raise the difference in capital cost that was necessary to create a new maternity unit. Over £100,000 was raised in a very short time. Money is still coming in from voluntary efforts by the local community. They have saved the district health authority a lot of money and have ensured the continuance of GP-run maternity services in Alnwick. That shows how much the doctors have the backing of the local community.

We are also having constant battles to retain the surgery facilities that are provided at our hospitals in Alnwick and Berwick. Surgery is carried out there by visiting consultants. The district health authority has hinted several times that it does not want this arrangement to continue; it wants to concentrate its facilities at the new district general hospital in Ashington. However, it is a team effort. The GP services, the hospital, and surgery at the hospital come together to provide a good standard of health care for a scattered area that does not fit the pattern for which the district general hospital model was devised.

General practitioners in my area feel strongly that the Government have got their proposals wrong in a number of key respects. They felt that way about the contracts; they still feel that way about many aspects of it. On the face-to-face time aspect for the contract, for example, the Government still seem to be ignoring the hospital work side of it. The contract arrangements do not seem to take account of the fact that our general practitioners spend many hours in the casualty service of the local hospital and on the geriatric ward of the local hospital. They serve hospital patients in many other ways. Unless that is properly calculated, it makes nonsense of the face-to-face time provisions in the contract.

Similarly, the minor surgery payment arrangements in the contract seem to expect doctors to carry out in their consulting rooms minor surgery that they now carry out in a hospital, which is a far better place to do it and a far more satisfactory arrangement.

I am glad that the rural practice aspect of the contract is to receive further consideration. If there is to be proper provision for scattered rural areas, that is essential. In an area such as mine, going out to visit a patient can involve a 50-minute or one-hour journey in each direction. I am talking not about practices that have extended far beyond their natural boundaries but about practices whose natural radius extends over 10 or 15 miles into extremely hilly country.

Perhaps the most infuriating feature of the Government's contract for general practitioners is the ever-increasing emphasis on list sizes—on relating capitation allowances and list sizes in such a way that the pressure is on to increase the number of patients on a doctor's list. It is impossible to increase the number of patients on a doctor's list in a rural area without amalgamating practices and putting them on to a scale that is quite inappropriate to the provision of an effective service in a large scattered area.

There are many other disadvantages of the list size and capitation arrangements. There is likely to be an adverse effect on the employment of part-time women doctors. That is a particularly valuable feature of general practice. It is much appreciated by women who like to be attended by a woman doctor, and it is very helpful in the development of family planning services, well woman clinics and other activities in which the help of a woman doctor is particularly important.

The Government have caused a great deal of anxiety among doctors in my constituency about many aspects of the contract, but that is as nothing compared with the anxiety that has been created by some of the proposals in the White Paper. The one which has caused the greatest anxiety is that the family doctor's ability to refer a patient to the hospital that he or she considers to be most appropriate to the needs of that patient will disappear.

To give the Minister the background to how the Health Service operates in my area, Northumberland is a large county with many scattered communities. Many referrals are to hospitals in Newcastle or Edinburgh. Many of my constituents and those of other hon. Members are much closer geographically to the Newcastle or Edinburgh hospitals than they are to the district general hospital that the district health authority is developing in Ashington. The new district general hospital there will be of great benefit to patients in the south-east of Northumberland, but it is a very mixed blessing for patients in Berwick and Haltwhistle and even in some of the western areas in my constituency. For geographical and very strong medical reasons, doctors have for a long time referred their patients to hospitals in Newcastle and Edinburgh. There are many services that the district has not previously sought to provide, such as paediatrics. We look to Newcastle hospitals to provide such services.

The Government's proposals would take away the ability of doctors to refer their patients where they choose, on medical or geographical grounds, unless they are budget-holding practices. Only six practices in the whole of Northumberland would qualify as budget-holding practices. Some of them may choose not to do so. They may find the arrangements unattractive because they may not think that it will be in the interests of their patients. However, the Government's working paper 2 states:

"G.P.s should be encouraged to refer patients within the terms of the contract and to those hospitals or departments which, in the District's view offer the best value for money

care . . . but an open-ended commitment on the part of the D.H.A.s to meet all non-contractual referrals would be incompatible with both the disciplines which the new system is intended to inject and with control of budgets."

One of the doctors in my constituency, Dr. Colin Brown, comments in a letter to the press that

"The White Paper thus restricts rather than enhances patient's choice."

I can see what will happen. The district health authority, having committed its resources so heavily to building the Ashington district general hospital, will tell doctors, "That is where you will have to send your patients." That will be the emphasis of its policy. Removal of the right of referral will destroy my constituents' ability to get medical care where it can best be provided and where it is most geographically convenient. There will be outrage in Northumberland if the Government proceed along those lines.

The proposal for self-governing hospitals could work severely to the detriment of the Ashington district general hospital. If some of the Newcastle hospitals turn themselves into self-governing hospitals, in spite of the opposition of their medical staff, GPs in my constituency will be unable to refer their patients there unless they are in budget-holding practices. The self-governing hospital might attract the best staff with higher rates of pay and by somehow improving conditions and concentrating on facilities that attract money rather than those which are most needed. That would prevent the Ashington district general hospital from getting off the ground and attracting the staff it needs to achieve the quality which the district health authority wants it to achieve.

The third proposal which is much resented by GPs is that concerning the prescribing of drugs. We have supported the Government in their attempt to move steadily towards more generic prescribing, but the proposed budget system has created suspicion among doctors. They believe that the system will create many suspicions among patients that it could be a serious handicap. Doctors think that patients will lose confidence in them if they believe that, because of the indicative drug budget and other cost-related features of the system, doctors are giving not the best advice that they can give but the advice which the budget requires them to give. Irrespective of whether that fear is justified, if it becomes reality it will harm the doctors' relationship with patients on which general practice is based.

There is enormous worry about the cost of the Government's proposals. The Minister was unable to provide the Social Services Select Committee with any estimate of the costs which will arise from these proposals. Many of the proposals are very costly in terms of administration and accounting. All this charging for patient services from one authority to another, one hospital to another and general practice to district health authority will involve a mammoth amount of accounting, detailed record keeping, detailed submission of accounts and checking from one body to another. It will cost a great deal of money. There has been no commitment of resources to ensure that those costs are not met at the expense of patient care.

There is no resource allocation working party formula to help historically underprovided regions such as the north of England. Abandonment of the principle that areas which have historically been underprovided with medical services is a serious disadvantage to the regions such as the north of England, and it will make it impossible to deal with the long-standing and deep-seated problems that have shown up in all of the major reports, such as the Black report, on the health problems of the region.

The cost problems are made worse by the fact that we have a high proportion of elderly patients in my constituency. I am sure that the air makes people live longer, or perhaps the attractions of the place draw more retired people to come to live among us. There is no doubt, however, that the proportion of elderly people in the area is very high. That has serious implications for GPs' drug budgets and for other medical budgets, such as community care. The Government have made no commitment about the costs of community care.

I said earlier that the standard of general practice in Northumberland is outstandingly high. We confront severe difficulties, however, with community care because the people involved simply do not have the resources necessary to provide anything like the service which is now accepted in many urban areas. Community care in rural areas is more costly because of the distances involved and the small number of people involved in each facility. That is especially true for specialised facilities for the mentally handicapped, the long-term mentally ill and people with infirmities or diseases which can be dealt with in the community but only by the provision of specialised facilities. Such facilities are costly, but we have no commitment to meet them. To many people, this is a more urgent health priority than many other things which the Government discuss in the White Paper.

There is an unrealistic expectation that vast savings can be made as a result of the Government's proposals and that patient care will not be damaged in the process. I listened to an exchange in which the Minister of State suggested to a Back Bench colleague that enormous savings have been achieved in a hospital in the north-west. I happen to know it well because two of my close relations died while in care there. Both were cared for by skilled nursing staff to the best of their ability. I know from personal experience, therefore, that what the Minister regarded as a great benefit—the fact that the hospital is getting more patients through more rapidly—put enormous strain on the hospital and the staff who work in it. The statistics on patient throughput which the Minister found so attractive hid real hardship and desperately difficult conditions on the wards. The idea that huge savings are there to be made by speeding up the process and making it all more efficient is quite worrying.

Efficiency improvements can always be made, but I question the idea that there is a huge pool of resources that can be extracted from the Health Service to pay for proposals such as these by pushing patients through more quickly and reducing the level of care. Services such as general practice and community care will be cash limited, as the Government make clear in the White Paper, but tax relief for private health insurance is not. However many people decide to take it up, that much money will be spent. It is not limited to £40 million. It can go up to any level. There seems to be a big difference between the Government's attitude to the provision of money for private medicine and their attitude to the essential needs of the Health Service.

The Government's concept in the White Paper is to introduce

"a chain of management command running from Districts through regions to the Chief Executive and from there to the Secretary of State".

[Mr. A. J. Beith]

That is a worrying feature of the proposals. The ambition of a centrally controlled National Health Service is particularly worrying to an area such as Northumberland. Some 300 miles from London, one does not have much confidence in the ability of those who sit in the Department's headquarters to make sensible decisions about an area which is so different from anything they are used to.

We fear that so centralised a management system will have no regard for local differences and needs. Local community representation is being squeezed out at every level. Elected councillors are to be removed from health authorities. It makes no sense to have a centralised system when the needs of various areas are so different. I hope that I have convinced the Minister that there are significant differences in the way in which any system can be operated which argue against such centralisation.

There is another theme which has run through many of the most cautious and responsible criticisms of the Government's proposals. It is that they do not contain any element of pilot study or experimentation. That criticism has been made by doctors in my constituency, by community health councils and by the Social Services Select Committee. So many of the proposals are so untried that they deserve to be tested systematically. They should be tried out in a certain area perhaps with some guarantee that, if they go wrong, quick action will be taken to ensure that patients do not suffer. Instead, the whole thing is being thrust on the Health Service without any experimentation or pilot study.

I fear that the Government have got themselves into a corner with their NHS proposals and that they have become frightened of losing face. They have jumped to the conclusion that every critic is motivated by personal interest and remuneration or by such fundamental political hostility that they would never believe that the Government had any good intentions. I ask the Government to put those paranoid thoughts from their mind and start to take seriously the well-directed criticism from people with enormous practical and professional experience in the Health Service, which is echoed by many patients with recent experience of the NHS. I hope that they will look again at the damaging features of the proposals.

I have sought to illustrate, in the case of Northumberland, that in some respects the Government's objectives are negated by the White Paper rather than carried forward by it. Patient choice will not exist if the doctor's right to refer patients to the most appropriate hospital is taken away. The price of not listening to advice such as this will be high for patients in areas such as Northumberland.

10 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Roger Freeman): I congratulate the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) on selecting this subject. It is an important one, and he has described fully and carefully his interpretation of the effects of the White Paper upon his county and constituency. In September I hope to visit the ambulance station in Berwick and the infirmaries in Berwick and Alnwick. I will write to the hon. Gentleman before a date is set. It is the most beautiful part of the country, with the exception of my constituency, and I am looking forward to my visit.

This has been a wide-ranging debate and, although the hon. Gentleman has geared his remarks to the effects of the White Paper, as he sees them, upon his constituency, it is with some anticipation that the House awaits his further remarks and those of his colleagues in the SLD. We await with great interest their positive and constructive proposals for reform of the NHS. There has been a deafening silence in the past few months. Only recently the Labour party has set forth its proposals, many of which march in step with the Government's, particularly in terms of the quality of service.

I am at one with the hon. Gentleman and the representatives of the medical professions in his constituency in saying that we are looking for reform in the NHS. It is a great British institution but it should not be immune from change. After 40 years, it is appropriate to review its functioning. That does not mean that it should not receive further resources, it has, is, and will continue to receive an increase in Government resources. At the same time, it is appropriate to consider change. We approach change on the basis of improving the quality of care—we are at one on that—rewarding general practitioners for the effort they put into their practices in looking after their patients and improving the quality of care and providing patients with more information so that they can make a more informed choice about who should look after them.

The hon. Gentleman began by quoting the report of the Select Committee on Social Services. I think that the House will share the disappointment felt by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and myself at the fact that the Committee clearly wrote its report before listening to my right hon. and learned Friend's evidence. That is rather strange. The report complains that, to use the hon. Gentleman's words, the reforms are uncosted, untried and untested and that the proposals are being rushed through—a short-term dash for change. I reject that charge entirely.

Self-governing hospitals and group practice budgets are experiments. There will be many examples in some parts of the country and none in others. The medical professions will watch carefully the success of the introduction of greater delegation of authority and decision-making in hospitals and primary care and will consider any problems or drawbacks that may arise. Therefore, that is a staged implementation of the White Paper, which will be monitored carefully.

We have a two-year period for discussing, debating and consulting on our reforms before most of them are introduced in April 1991. The hon. Gentleman suggested that reforming the funding of the system, which is the kernel of the reforms, should be piloted. That cannot be done. A system of funding cannot be changed for just one part of the country or one hospital. One either changes the system or not. It is possible to introduce delegation of authority on a more experimental basis and that is what we propose to do.

The hon. Gentleman cited the Newcastle doctors and I understand that about half of them voted on a motion. I have not seen the precise text of that motion. As I understand it, those who support it are alleging that financial considerations are being put before patient care. That is wrong. Financial considerations should march

alongside considerations of patient care—it was ever thus. The late Richard Crossman, as Secretary of State for Social Services, pointed out that demand for health care is unlimited. It is important that hospital doctors and general practitioners share the responsibility of managing the resources, which are not infinite, with the administrators. Therefore, financial considerations are always present in examination of patient care, but they do not come before patient care.

The reforms that we are introducing into the management of hospitals—the resources management initiative which I support and which has received widespread support in the hospital service—are based upon the assumption that doctors, nurses and administrators share responsibility for the management of resources.

The hon. Gentleman's main point referred to the right of general practitioners to refer patients. He was right to say that in theory, general practitioners can refer patients anywhere within the NHS. That is an unlimited, theoretical right. The problem is that with our present system of funding, that right is more theoretical than practical in certain parts of the country. That is because a doctor wishing to refer a patient from the home counties to a London teaching hospital may be told that it cannot take his patient because its budget is limited and it will run out of funds. We shall change the basis of funding. If a general practitioner who holds his own budget or a general practitioner operating within the contract system laid down by the district health authority—I shall come to that because it is the kernel of the hon. Gentleman's concern —wants a patient to go to a particular hospital, money will follow the patient and the receiving hospital will be able to expand its activities.

The hon. Gentleman's fear was that the district health authority would force a large proportion of his constituents to go to Ashington for acute care and away from Newcastle and Edinburgh. There is no prospect of any change in the status of Alnwick or Berwick infirmaries. Their work is respected and I am talking about acute care. I note that the new hospital at Ashington is expensive, costing about £30 million. We are replacing an unlimited, theoretical right of referral with a system in which money will back up the referral patterns of general practitioners.

The district health authority will have the responsibility for placing contracts for the care of those in its district with its district general hospital and with other hospitals outside the district. I expect contracts with hospitals outside districts to reflect the sensible referral patterns that currently exist. I assure the hon. Gentleman that I expect district health authorities to work closely with family practitioner committees, group practices and doctors in establishing such contracts, which are simple and clearly written to facilitate that flow.

Doctors may wish to refer some patients who are outside the contract system to distant hospitals, perhaps because a doctor was at medical college with a consultant or because the patient is suffering from a unique disease that has to be treated, for example, in a London hospital. We are asking health authorities to set up contingency funds to pay for specific contract referrals. It would be madness if the Government were to distort the sensible clinical referral pattern of doctors, thereby jeopardising the clinical care of patients and profoundly disturbing the medical profession. Under our facilitating measure, we are trying to solve the problem of doctors who say "I want my patient to be cared for in a hospital 20 or 30 miles outside the district. The receiving hospital cannot finance treatment because it is on a limited budget." The proposed system will be much more flexible, and in certain cases —it may not apply in the hon. Gentleman's constituency —patients will receive care quicker.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed fairly referred to the problems affecting rural GPs. He expressed his support for our decision, which has been agreed by the general medical service committee, to refer the issue of rural practice payments and the income of GPs in rural areas for further consideration. We have agreed to remove the remuneration scheme for rural practitioners from the present negotiations, and it will be considered by the central advisory committee on rural practice payments. Pending the committee's decision, the retention of the rural practice payments scheme will be welcomed by rural practitioners.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed referred to self-governing hospitals and speculated that there may be one in Newcastle. He is concerned that the self-governing hospital in Newcastle might bid away staff from Ashington and the infirmaries in Alnwick and Berwick to the detriment of local patient care. However, a self-governing hospital begins the year with no money. It is not funded directly by the district health authority. It must win contracts through private sector referrals and patient referrals, not only from its proximate health authority but from distant ones. It will not have the unlimited ability to bid up pay rates and poach staff from surrounding hospitals. It will be subject, as are all hospitals currently, to financial stringency, with the discipline of budgets and ensuring that its books balance.

The hon. Gentleman referred to indicative drug prescribing and expressed his fear that doctors will not give the best advice because they will be constantly thinking about money. He implied, although he did not say so, that some patients will not be given the drugs that they need. I refute the allegation that has been made by some people, but not by the hon. Gentleman, that patients will be denied the drugs that they need. General practitioners are not being cash-limited individually or collectively. Drug budgets are indicative and are designed to put downward pressure on drug budgets, not cut them. If GPs' drug prescription budgets are in excess of their indicative or target budget for the year, we are asking them to explain why to their family practitioner committee. There may be good reasons for their having exceeded their budget, such as an epidemic, because the original budget was incorrectly calculated or because the cost of drugs has risen. For whatever reason, they are being asked to talk sensibly and maturely to their family practitioner committee, and I believe that many GPs welcome that.

The proposals in the White Paper are regarded by hon. Members and many in the medical profession as being designd to improve the quality of patient care, to improve choice and flexibility and I commend them to the House.

Road Safety and Tyres

10.15 am

Mr. Iain Mills (Meriden): I am grateful for the opportunity to discuss a most important subject. In the 10 years that I have been an hon. Member tyres have never been the subject of a separate debate. They have been discussed at Question Time and mention has been made of them in motoring and car industry debates. In view of a decision taken by the tyre industry, I thought that it was important to raise the subject for the benefit of hon. Members.

I have a passionate interest in tyres, having spent 20 years working for Dunlop as a tyre designer and latterly as a senior manager. My career was dedicated to tyres until I became a Member of Parliament, and I have many friends in the industry. I have some experience of the industry and my campaign for better tyre depth legislation dates back to my youth. I began to try to persuade Ministers and others about the issue in 1961.

I still advise the National Tyre Distributors Association, as I have done for many years. I am glad to say that, through its initiative, with the able co-operation of other organisations such as the British Rubber Manufacturers Association and the Retread Manufacturers Association, a new Tyre Industry Council has been formed. That is an important step, as many other industries are advised and represented and, therefore, have an interface with Parliament. It is a collective body, with coherent views being expressed throughout the industry. The formation of the council is a major step forward, enabling the industry to present its policies coherently and enabling hon. Members to deal with one organisation if they have queries about employment standards, training methods, technical standards and design.

The council, which will have an experienced chairman, will enable the industry to take a number of important initiatives. It will enable it to answer hon. Members' and their noble Lordships' queries and will promote the industry. I regret to say that it has not been as glamorous as some other industries. Most people regard tyres like exhausts—they hope that they will never wear out, but when they do it is a bitter blow. People do not fondle tyres or gleefully chuckle about them, unless they are fortunate enough to have steel-braced, low-profile tyres on their Ferraris or four-wheel drive Audis.

Tyres are the most vital part of a car's relationship with road safety, which is why I asked for the debate to be entitled "Road Safety and Tyres". If you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I were both wearing size nine shoes, between our four feet we would have exactly the same contact with a road as the tyres of a car have. That is a quite shattering fact, given the heavy weight of a car and that it must move extremely rapidly in all weather conditions, often cornering sharply and frequently braking sharply. That size nine shoe contact means that tyres must be of extremely high quality, and their design is extremely important.

The European directive on tyre tread depths is important. I strongly urge my hon. Friend the Minister to consider supporting the directive on 6 June at the Luxembourg meeting of the working group of Ministers. I understand that it is third on the agenda after seat belts and blood alchohol levels. The Minister for Roads and Traffic has said that there is proof that accidents are caused by the present tyre tread depth law. That law is inadequate. It provides for 1 mm of tyre tread across the surface of a tyre, provided it is visible. One shoulder can be worn down to almost nothing, but it is legal if the groove is still visible.

The House is not as packed with colleagues wishing to hear my speech as I would have hoped. My hon. Friends the Members for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) and for York (Mr. Gregory) are anxious to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I shall have no objection if they manage to do so. They are both experts and I shall be interested to hear the initiatives that they propose. If more hon. Members had been present, I would have adopted a novel approach and asked how many had checked their tyres. I might even have embarrassed them further by asking whether they knew the make or size of their tyres and when they last checked their tyre pressures. *[Interruption.]* At least one hon. Friend agrees that those might be interesting questions to put.

A Gallup poll shows that 19 per cent. of motorists never check their tyres. One group which is a member of the National Distributors Association and runs 100 depots has said that two thirds of the tyres that it changes are dangerous. The NTDA's members are the specialists to which one goes to get one's tyres changed. Dangerous tyres endanger the lives of the motorist, his wife and family and other road users. Their use reduces the pool of tyres available for retreading. It has been calculated that adoption of the European directive, providing for a tyre tread depth of 1·6 mm across the tyre, would make 1·5 million more tyres available for retreading. Surely, that is a major consideration.

My hon. Friend the Minister may argue that the deeper tread will cost the motorist more because a deeper tread means that the motorist gets less mileage out of a tyre and has to change it more frequently. The estimates vary, but Ministers have said that it will cost about £50 million or £60 million per annum. I suggest that my hon. Friend considers this issue carefully. On a net-net basis and taking account of the fact that steel-based tyres of current design last longer, over a two-year period the motorist will gain a benefit. He will benefit also on the replacement market, which is one of the most competitive markets in the car industry. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister has seen full-page advertisements in his local newspaper by local tyre dealers, vying with each other to offer discounts. To say that changing the law will greatly increase the cost to the motorist is not a strong argument, because he is benefiting already from the longer life of the tyre.

It is almost like young voters who did not experience the winter of discontent and therefore wonder whether they should vote Conversative, which I recommend that they do—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Good. They have never had the experience of a Labour Government and do not understand the bitter horror of such a prospect. Similarly, some motorists never change their tyres because their company car is changed every two or three years or they change their own car frequently. Tyres are lasting for 20,000, 30,000 or even 40,000 miles whereas in the old days of cross-ply tyres a motorist was lucky to get 7,000 or 8,000 miles. The combination of tyre technology and the competitive market gives the motorist a considerable benefit.

I do not want to take up the entire time allotted to the debate, because, if they are fortunate and you are feeling kind, Mr. Deputy Speaker, colleagues of quality can make

their contributions. The most telling argument in favour of a tread depth of 1 mm or 1·6 mm across the tyre is that the motorist will benefit in cost terms. It will not cost him more. Having spent nearly 30 years in the industry, not only in motor racing but in designing truck and car tyres, I believe that it is sensible to have a tyre that gives better grip. It is difficult to argue that there is no evidence that this would be safer. A tyre depth of 1·6 mm would give a better grip.

My hon. Friend the Minister may quote a report by the Transport and Road Research Laboratory, but his letter to me contains the key phrase,

"Under normal conditions of wetness on roads".

That means that a puddle on a corner is not normal; but this is Britain and rain does not, I hate to say, always obey ministerial diktat. If tests showed that there was little difference between the effects of the present tyre tread depth and the effects of the proposed 1·6 mm depth, I believe that it was because the water conditions were marginal. If my hon. Friend can guarantee that the roads in my constituency of Meriden, especially the M6 and M42, will always be adequately drained, I should be pleased to arrange a parliamentary question to enable him to give that answer. If he cannot give that guarantee, I ask him to reconsider tread depths.

I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to encourage research and more positive attitudes by his Department and others and encourage the use of run-flat tyres. When I was at Dunlop, I was involved in the Denovo project, which was a failure, not because of technology, but, I suspect, because of lack of any motivation by car manufacturers to accept safety innovations, just as they have ignored safer windscreens and other items which are undoubtedly more expensive. The technology exists to produce a tyre that can be deflated without causing a problem and that can continue to run for a limited period. I gather that Conti has produced a similar product with a different design, yet it is foundering, just as Dunlop did with Denovo, because of lack of encouragement.

I know of the keen mind and impressive intellect of my hon. Friend the Minister and I urge him to speak to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, who has an equally impressive intellect, and ask him, in view of the billions of pounds that we shall spend on motorways, to provide adequate road surfaces, especially where there are likely to be rain and braking problems. Shell has Shell-grip, Dunlop has Delu-grip and there are a number of other processes which have been demonstrated to have a number of advantages in their interface with tyres. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to think of his size 9 or 10 shoes on 6 June and consider that when a tyre meets the road that is all it has to stand on and a 1·6 mm tread depth would squeeze out more water and be much safer.

10.20 am

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Mr. Mills) on securing the debate and thank him for allowing me to participate. For a long time I have had an interest in road matters and I am vice-chairman of the Conservative parliamentary transport committee. I am happy to declare an interest as consultant to the tyre committee of the British Rubber Manufacturers Association which represents all six tyre manufacturers in the United Kingdom—Avon, Goodyear, Michelin, Pirelli, SP Tyres—formerly Dunlop to which my hon. Friend referred—and Uniroyal-Englebert. They are important employers who take their responsibilities seriously.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Meriden said, the United Kingdom does not have tyre regulations that ensure high safety standards. In other transport matters, the Government have rightly given priority to safety. Unfortunately, the one aspect that has been passed by is vehicle tyres.

The present regulations were introduced in 1983, but are very similar to those introduced in 1968. In the intervening years motoring conditions have changed noticeably. I cannot believe that the tyre tread depth regulations suitable for 1968 are appropriate for present-day conditions.

There are clearly difficulties with the present legislation. The law falls into disrepute if it is not comprehended and cannot easily be enforced. Tyre law is such a case study. It may not be long before law colleges use tyre safety as an example of bad legislation. In a statement to the Select Committee on Transport in 1984, the Association of Chief Police Officers said:

"The present law is difficult to understand and enforce. The requirements should be for a minimum 1 mm tread depth across the whole width of the tyre."

Are we being good Europeans on tyre safety? No other European state except Spain has such low standards as the United Kingdom. In all other member states the requirement is 1 mm tread depth across the whole tread width, apart from Luxembourg where 1·6 mm is mandatory. The 1·6 mm depth is also the minimum requirement in many other non-EC states.

The British motorist, who this bank holiday weekend ventures abroad with car tyres that are worn but legal in the United Kingdom, could be breaking the law elsewhere in the Community. With the advent of the single internal market in 1992, the idea of differing tread depths in differing member states will be as inappropriate as different regulations in two English counties.

If the Department is to get the legal and safety message across, we need a straightforward regulation which is easily enforceable. The present requirement of 1 mm across three quarters of the tread width and visible tread on the remaining quarter does not lend itself readily to an eye-catching safety poster. Perhaps that is why the Department has not produced one.

Wherever possible, the Government should base legislation on good research. I investigated whether there had been such research and I am happy to assure my hon. Friend the Minister that he can base changes in legislation, that I hope he will announce, on good solid research. The Tyre Industry Council, which my hon. Friend the Member for Meriden welcomed so heartily and which I applaud, has undertaken research which shows that well over 60 per cent. of all tyres changed were worn below the current legal minimum in the United Kingdom. That means that a high proportion of motorists are putting others on the road at risk.

The Transport and Road Research Laboratory has done some limited work on tread depth. However, its research is seriously flawed. One example sounds like an April Fool story. One of its conclusions was that a completely bald tyre is safer in wet conditions than a tyre with tread. That is nonsense. It is an Alice in Wonderland

[Mr. Conal Gregory]

approach unworthy of the Government and it is profoundly worrying that Ministers could be influenced in any way by such nonsense.

Reference has already been made to the Department's comment about tread depth on normally well-drained roads. We cannot legislate for perfect laboratory conditions with some boffin's careful wording about normally well-drained roads. It would be embarrassing to ask the Minister which kilometres of road he was talking about. It is a statistical freak and unworthy of the Government.

My hon. Friend the Member for Meriden did not refer to the cost. In the most unlikely event that my hon. Friend the Minister were to try to find a reason for not amending the regulations, he would ask about the cost. Economists have estimated that it would cost £3·68 per car per year —around the price of two gallons of petrol. Are we saying that lives continue to be put at risk on British roads because of that small sum of money? I do not believe that my hon. Friend the Minister would defend that. However, there is a light at the end of the tunnel and that is 6 June.

The House is making history because we are debating, and, I hope, bringing guidance to our ministerial team before an EC decision is made on 6 June. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will not go into battle on that occasion, but will say that the Department has seen the light, has realised the folly of some of its boffins and considers that it makes economic sense to improve road safety and that Britain, like Luxembourg, will take the lead, impose a real tread depth and put road safety first. We shall then be in a proud and better position in Europe and in Britain.

I heartily support my hon. Friend the Member for Meriden in his campaign and I hope that today's debate will give succour to the ministerial team in early June.

10.37 am

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Mr. Mills) and congratulate him on his good fortune in securing the debate. My hon. Friend is held in very high esteem in the tyre business. I attended a dinner last night at the Institute of the Motor Industry and people were waxing eloquent about his prowess as a tyre designer and engineer when he had a real job before he became a Member of Parliament.

I endorse what my hon. Friend said. I, too, have experience of wheels, as for seven years I ran a business manufacturing wheels for cars. Of course, wheels are no good unless they have tyres wrapped round them, so obviously I was closely connected with the tyre industry. In another modest capacity I advise the Retread Manufacturers Association by virtue of my long connection with the wheel and tyre business.

My hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) has already touched on the significance of today's debate in that we are debating a measure which will be discussed fully by the European Commission on 6 June. Perhaps that is a precedent. I assure my hon. Friend the Minister that if he brings the measure back to the House, at least he will not risk my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) walking out because we did not have the chance to debate the matter beforehand and express our views.

It is time that this country took an initiative in the development of European law. This is one small but very important subject in which we can do so. If we take a positive role we can play a major part in producing an overall European scheme which is acceptable to us, instead of having to adapt our ideas to those of somebody else.

There is no doubt that the present law is widely flouted, as my hon. Friends have already pointed out. Figures showing that more than 60 per cent. of the tyres taken off cars are below the present United Kingdom minimum tread depth endorse that fact. One problem of existing law is how to interpret whether a tyre is running below the minimum requirement. A visual check is all that most of us make. Another *Gallup* poll shows that 19 per cent. of us do not even do that. Therefore, checks on tyres are entirely dependent on routine vehicle servicing or MOT tests when vehicles are given an annual check-up.

The MOT test is a strange aspect of our lives. When a vehicle is tested, provided its tyres are at the minimum legal level, it will pass. However, that vehicle could be driven for another 50 miles and then be flouting the law. That could occur within a couple of days or even on the same day as the test, which contains no element of potentiality. If it did, the examiner looking at the vehicle would decide not only whether it passed when it came in for the test, but whether it would run within the legal definition of the regulations on construction and use for a period after the test. The MOT test should be amended to ensure that when vehicles are tested, their tyres are not merely on the minimum level but a good deal above that, so that they can be used for a period after the test and still remain legal.

Our motorway systems are developing, vehicle speeds are increasing, and there has been mention recently about extending the width of motorways to four lanes. Private motorways and toll roads may not have speed restrictions. As those developments take place, higher standards of vehicle safety are prerequisites to enable those higher speeds to be achieved. Therefore, tyres, being the only source of contact between the vehicle and the ground, assume an ever more important role.

One fact of commercial and marketing life in the car industry is that it produces vehicles of higher and higher performance ability. Cars are now turbo charged and fuel injected, and ordinary saloon cars can easily obtain speeds of well over 100 or 120 mph; in some cases they are capable of travelling at 135 mph. Those are souped up, ordinary bread and butter saloon cars that are re-engineered to take into account the higher speeds: the suspension ratings, braking system and tyres are altered.

The tyres needed for such vehicles are high cost and of a high standard. My fear, and it is a growing fear within the business, is that when cars have cascaded down to the second and third user, the performance envelope will still be present but the owner will find it increasingly difficult to afford the cost of replacement, high-performance tyres and will be tempted to use his car, which has high performance potential, with tyres that have been reduced to the legal minimum and below.

It is difficult to correlate accident statistics with tyre depth, but to assume that bald tyres never have an impact on accident statistics would be to deny the facts. Tyres must be a contributory factor. They are the vehicle's only

retardation source to slow it and stop it before an impact. If 16 vehicles were in a nose-to-tail accident in wet weather conditions on a motorway it would be difficult to say that any of them had failed to stop because of inadequate tyre depth. However, there are grounds for substantial doubt, and tyre depth has a role to play. Adopting more sensible and enforceable legislation providing for tyre depth of at least 1·6 mm across the width of the tyre, would play a major part in improving safety standards on roads.

My colleagues have touched on another problem that concerns the tyre industry—the enormous and growing problem of tyre waste. People tend not to appreciate the industrial waste problems that are caused by tyre disposal. Despite much thought about shredding tyres, recycling them using power stations to burn them as a source of energy or dumping them at sea to make new forms of barrier reefs, as is frequently done in Australia and other parts of the world to help with sea, ecological and environmental life, the prime problem remains that we are covering our island, waste pits and dumps with growing mountains of tyre carcases.

The problem is that industry cannot recycle tyres by retreading them because they fall below the legal minimum and their structure has been damaged. By introducing higher standards we can help with the recycling problem and save ourselves money and energy. Some people have said that we could save about 26 million gallons of oil if we were able to reclaim more of the tyres that are now scrapped because they have fallen below the present, difficult to define, legal tread depth.

Therefore, I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will take account of the points raised this morning. It is an important issue and the legislation needs to be looked at because of the growing changes in the way cars are used, the speed at which they are used and the way in which people flout the law. The evidence is there. Should we continue to ignore it?

10.47 am

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Michael Portillo): I begin with the pleasurable task of congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Mr. Mills) on securing the debate. As I stand here in place of my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic, I feel inadequate to the task in everything except my shoe size. As I have listened to the expertise of my hon. Friends I was worried, not that I would fail a test of the depth of my tread, but that I might fail a test of the minimum depth of my knowledge on the subject. Certainly, I do not have a lifetime in the tyre industry as has my hon. Friend the Member for Meriden, to whom I am grateful for having introduced the subject.

My central point in responding to my hon. Friends is that this country has an outstanding road safety record which exists because the Government have always concentrated on acting on matters deemed of the greatest priority in road safety. They have always been concerned to act in a way that will produce demonstrably better road safety in the future. They have never allowed themselves to be carried away with enthusiasm for causes until sure that they would lead to improvements in standards.

I have just returned from an international conference in Edinburgh, at which our own safety record compared extremely favourably with those of the other countries represented. Attention was drawn to the fact that the United Kingdom has an extremely good record. However, there is scope for improvement. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport set the target of reducing road casualties by one third by the year 2000, from 300,000 per year to 200,000 per year. We set a short-term objective of reducing road deaths to fewer than 5,000 per year. The final figures for 1988 show that, with deaths at 5,050, which is 2 per cent. down on 1987 and the lowest for 25 years, we are well on target.

Our strategy for achieving those targets is to concentrate on action which has a proven ability to reduce casualties and which represents maximum value for money. Our priorities are to reduce casualties among vulnerable road users, notably pedestrians—where our performance is merely average—cyclists, children and motor cyclists. In order to achieve that we are working closely with local authorities on ways to increase levels of low-cost road engineering schemes to prevent accidents.

The European Commission's proposal is that tyres on all vehicles throughout the Community should have at least 1·6 mm of tread across the whole width. As my hon. Friend the Member for Meriden said, this compares with the United Kingdom's present requirements of 1 mm of tread across three quarters of the tyre and visible tread on the shoulder areas of the tyre. Tyres when new typically have about 8 mm of tread. We need to look at the Commission's proposal, which is not linked to our common objective of achieving a single European market, in terms both of the benefits to road safety and the costs to members of the public, including to businesses.

On the benefits side, the Commission claims that its proposal will bring road safety advantages and prevent accidents, but it has produced no evidence at all to support this contention. Very few road accidents are due to tyres being worn to between 1 mm and 2 mm tread depth. Tread depth variations in this range only make a significant difference to braking at speeds of over 50 mph on smooth roads in extremely wet conditions. Only a minority of accidents occur in those conditions. Most accidents occur on urban roads where speeds are lower.

Trunk road and motorway construction standards now specify rougher surfaces which give better adhesion, a point which my hon. Friend the Member for Meriden specifically raised. All main traffic routes in the United Kingdom are now surfaced in that way and we believe that this will be the case in most Community countries. Research by the Transport and Road Research Laboratory on a variety of road surface types has shown that Delagrip material, dense bitumen macadam and open-textured macadam showed lower resistance to skidding than pervious macadam and well-chipped, rolled asphalt.

Therefore, in our view, the Commission's proposals would save very few accidents. Although it is not a fact that Ministers can prevent it raining in this country, it is a fact that extremely wet conditions are statistically not very common in the United Kingdom. Most other member states also appear to have recognised that the Commission's proposals would not save many accidents. It is notable that of all the 12 member states in the Community only one has a minimum tread depth as high as 1·6 mm. That country is Luxembourg. Most member states require only 1 mm, although I admit that many require it across the whole width of the tyre.

I now turn to the costs. The current limit of 1 mm means that there is about 7 mm of usable tread on tyres

[Mr. Michael Portillo]

—the difference between the 8 mm supplied with tyres are new and the 1 mm minimum tread. So moving the the limit from 1 mm to 1·6 mm means that on average tyres would have about a 10 per cent. shorter life before they have to be replaced. That 10 per cent. increase would cost over £50 million per year in the United Kingdom. I know that my hon. Friends had foreseen my argument on that matter. Over the Community as a whole, the corresponding figure would be in the range of £300 million to £350 million. When listening to my hon. Friend the Member for Meriden, I was not sure that that argument was weakened by the fact that new tyres are of a higher quality and last longer. A further element of cost comes from the Commission's proposal requiring the 1·6 mm depth to apply across the whole width of the tyre rather than as in the United Kingdom, only over three quarters of the width. We estimate that that would cost about another £20 million per year.

Of course, the tyre industry would think that that money was well spent, but other industries might not be so sure about it. We think that there is a better means of ensuring safer tyres than raising the minimum tread depth, and that is better compliance by motorists with the present limits. At last, I find myself in agreement with my hon. Friends who said that the compliance rate was currently unsatisfactory. They pointed out that research by the tyre industry has suggested that a high percentage of tyres are below the existing legal limit. Our own research shows that over 1·75 million vehicles per year currently fail the MOT test because of tyre defects, and that most of those involve illegal tread.

What, then, would be the effect of raising the limit to 1·6 mm? We can assume that a still higher proportion of vehicles than at present would fail the test; but we are not sure that it would do anything to improve the safety of tyres which already fail the MOT test. Our main message for motorists must be that they should observe the existing limits, which they do not sufficiently at present. In other words, our priority should be to make sure that we improve the success rate in jumping over the present hurdle before we start raising the bar.

The MOT test takes place only once a year. My hon. Friends were right that it does not ensure good condition for the rest of the year. We announced earlier this year our intention to empower the police and the Department's vehicle examiners to prohibit the movement of cars and motor cycles which are in a dangerous condition. Safe vehicle condition is extremely important. The various inspection procedures in the United Kingdom, including the MOT test, play a part in keeping down the number of accidents. The MOT testing scheme stands up well to international comparison. We have regularly moved ahead of the European Community requirements in this area.

The annual MOT test has proved to be a good way of policing the quality of tyres. The large number of vehicles that failed the MOT test in 1986 because of defective tyres provided proof of its effectiveness. But more than that, an experienced mechanic examining the vehicle will quickly detect not only the places where the tread is worn to below the legal limit, but other defects such as cuts and bulges. In no other European Community country are vehicle tyres examined as frequently as they are in the United Kingdom. That is doubtless one of the reasons why accident surveys have shown so few cases in which defective tyres have been a contributory cause of an accident.

Last year agreement was reached in the Community on mandatory testing of light goods vehicles. Member states that are setting up a testing scheme for the first time have until 1995 to implement the directive. In Britain on the other hand, we have tested light goods vehicles for many years already.

In short, we have no evidence of clear safety benefits from the Commission's proposal on tyre tread——

Mr. Mills: I am sorry to interrupt my hon. Friend at this stage, when we have only a couple of minutes left. I was hoping that my hon. Friend's latest point would be on the MOT and the way in which it operates and that he would say something about better enforcement. I had thought that my hon. Friend was about to announce a major Government publicity campaign to inform motorists. In the past, our hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) has encouraged tyre distributors, the British Rubber Manufacturers Association and others to improve their information services. I must inform my hon. Friend that the formation of the Tyre Industry Council has included a full public information service on industry matters and especially on matters relating to tyre safety.

I remember a written answer of some years ago that stated that the Department's expenditure on tyre safety publicity was vestigial at £8,000. If my hon. Friend cannot give me a promise now—I realise that he may not be able to do so—will he consider discussing with his colleagues in the Department of Transport a major and co-operative campaign so that people will know about this issue and so that two thirds of cars are not found to have dangerous tyres at their MOT tests?

Mr. Portillo: I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic will be interested and pleased to hear about the proposals for publicity that have been put forward by the Tyre Industry Council. At the moment, my hon. Friend's priorities relate to child restraints, to publicity aimed at child pedestrians and at improving conspicuousness, and to continuing the campaign against drinking and driving. Doubtless he will be interested to hear what my hon. Friend the Member for Meriden has just said and will wish to take that into account.

We want to listen carefully to the debate in the Council of Ministers on 5 or 6 June. However, at the moment we do not see that clear evidence has been produced by the Commission to support its view that we should have a new standard of tyre depths across the Community of 1·6 mm.

Mr. Gregory *rose*——

Mr. Portillo: No, I want to conclude.

My hon. Friend the Member for Meriden raised the question of run-flat tyres. We are aware of the various run-flat tyre innovations, and we note, as he did, that the vehicle industry has not taken up the idea to any great extent. We have altered the construction and use regulations to encourage the use of Dunlop Denovo run-flats. We would do the same again if necessary, subject to being satisfied on the safety of the particular tyre that was being proposed.

Soviet Diplomats and Journalists (Expulsion)

11 am

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I should like to draw your attention to a matter that pertains directly to the rights of hon. Members on which you might be able to assist us.

On Wednesday—after my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) had asked under Standing Order No. 20 for a debate upon Anglo-Soviet relations following the decision of the Government to expel a number of Soviet diplomats and journalists—in the presence of the leader of the House, I asked, because of hon. Members' concern about that matter, whether it would be possible for the Foreign Secretary to make a statement before the House adjourned. There has, of course, been no such statement, but last night the first item on the BBC 9 o'clock news was a story apparently detailing the reasons why the Soviet diplomats and journalists had been expelled. Those reasons included alleged contact between the Soviet embassy and Libyan and Iranian terrorists, and what was referred to as blackmail of Labour Members of Parliament.

I submit that the rights of the House are affected in two ways. First, Mr. Speaker noted the fact that the Leader of the House was present when we requested a statement on the matter. It is completely unacceptable that the Government should fail to make a statement to the House, and further that sources authoritative enough for the BBC to feel justified in using them as its first lead story on its main news bulletin have attempted to clarify and amplify what the Foreign Secretary did not inform the House about on Monday and what he has refused to inform the House about since. Therefore, I believe that it is a serious affront to the House that Ministers have failed to give information that has been requested, and yet the broadcasting media, by some source or another, have been given amplifying information which has been directly denied to the House and about which hon. Members could ask questions of the Foreign Secretary.

Secondly, if there were to be any validity in allegations that hon. Friends of mine have been subject to blackmail, it would have been proper, through long-standing practice, for the Government to notify my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition and/or myself, and no such notification has been given either to my right hon. Friend or to myself, or for some information to be made available. I have contacted the Foreign Secretary's office this morning, and it is completely unable to clarify the situation. What we have, therefore, is briefing from sources—authoritative enough to have satisfied the BBC that the matter should be its main story on its main news bulletin—making implications about hon. Members which, if they are to be validated in any way, should be made to the House, or, at any rate, through the proper channels, to the Leader of the Opposition.

The House has been affronted in two ways. First, information has been given to the BBC which has been denied to the House, although it has asked for it; secondly, that information purports to make statements which involve the standing of hon. Members. Clearly that is a serious affront to the House.

It is necessary for the Foreign Secretary to come to the House this morning, as the House will adjourn this afternoon for more than a week, because otherwise the conclusion we will have to draw is that a week after those expulsions—with no information having been given to the House other than the Foreign Secretary's reply to my private notice question last Monday—an attempt is being made covertly to justify action which the Foreign Secretary, for reasons which I thought proper at the time, was unwilling to justify overtly. That is clearly unacceptable.

The House is being affronted in those two ways when at the same time it is clear that what has taken place is a blatant attempt—successful, too—at news management by authoritative Government sources, so that various implications can be trailed across the BBC to prevent yesterday's main news story—the disastrous trade figures—having its proper prominence. That is an example of news management which is an affront to the House of Commons. I ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to obtain a statement for us.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I remind the House that we are encroaching on valuable private Members' time. I have received no request for a statement to be made, and, of course, the right hon. Gentleman knows that I do not have the authority to require a Minister to make a statement. Doubtless what the right hon. Gentleman has said will be made known to the appropriate Ministers. The right hon. Gentleman, equally, would not expect me to accept any responsibility for statements made either in the media or by the Government. If the right hon. Gentleman is alleging, as he appears to be, that there has been a contempt of the House, he knows that he must follow the appropriate procedure, which is to write to Mr. Speaker conveying the details of the allegations.

I hope that we can now get on.

Mr. Kaufman: I do not want to take up the time of the House, but hon. Members simply do not appear to care about the way in which the House has been treated. I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the way in which you have responded. I was not for one moment implying that you carry responsibility for these matters other than the fact that you have the proper duty of protecting the rights of the House. I say to you, however, in the presence of the Government Deputy Chief Whip, that the Opposition believe that this matter should be the subject of a statement. Either the Government have information, in which case they had better provide it, or they have no information and this is a piece of blatant and contemptible news management.

Kurdish Refugees

11.7 am

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I am pleased that we are able to have a short debate on the position of Kurdish refugees, 1,000 of whom have arrived in this country since the beginning of May. They are asylum seekers who are at present being looked after by voluntary organisations, families and friends in the boroughs of Hackney, Islington and Haringey. I believe that it is high time that the House had the opportunity to debate and discuss the situation facing Kurdish people as a whole, as well as the specific demands that we wish to make concerning the asylum seekers, who have arrived in this country.

Kurdistan is, perhaps, the greatest unrecognised nation in the world, comprising 20 million people—4 million of whom live in Iraq, 5 million in Iran, 1 million in Syria, small numbers in the Soviet Union and the Lebanon and about half of them in total live in Turkey. It was only recognised as a nation briefly after the treaty of Sevres in the early part of the 1920s, and was carved up in the treaty of Lausanne. Ever since then the aspirations of the Kurdish people for their own homeland, and, indeed, within Turkey the ability to speak and write in their own language and promote their own culture has been a dominant feature of Kurdish politics.

A series of uprisings took place in 1922, 1925, 1928, with the longest one being from 1932-1938 at Dersin. After each of those uprisings internal banishments, deportations and imprisonment have followed. Similar stories are told of what happened in Iraq, following the uprising at Borzhani in 1961 to 1974, following which 600,000 Kurdish people fled to Iran. In Iran there was the great uprising of 1945-46, when the Kurdish Republic was declared. It was supressed at Mahbat and the leaders of it were executed.

We are talking about people who have come from Turkey. The problem that the Kurdish people face in Turkey is that which any other minority faces in Turkey, except that they are a large minority. The Kurdish language is banned and the Kurdish culture is suppressed. The continual repression of Kurdish people has been a feature of Turkey ever since the formation of modern Turkey in 1922. The aspirations of the Kurdish people live long within the minds of the community. That feature has never been recognised or understood by Western European or other countries in their dealings with Turkey. I hope that this short debate will give at least an opportnity to recognise those parts of history.

More recently, in 1977, there were elections in Turkey. At that time, the people who held public office were Kurdish speakers, and they promoted the Kurdish culture. At the time, the mayor of Diyabikir, Mehdi Zana, openly defied the Turkish national laws that promoted the oneness of the Turkish nation, language and culture. In 1978, there was a massacre at Kahramanmaras, which is normally pronounced Maras, in which 117 people were officially killed, although it is believed that many more were killed at the time. In the late 1970s, 19 cities were put under martial law. that was succeeded by the military coup in 1980, when all Kurdish groups were broken up, leaders were imprisoned and many people executed. Indeed, Mehdi Zana, the former mayor of Diyabikir, was imprisoned for 25 years as a result. Many of the Kurdish leaders were then put in Diyabikir prison. In the early 1980s, some hon. Members raised the matter many times. A Member of the European Parliament, Richard Balfe, visited Diyabikir prison. There was a long hunger strike there in 1984 to draw attention to the plight of the Kurdish people. Four people ignited themselves with petrol and other materials to draw attention to the plight of the Kurdish people.

We are dealing with a history of systematic torture and abuse of the Kurdish people. That is the background to the current problem that the Kurdish people face and their perfectly legitimate and understandable plea for help in the present situation.

After the military coup in 1980, 250,000 people were imprisoned by the Turkish authorities at least half of whom were Kurdish. Strong repression was meted out against anyone who sought to speak the Kurdish language or promote the Kurdish culture. I have a cassette tape by a famous Kurdish musician called Sivan. Merely for listening to that tape in their homes or playing it on their car radios people would be arrested and possibly imprisoned for promoting something other than the Turkish culture. It is important to understand that background.

Many of the Kurdish people who managed to leave Turkey applied for asylum in Europe or the middle east. They applied for asylum or fled because of the history of repression and because of the number of their friends or comrades who were imprisoned. They legitimately sought political asylum. In every country throughout Europe and the middle east, one finds large numbers of Kurdish people, either seeking political asylum, having achieved it or, in some cases, having exceptional leave to remain. In many cities one finds groups of Kurdish people, all of whom have suffered that kind of repression, not only in Turkey but in other countries. Today I am dealing with Turkey. On several occasions over the past few years it has been my privilege to attend the annual festival of nawroz of the Kurdish community in London. Again one sees the spirit of hope and of wanting to be able to express themselves in their own way.

Of the 1,000 people who have arrived in this country since 2 May, most, if not all, have come from the Maras area. They have come partly from fear of continuing repression and fear of local Fascist groups. In 1980, the leader of the local Fascists—it is the only way to describe him—Okkes Kengar, was imprisoned. He has now been elected to local office in the town of Maras on a fundamentalist platform that is opposed to and repressive of Kurdish people. It is called the party of prosperity. At the time of his election and since then, a large number of Kurdish people have suffered the most appalling torture and treatment. One third of those who have been interviewed by organisations that have been receiving Kurdish asylum seekers here—be they the Kurdistan Workers Association, Rights and Justice, or any of the other groups that have been helping with interviewing to prepare their case before it goes to the Home Office for application—have evidence of the application of torture. Bearing in mind that there are many interviews still to be done, 40 of those who have been interviewed have had their cases referred to the medical foundation for the care of torture victims.

Maras is a mixed area. Only a small number of Turkish people, as opposed to Kurdish people, have come here with the group of 1,000. Indeed, some have gone back. The

interesting feature of many of their cases is that they had jobs, farming and so on, in the area. It appears that they are definitely fleeing from repression more than anything else. There is evidence also that those who have returned have been stopped at Izmir airport and have been extremely badly treated there, having voluntarily left this country, because they were deemed to have brought Turkey into disrepute. It is important that the British Government recognise that fact. When people voluntarily return to Turkey, the British Government should satisfy themselves that they are going back in safety. I am extremely worried about some of the reports that I have received.

There is also the problem of internal relocation of Kurdish people in western Turkey, which has been going on in the Maras area. Unilever has invested a great deal of money in the region. A tea plantation scheme has involved the relocation of Kurdish people away from there.

We are beginning to see a pattern of economic and physical repression and the torture of political activists by the Turkish Government. The problems have not arisen only in Turkey. Clearly, the treatment of Kurdish people in Iraq is indescribably awful. Chemical weaponry has been used against them on numerous occasions. Attacks have taken place against Kurdish people, and there is the horror of Halabja, which ranks alongside what happened in Vietnam or the bombing in Guernica, which is one of the horrors of this century. Some of those people have fled to Turkey. That is no reflection of the humanitarian instincts of the Turkish Government, but it is a reflection on the horror of Kurdish people living in Iraq. Perhaps the British Government should reconsider their relationship with the Government of Iraq, their trade with Iraq, and their support for the Baghdad arms fair which is to be held later this year.

Under the 1951 Geneva convention on the treatment of asylum seekers and refugees, the British Government clearly have obligations to receive applications and to deal with people in a humanitarian way. I have met many of those people, as has my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) and others, and we well understand what has gone on. The 1,000 people who have arrived here have largely been supported by voluntary organisations. The Kurdistan Workers Association has the largest number under its care at the moment. Tribute should be paid to it and to Ihscen Qadir, its co-ordinator, and the other local organisations and voluntary groups in Hackney and Islington who have done a great deal to raise money and support for those people. The response of all the Churches—Catholic, Methodist, Baptist and Anglican—has been amazing. Cardinal Hume himself visited some of the people yesterday in Loyola Hall in Haringey. The local authorities have been helping as best they can. Representatives of the Department of Social Security, with whom I had a meeting last week, have been helpful by opening a special office to ensure that those people are paid whatever benefits they are entitled to receive.

Obviously local costs are incurred, and today I want the Government to say that they are prepared to do what they can to help the Kurdish people and that they are prepared to provide resources to the local authorities and to the voluntary organisations to assist them in the necessary humanitarian work of supporting those people. They should also be prepared to act politically and put all possible pressure on the Turkish Government concerning the treatment of Kurdish people within Turkey. That is the nub of the problem.

I understand that yesterday, some people were taken into detention—for all I know they still are. I find that awful and totally inappropriate. Those people who have fled from Turkey have fled from a horror, they have sought safety and have not fled to be put in prison again. I hope that the Minister will recognise that the voluntary organisations are more than willing to look after those people. They have mounted herculean efforts to provide the necessary support.

Earlier this week my hon. Friends the Members for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott), for Hackney, South and Shoreditch and for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) and I met the Minister. We insisted that the British Government should be prepared to make resources available. I can only contrast their current contribution with the vast sums of money spent by the British Government on receiving General Evren last year and on promoting the interests of the Evren regime of Turkey. I understand that the Turkish Government have now retained the services of Saatchi and Saatchi to befuddle the British people as to the human rights record of the Turkish Government. I hope that the British Government will react accordingly to the demands that we have made.

I shall quote some individual cases of how people have been treated. This information has been given to me this morning by Mary Dines who is the organiser of Rights and Justice, a well-respected humanitarian organisation. Mary's own record of working for humanitarian causes and refugees for many years is well recognised and she is rightly well respected for it. Example one is a man who was held by the police on three occasions in 1987 and 1988; during which he was immersed in cold water for a whole day, suspended by his hands for a whole day and severely beaten. He was not a member of an illegal organisation.

Example two is a political activist:

"Owing to persecution during martial law (1980 to 1985) he was forced to leave his village and go to Istanbul. He was arrested four times in Istanbul and detained for nine months for distributing leaflets. During detention he was tortured by falaka (trussed up like a chicken and beaten on the soles of his feet). He was given electricial shocks to his testicles, tongue and teeth, covered for long periods of time by cold water, hit with sacks of sand (which are supposed to leave no marks), hung upside down and hit with truncheons. He was last arrested in 1988. He has a damaged kidney."

The case of example three is as follows:

"Arrested in 1981 for taking a wounded man to hospital in his taxi. Had seven stitches in his head after assault and still suffers from blurred vision and headaches. Arrested in 1988 with his seven months' pregnant wife. They were held in the army camp for four months. The baby was born in detention. After he left Turkey his wife was rearrested and is now in prison with the baby."

Another example relates to a man who was a member of the Social Democratic party and also a member of an illegal Kurdish organisation. His story is as follows:

"Arrested in 1981—imprisoned for one month. Arrested in 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1988. During detention he was forced to run kms over rough ground in bare feet, beaten with a bag of concrete, hot eggs were put in his armpits, he was beaten with sticks and batons and hit in the eyes. Since 1987 he has been in constant pain. His father was killed by the army in 1975. His mother was also beaten up and is still suffering from injuries to her head. One cousin has been imprisoned. One cousin is missing. Other family members have been imprisoned."

[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]

We are dealing with the systematic torture of Kurdish people by the Turkish Government. I understand that attempts are now being made to stop people leaving Turkey to seek political asylum elsewhere because it is believed that that damages the image of modern Turkey. Nothing damages the image of modern Turkey more than the factual, accurate accounts I have given, of the way in which people are treated by the Turkish army. We now look to the British Government to fulfil their obligations under the United Nations charter of 1951 to provide urgent humanitarian aid. That aid is necessary because the voluntary organisations are relying totally on voluntary donations and a little bit of assistance from local authorities.

It is the responsibility of the British Government to provide the financial assistance and they should not throw the job on to the voluntary organisations and the local authorities. Willing as they are to help, those organisations and authorities have enormous problems of their own. The Kurdish people should be properly treated and the Government should give assistance to the suitable local organisations.

11.24 am

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): We are all indebted to my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) for bringing this subject to the attention of the House today, as well as for the moving and sensitive manner in which he presented his case.

I was talking to another hon. Member yesterday about this issue and he said that he believed that the Kurdish people were the victims of some of the worst atrocities perpetrated in the modern world. That hon. Member was not a Labour Member, but a Conservative who just happens to be a senior member of the Government.

I cannot help contrasting the way in which some spokesmen have talked about this issue to the media, including reports on television yesterday, with the visit of the Roman Catholic archbishop, Basil Hume, to the east and north of London yesterday. He brought with him not only sympathy, but money and moral support. I hope that his visit to our local region will help to persuade the Government to take some action.

If we consider the action of the various Government Departments it would be fair to say that the Department of Social Services has acted promptly and efficiently and it has been extremely helpful. My hon. Friends and I were grateful that the Minister of State, Home Office discussed this matter with us earlier this week. We had a civilised discussion, although there were some obvious differences between us. At that meeting, the Minister said—I hope that he will reaffirm that statement today—that he would consider giving money to help the British Refugee Council to set up a hostel at Tower house in Tower Hamlets. He also said that he would consider giving extra money to some of the voluntary agencies.

Yesterday I spoke to most of the voluntary agencies and they have simply run out of money—there is no more cash in the till. On the debit side, I am bound to say to the Minister that the idea of putting the Kurdish people in prisons in the south-west of England is deeply disturbing. On the credit side, some prison officers came up from the west country yesterday to talk to representatives of the Kurdistan Workers Association to see how they might best help if the threat to detain Kurdish people in prison was carried out. Underneath the cynicism and some of the meanness on the part of the Home Office there is a deep undercurrent of sympathy for the Kurdish workers.

The Department of the Environment is also concerned and it is likely to become deeply involved over possible rate support grant and the need to help local authorities regarding the temporary and the possible permanent rehousing of those people.

What has disturbed me about the public statements that have come from the Home Office is that various officials have said—I have no doubt with the concurrence of the Minister—that they believe that many of the Kurdish people who come here do so for simply economic reasons rather than through fear of persecution. That the Home Office should make such unattributable briefings is disturbing. That Department must consider in a judicious and judicial manner all the cases that come before it. It is extremely difficult to believe that it can do so fairly when spokesmen publicly say that they believe most of the people concerned are not valid refugees. The Home Office, in order not to make itself look silly, has therefore had to reject a lot of the cases for asylum and send people back. In other words, the public pronouncements by Home Office officials are liable to produce self-fulfilling prophecies.

I hope that the Home Office will get on with the business of dealing with each case in a humane and sympathetic manner. Its officials should stop making adverse public statements, which do not suggest to the public that they are dealing with the matter in a proper, judicial fashion. I hope that the Minister will relent a bit today and open his heart to the Kurdish people. I hope that he will offer some constructive suggestions to the House.

11.29 am

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Tim Renton): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) for giving us the opportunity to discuss the recent increase in the number of Turkish people, mainly of Kurdish origin, coming to this country, who have claimed asylum on arrival here. I am also grateful for the opportunity to talk, as the hon. Members for Islington, North and for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) have asked me to, about the Government's response to that problem.

This debate was immediately preceded by a shameless piece of news manipulation by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) who came to the Chamber and made a fuss about what the BBC had said in relation to Labour Members——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I must remind the House that when I dealt with that point of order, other hon. Members were trying to catch my eye to pursue the matter. Out of regard to private Members' time, I disregarded them and did not allow them to speak. It would be quite wrong for the Minister now to try to do what I did not allow earlier.

Mr. Renton: I understand your warning, Mr. Deputy Speaker. However, the hon. Member for Islington, North spoke movingly as a result of his experience—as he lists

Turkey in the reference books as one of his special subjects of interest—for 10 minutes or so about the problems of Kurds in Turkey moving between Iraq and Turkey. The shadow Foreign Secretary, the right hon. Member for Gorton, having come to the Chamber to make his little fuss about the BBC and Labour Members, might have had the courtesy to remain in the Chamber to listen to the points which the hon. Member for Islington, North was making. That would have been the appropriate thing for the right hon. Member for Gorton to do rather than to engage in a little bit of shabby publicity-seeking, which is what we have come to expect from him.

I want to consider the serious subject of this Adjournment debate and I will begin by explaining the general context of the Government's policy towards people who claim asylum. As the hon. Member for Islington, North reminds us, the United Kingdom was one of the earliest signatories to the 1951 United Nations convention on refugees. We take our responsibilities very seriously, despite what is sometimes said by organisations such as Amnesty International.

No one who does my job can fail to be affected daily by the plight of people who are fleeing from persecution in their own country. Each day, about half a dozen people arrive at our airports seeking political asylum. Another dozen or so apply from within the country. They are all dealt with without fuss. In every case, as the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch said, a carefully organised series of actions takes place. An application for asylum, I fully realise, as do Home Office officials, is important, sensitive and under our law must be properly and exhaustively considered.

No one is refused asylum in the United Kingdom until full inquiries have been made, interviews conducted and the opportunity given for further information or representations to be submitted. In the great majority of ordinary cases, the claimant is allowed to remain in the United Kingdom. However, as the hon. Members for Islington, North and for Hackney, South and Shoreditch will be aware, as they both have a great deal of knowledge on this subject, the fundamental obligation that we accepted under the United Nations convention is that no one claiming asylum should be returned to a country where they have a well-founded fear of persecution. The practical effect of that is that unless the person has arrived from a third country which is safe for him to return to, he must be admitted to the United Kingdom either on a temporary basis, or held in detention while his claim is considered.

If the interests of people genuinely fleeing from persecution are to be safeguarded, it is vital that the system designed to protect them should not be exploited by people whose main motivation is economic migration.

I want now to consider the particular circumstances of the recent influx of Turkish asylum claimants. Over the past two years we have come to expect an average of one or two asylum claims each day from Turkish nationals. Some have been given refugee status and many others have been allowed to remain, exceptionally. Earlier this month, young Turkish men began to arrive at the rate of about 50 a day claiming asylum here. In one instance they almost filled an entire charter flight of over 100 passengers. On another weekend, more than 300 arrived on a variety of flights. In every case where asylum was claimed, they have been admitted while we examined their claims. We are now looking at more than 1,000 Turkish cases who have arrived in the past four weeks.

Some pattern is beginning to emerge which begins to explain this surge. It is clear that for a substantial number their real objective is to find work in the United Kingdom. Some have said so explicitly. There is evidence that middle-men selling air tickets have been exploiting the economic situation in Turkey, with stories of job opportunities in London, and briefing on how to claim asylum.

How do we know that? More than 80 people who initially claimed asylum have already gone back to Turkey of their own accord, realising that jobs and housing are not going to be so easy to obtain as they were led to believe. Many of them were, quite simply, led up the garden path in their own towns and villages. That is not the action of people who fear imminent persecution. We are seeing a gross and transparent abuse of the asylum procedures as a means of obtaining jobs, housing and perhaps social security benefits in the United Kingdom.

The tragedy is that we know that among the spurious claims there will certainly be some which are genuine. The hon. Member for Islington, North gave details of one case which sounded particularly horrific. We are well aware that the human rights standards in Turkey still fall somewhat short of those that we consider to be acceptable. I must look to my right hon. and hon. Friends at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to respond on another occasion to the details referred to by the hon. Member for Islington, North.

We have already given exceptional leave to some Turks from the recent arrivals on those grounds. However, it takes time and detailed inquiry to assess each asylum application. It will now take us some months to sort out the genuine from the abusive claims which continue to come at the rate of 50 a day.

It cannot be in the interests of the genuine refugee that he has to remain in a state of uncertainty for some months. That is now inevitable, given the numbers involved. Hon. Members and the courts would justifiably criticise us if we were to cut short the process of considering claims. In those circumstances, I wish from time to time that Opposition Members would support us in criticising those who so clearly take advantage of the difficulties.

An immigration officer may either detain an asylum applicant while his claim is considered or grant him temporary admission. A very small percentage are detained. The vast majority of applicants for asylum are granted temporary admission pending a decision. They frequently have relatives or friends in this country who are willing to look after them but a large number of the recent arrivals from Turkey are young single men who know no one in this country. Various welfare organisations, including the British Refugee Council, have helped to find them temporary accommodation which understandably is frequently with members of their own community. There is a large resident Turkish community in north London, and many of those granted temporary admission are now in that area. A number of Turkish organisations have offered to look after them.

Those people have come here without any notice or invitation. In many cases they do not appear to be political refugees by any stretch of the definition. They are in an entirely different situation from the Ugandan Asians or the Vietnamese boat people where reception centres were set

[Mr. Renton]

up in this country in advance. The Turks are here on a temporary basis until such time as decisions are reached on their applications. The Government have no special responsibility for those people who are not refugees coming here as part of a Government programme. However, we recognise that there is a human problem to be addressed.

Community organisations have helped and continue to provide, emergency shelter and food. I whole-heartedly thank them and commend them for their efforts. I have undertaken to consider reimbursing specific costs which they have had to incur.

I confirm that I have also said that we are willing to consider financial help towards the establishment of a short-term hostel in Tower Hamlets. My officials are in urgent discussions with the director of the British Refugee Council with a view to having this available for new arrivals at the earliest possible opportunity. More widely, my officials in the Home Office's voluntary services unit have been in touch with their usual contacts, and others, across Government Departments to let them know of the problems that these people may face while their claims are considered.

When I met a delegation from the Association of London Authorities and Hackney a few days ago, to which the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch referred, I agreed that my officials should set up a meeting between the ALA, Hackney and Government Departments to explore in more detail than was possible at that meeting—I agree with the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch that it was a courteous meeting, even if we did not agree on every objective—the problems that Hackney and other inner London boroughs are having to address as a result of the arrivals. I understand that that meeting has now been fixed for 5 June.

Meanwhile, we shall continue as quickly as we can to consider the individual claims and to reach decisions accordingly. This will be done on a case-by-case basis, as I have already said, against the criteria of the convention. There will certainly be some applicants where there are good and valid compassionate reasons for allowing them to remain here and they will be allowed entry on an exceptional basis. Where there are no compassionate features and where the applicant does not qualify for entry as a refugee or under any part of the immigration laws, refusal of entry and removal must follow. I listened with great interest to what the hon. Member for Islington, North had to say about the general situation of the Kurds in the middle east. However, we do not accept that all Turkish nationals of Kurdish origin, regardless of individual circumstances, qualify to remain here as refugees under the convention.

We have so far reached decisions on 26 applicants who arrived here at the beginning of the month. Ten have been given leave to enter. Sixteen have had their applications refused and, after their solicitors' representations had been considered, were returned to Turkey.

Additional immigration officials have been brought in to deal with a sudden increase. I can assure hon. Members that every effort is being made to resolve these applications as quickly and as fairly as possible. This process will be hampered, though, if applicants on temporary admission do not co-operate or attend for interviews at the times requested. The hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch referred to the remarks made by His Eminence Cardinal Hume yesterday and his visit to the area. Of course I understand that it is desirable to provide accommodation for all asylum seekers in the community rather than in prisons. The cardinal called for Government funding. Our resources are very limited.

We are considering giving help to increase the amount of accommodation within the community, but I warned the hon. Members for Hackney, South and Shoreditch and for Islington, North when they came to see me on Tuesday or Wednesday that I thought that it would be necessary in appropriate cases, where we were concerned about applicants on temporary asylum, to place them temporarily in prison. About 20 applicants are now detained in prison. A further 80 places have been made available in prison accommodation. That will be for those whom we think are unlikely to co-operate with interviewing officers. It will help in the speedy consideration of those cases. That can only be to the benefit of the genuine applicant.

In the past, as the hon. Member for Islington, North certainly knows, Opposition Members have repeatedly extolled the benefits of an appeals procedure for port asylum applicants within the United Kingdom, but I wonder whether they have really thought through the implications. We already normally refer all applicants, on a non-mandatory basis, to the United Kingdom immigration advisory service when we refuse their application. I personally look at any refusal whenever there is a difference of view between UKIAS and Home Office officials. A formal appeals system would be hamstrung by delays, as is the appeals system which already exists for ordinary immigration cases.

The longer the delay, the more attractive it must become for some applicants to exploit it. The experience of our European partners who have full appeal systems is precisely that. In France, asylum applications are running at the rate of over 30,000 a year and in Germany at over 100,000. In both countries, the delays in hearing appeals are in the order of years. Meanwhile, the applicant is free to stay in the country, to work, to marry and to raise a family. Removal soon becomes impossible because of the ties that have been established. None of this would be of any benefit to the genuine refugee fleeing persecution. It could only be an invitation to exploit the system.

Members on both sides of the House are united in agreeing on the need for measures to protect the genuine refugee. I am deeply disheartened that, where we have circumstances that are clearly being exploited to the disadvantage of the genuine refugee, Opposition Members never join me in condemining the abuse. In the long run, their failure to do so, and the encouragement that that gives to people who abuse the system, can only threaten the proper working of the very machinery that has been so important a part of the protection of refugees since 1951.

Cyprus

11.45 am

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): It gives me great pleasure to have this opportunity to raise the subject of Cyprus.

Cyprus is a small island, some 3,000 miles away with a population of about 650,000. The United Kingdom has very strong historical, strategic and emotional ties with the island. They stretch back to 1878 when Cyprus was annexed from the Ottoman empire and continued until 1960. During that period the island was a colony of Britain. We still maintain sovereign base areas on the island, in which 10,000 service men live. Moreover, Cyprus is an extremely important strategic base in military and geopolitical terms in the eastern Mediterranean. Therefore, its stability is extremely important. Britain also has significant economic ties with the island and is its largest trading partner. At present, 200,000 Greek and Turkish Cypriots live in the United Kingdom.

Most important, however, is the United Kingdom's legal role as a party to the treaty of guarantee that set up the present Republic of Cyprus in 1960. The treaty obliged the United Kingdom to protect the constitutional and territorial integrity of the island. Incidentally, it is a constitution about which, with a somewhat curious use of the double negative, the former Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Baroness Young, said that the British Government have

"not accepted that the Constitution is not still in force".

It is generally accepted that the British Government failed to carry out their role under the treaty. In 1974, it led to the partition of the island, to the effective occupation of just over one third of it by the Turkish Government and to its division ever since.

Today, 200,000 refugees from both sides are denied access to their homelands. Moreover, 2,000 people are missing and still unaccounted for, despite the efforts of the United Nations. A kind of Mediterranean iron curtain has been drawn through the island. Most important of all, when he last visited the United Kingdom, President Vassiliou said that Cyprus—a Commonwealth country and an associate member of the EEC—will, at the end of this year, following the Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia, the South African withdrawal from Namibia and the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, be the only country in the world that is occupied without its consent by troops of a foreign power. As *The Independent* recently said:

"The spirit of détente and co-operation which has run across other parts of the globe has yet sadly to reach Cyprus."

That is not through want of trying. In the past 14 years, through the United Nations and through bilateral negotiations, culminating in the present negotiations between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities, under the auspices of the United Nations, that began last September, efforts have been made to reunify the island. However, it is still occupied and divided, and in terms of the stability of the region and natural justice, that is dangerous.

The Foreign Affairs Select Committee studied relations with Cyprus in May 1987. It reported:

"The permanent partition of Cyprus would be an injustice to those who have been forcibly removed from their traditional homes and possessions, a tragic concession to racial and religous bigotry, and a continuing irritant to the political stability of the region."

If that stability is to be regained, if unity is to return to the island and if injustice is to be removed, the United Kingdom must take a proactive role in diplomatic terms to bring it about. There is a danger in relying, as we do now, on a bilateral approach by the Turkish and Greek communities, as the Turkish side seems to have a continuing investment in the status quo. There is a danger that such an approach may be unsuccessful.

I shall not repeat the historical arguments or apportion blame. Ever since 1891, when there were 346 mixed villages, to 1960, when there were only 114, the two communities have taken paths of separate development, although it must be said that, at least until independence in 1960, they lived together in reasonable toleration of each other.

It is understandable that Greek Cypriots are fearful of a Turkish takeover—they are only 40 miles away from Turkey. It is also understandable that they are emotional, and feel strongly, about the fact that many of them have lost everything—property, fathers and sons and other family—during the Turkish occupation. They resent the continued and unlawful military occupation of the island and what they regard as the raiding of many Cypriot treasures in the north of the island with the acquiesence, or even knowledge, of the Turkish authorities there.

We can also understand the Turkish Cypriots' perspective. They are outnumbered six to one. There is no doubt that they were subjected to significant atrocities by the Greek community between 1963 and 1974. Perhaps the worst were the activities of General Grivas in 1967. They are rightly suspicious of enosis, or union with Greece. In 1966, Archbishop Makarios talked about the 1960 agreements being abrogated and buried. No doubt that is a significant reason why, from 1963, the Turkish Cypriots effectively withdrew into their own enclaves. They regarded their security as paramount.

Objective analysis, no matter how genuine may be the attempt to be even handed, will not remedy injustice or provide sufficient impetus for reunification of the island, which time is gradually pushing apart. Certain facts are patent in this respect. It is not just the Greek Cypriot community, but the international community and the United Nations Security Council, who regard the Turkish occupation of the north of the island as illegal. Resolutions 541 and 550 of 1983 state that. Moreover, it could be argued that article 3 of the 1949 Geneva convention, which states:

"An occupying power shall not deposit or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies"

is being contravened, as Turkey is introducing a significant number of mainland settlers to the island.

Although, over the years, the Greeks have abandoned enosis in their proposals and have talked of multilateral guarantees for a sovereign independent state of Cyprus, the most recent Turkish constitution, which was adopted in 1983, talks of the Turkish Cypriot people as

"an inseparable part of the great Turkish nation".

Assembly members in the north of Cyprus have to take an oath of allegiance to the "principles of Ataturk".

Although Turkey justified the invasion in terms of protecting the 1960 constitution and its position as a guarantee power and has used that to argue for the

[Mr. Anthony Coombs]

legitimacy of northern Cyprus ever since, the treaty argued against any partition of the island. In 1987, the Select Committee said:

"While the first Turkish invasion of Cyprus in July 1974 could have been regarded as a legitimate and successful exercise of her Guarantor rights in order to prevent Enosis, the subsequent Turkish occupation of the whole of the area north of Nicosia has been, and must be, seen as an illegitimate . . . attempt to impose partition. In July 1974 Turkey appeared to be acting in support of the 1960 settlement; in August 1974 Turkey was undoubtedly using force to prevent its restoration."

Turkey has allowed 60,000 settlers from Anatolia to populate the north of the island. Mr. Denktash, the Turkish leader, through his New Birth party, relies on their support to remain in power. When we take into account the fact that 30,000 native Turkish Cypriots have left Turkey during the past five years, we realise that Turkification has effectively taken place in the north of the island.

I rely on personal observation and on the words of the leader of the Republican Turkish party in north Cyprus, Mr. Orker Ozgur. He addressed the congress on the Nicosia branch of his party on 14 April and said:

"In accordance with this strategy,"

—of the National Unity party and Mr. Denktash—

"the Turkish Cypriot Community is being dissolved and North Cyprus gradually turned into a province of Turkey . . . The workers and peasants brought from Turkey are being exploited as a means towards permanent partition. They are being used to turn North Cyprus into a province of Turkey. They have been brought here in order to destroy the Turkish Cypriot identity."

He said that he estimates that, in five to 10 years' time, if such deliberate policies continue, the result will be the effective annexation of the north of Cyprus.

It is, therefore, not surprising that questions have been asked about the sincerity of Mr. Denktash and his allies in Turkey in their recent negotiating stance. Mr. Ozal's position, and especially that of his Motherland party, was substantially weakened as a result of the Turkish local government elections in March. That fact is highlighted by the negotiating positions taken by the Greek and Turkish Cypriot sides during the United Nations talks. On the three freedoms—of movement, settlement and property—the Greeks have admitted that, although they regard them as of cardinal importance, they are not perfectly attainable and that there will be a transitional period during which they can take place. Yet the Turkish side has merely said that it is prepared to look at the problem and consider it in 18 years' time, and even then only on a limited basis. That will effectively mean that the partition of the island will have become virtually permanent after 32 years.

On territorial guarantees, the Greeks have specifically excluded Turkey and Greece and have called for the supervision of any future agreement by the Security Council or, at least, by an international force. The Turkish side has merely stuck to its major and first principle that there must be a physical presence of Turkish troops in the island.

On the security of the community, the Greek side has called for what has been generally regarded as the most effective way of ensuring that troubles do not re-emerge—the general demilitarisation of the island and the stationing there of an independent international police force to ensure that a bizonal policy is effective. The Turks have said that Turkish troops must remain, despite the fact that it has been calculated that it would take only one hour for troops to reach the island from the Turkish mainland in an emergency.

Equally important are the attitudes of the Turkish and Greek sides to confidence-building measures which are regarded as crucial to maintain contact between the two communities and create the undercurrent of trust which must underpin any effective reunification of the island. For instance, Friends of Cyprus has recently attempted to bring together Greek and Turkish Cypriots in a number of conferences for women, environmentalists, journalists and so on. Although there has been the will to co-operate among the leaders of the Turkish and Greek communities in, for instance, Nicosia, there have been continual attempts by the Turkish Cypriots to ensure that their representatives do not attend.

That does not mean that I believe that good will does not exist: it does. Most ordinary Turkish and Greek Cypriots and the civil authorities in Nicosia wish to co-operate and have been successful in doing so in several ways such as electricity, planning and a joint sewerage system in Nicosia. However, it would be wrong to ignore the differences, since they explain the painfully slow process of the negotiations which will reach the end of their present phase in June.

It would be wrong not to wish them well—I do. But if bilateral negotiations fail, I urge on the United Kingdom a proactive role which will see that the reunification of Cyprus can be effectively dealt with in a multilateral context. I urge on the United Kingdom a number of steps which would help bring about reunification. It should organise with the EEC a joint statement which will say to Turkey, whose troops are occupying Cyprus, that until it substantially reduces its forces or comes up with a timetable for their withdrawal, there is no possibility of a positive and successful result to the negotiations on its application for EEC membership. At present, that application and the fact that it may not be further processed relies purely upon a Greek veto. Given the international and legal circumstances, the EEC should take that proactive stance.

To be even-handed, Britain should insist that the south ends its campaign to isolate the north economically and by its trade embargo. That would give the north more confidence that trade relations can take place.

A financial package led by the United Kingdom should be put in place to allow the redevelopment of the north following reunification and to pay for the enormous resettlement claims that will no doubt be put forward once reunification occurs.

The United Nations force should be taking a more proactive role, instead of supervising division, in encouraging unity between the two communities. It has an important role in confidence building, arranging conferences, supervising exchanges of people between the north and south and applying pressure on the Turkish and Greek communities to allow those exchanges to take place successfully.

In 1979 it was agreed between the two communities that Varosha, the industrial area near Famagusta should be opened up for the benefit of the entire island. That has not taken place yet and it should happen speedily.

The United Kingdom should use its membership of the Security Council to propose ideas to allow for an effective

guarantee of demilitarisation of the island and a federal police force once the island is reunified. That would give confidence to the two communities that once an agreement had been reached, it would be made effective and their security would be protected.

Those are initiatives which the British Government are uniquely qualified to take. They have good relations with Greece and Turkey, they are members of the Security Council and the EEC and they have guarantee status on Cyprus. More than that, the Government have an historical and moral responsibility to ensure that peace and unity return to Cyprus. That task is not easy but the rewards are great. I urge the Government to act with their customary imagination and sense of purpose.

12.7 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. William Waldegrave): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) for providing this opportunity to have a short debate about relations with Cyprus. I congratulate him on a thoroughly comprehensive and scholarly speech in which his expertise and commitment shone through. I know that he has developed that expertise through visits to the island and through his membership of Friends of Cyprus, to which he referred. As my hon. Friend said, Friends of Cyprus does extremely valuable work in the cause of fostering contact between the two communities. I applaud its efforts and my hon. Friend's efforts in support of it. I wish Friends of Cyprus continuing success.

This is a good time to have this debate. It is some time since the House last debated Cyprus. We had an Adjournment debate in October 1987 when we heard the views of my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend). A little later, in December 1987, my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Sir W. Shelton) initiated a longer debate on Cyprus, which allowed a number of hon. Members to speak. But there has been a long gap since then, and much has happened in that period.

As my hon. Friend said, there has been an improvement in the international climate in a number of regional disputes and problems. There has been a solution to a number of thorny issues. Sadly, as my hon. Friend said, we cannot say that the problem of Cyprus has been solved.

At the risk of being proved wrong by events, I think it is fair to say that the prospects of a solution are better than they were 18 months ago. I shall explain the reason for that qualified optimism in a moment when I deal with the present state of play in the international talks and how that fits into the context of Britain's relations with Cyprus.

I shall first run through some of the other aspects of those relations. I am glad to say that they are generally excellent. That is something to be proud of, and hon. Members from both sides of the House are to be congratulated on playing their part in bringing that about. Nearly 30 years after Cyprus was brought to independence, memories of the difficult last years of the colonial period are dimmer. But the links forged by earlier generations have proved remarkably durable. Admittedly, relations with Cyprus since then have, at times, been conducted in extremely difficult circumstances.

I shall not go into the old arguments about what Britain might have done, but shall show briefly that although our relations have been through the fire they have emerged tempered and are in excellent condition.

Bilateral trade is reasonably healthy. Latest figures show an increase in our exports to the island from £141 million in 1987 to £160 million in 1988. Imports from Cyprus reached £122 million last year, so the balance of visible trade is in our favour. However, that is redressed by the income that Cyprus derives from British tourism. Our statistics rightly do not separate trade with the south of the island from that with the north. The healthy overall picture is reflected in the Cypriot Government's statistics and in those produced by the Turkish-Cypriot authorities. They clearly show that Britain is the largest overseas market for both communities. Indeed, we take far more of the north's exports than does Turkey, demonstrating Britain's position in the island which was one of the underlying themes of the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest.

Our bilateral aid through the European Community to Cyprus takes the form of technical and educational co-operation and training. As the Government have made clear many times, notably when replying to the previous report on Cyprus of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, we believe that our aid should benefit both communities. Some hon. Members would like us to give all our aid money to the north, where the gross domestic product is much lower, or split it 50-50 between the two sides. We believe that the first course would not be right—the provision of training, scholarships for study in Britain and so on should be for the benefit of both communities—and that the second would be impracticable because the size of the two communities is not equal.

I am sure that the majority of hon. Members agree that we must proceed according to the needs of the moment and whatever viable projects may be available. It is no use to say that we should give *X* thousand pounds a year to provide scholarships for Turkish Cypriots if there are insufficient qualified candidates to use the money. We therefore proceed pragmatically and apply funds to meet the needs.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development recently gave the House up-to-date information, in reply to a question from the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds), on commitments of public funds that the Government have made to the two communities over the past 12 months. They show what we are doing and what we are trying to do. It would not be right in this short debate to go into detail, but the Cyprus fee support scheme is winding down at the same time as the Foreign and Commonwealth Office scholarships and awards scheme is winding up. We expect Turkish Cypriots to benefit more from our educational provision in the future. I repeat that how much they benefit will depend on how many suitably qualified candidates are identified.

We contribute our fair share to the provision of EEC aid to Cyprus. As my hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development told the House, the Community allocated £29 million under the second five-year financial protocol for Cyprus, which expired last December. A further financial protocol was agreed earlier this year, under which £41 million will be provided over the next five years. The Community tries to support projects of benefit to the whole population of the island. In particular, it has met the cost of water, sewerage and electricity works. I am

[Mr. William Waldegrave]

afraid that I cannot break down how the sums benefit Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots as the information is not available.

Links between friendly countries depend in large measure on people and the cross-fertilisation of cultures and interests that they make possible. Our links with Cyprus are very healthy. About 200,000 Cypriots from both communities live in our midst. Many of them hold British citizenship, and I am proud to have a considerable number, especially Greek Cypriots, living in my constituency. They play a full and active part in the political life of this country.

More than 300,000 Britons visit Cyprus every year, going to both northern and southern Cyprus. They make a large contribution to the economies of both communities. There are about 3,000 British residents on the island, which shows the long-lasting ties of affection that still exist, divided between south and north.

At the pinnacle of importance are contacts between the two Governments of Britain and Cyprus and the Turkish-Cypriot community in the north. I am happy to say that contacts between the two Governments could hardly be closer. The best illustration of that is that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has met President Vassiliou no fewer than four times in his relatively brief term of office, which is remarkable. We have welcomed here two of President Vassiliou's Ministers. I met and gave a dinner for its Interior Minister, Mr. Venyamin last year. The traffic in high and low ranking officials in both directions is considerable. The strength and diversity of links are, I am sure, all that hon. Members could wish for.

We have good contacts with the Turkish-Cypriot leadership in the north; some would say that we have too few and others that we have too many. As usual, the Government are criticised by both sides. It is a difficult balance to achieve, but I believe that we have done so.

I say to those who believe that we should cut off or reduce links with Turkish Cypriots that it would serve no one's interest, and my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest was not arguing for that. He argued that we should use all our contacts to work for the unity of the island. The Government have made clear their attitude in reply to the report of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee.

To those who believe that we should be according the same treatment to Mr. Denktash, who is the Turkish-Cypriot leader, as we give to President Vassiliou, I say that we recognise only one state in Cyprus, whose Government is now headed by Mr. Vassiliou. Mr. Denktash made it difficult for us to give him the access that he used to have to Ministers when the so-called "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" was declared in November 1983. We can have no truck with separatism and must guard against any action that might be construed by one side or the other as conferring recognition on an illegal entity. I do not say that we rule out for ever and a day a meeting between Mr. Denktash and a British Minister. If my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary were satisfied that such a meeting would materially assist the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement in Cyprus, I am sure that he would consider sanctioning one. I am sure that my hon. Friend agrees that in those circumstances that would be the right course to take. However, the conditions that will make such a meeting possible are not yet available.

Mr. Denktash's lack of access to the higher levels of the Government does not mean that his voice and that of his community are not heard—they are. Turkish-Cypriot views are fully taken into account. Our high commissioner in Nicosia sees Mr. Denktash frequently. Mr. Denktash has also been received three times in the past 18 months by a deputy under-secretary in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

The most important aspect of my hon. Friend's speech was the state of the current inter-communal talks about a settlement of the Cyprus problem. When my predecessor replied to the debate in December 1987, he said that it was time for both sides to try to reacquire the habit of continuous and constructive co-operation—that marked the earlier stages of the inter-communal talks, which have been going on for a decade and more—and that we believe that the newly announced appointment of Mr. Camilion as the United Nations Secretary-General's special representative in Cyprus was a challenge to which both sides had to respond.

We congratulate the United Nations Secretary-General on having grasped the opportunity provided by the election less than three months later of Mr. Vassiliou as President of the Republic of Cyprus to relaunch the inter-communal talks. That took some doing, given the mutual mistrust that has built up between the two sides over the years, but the secretary-general managed to do so. With the active support of the British Government and others, he persuaded the two Cypriot leaders to meet him in Geneva last August, when they accepted his proposal that, without preconditions, they should attempt to negotiate a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem by 1 June 1989. President Vassiliou and Mr. Denktash have subsequently held an unprecedented number of one-to-one meetings, largely in the presence only of Mr. Camilion, to whom I pay tribute. They have had two further meetings with the secretary-general in an effort to cut the knot that has tied up the negotiating process for so long.

The going has been predictably tough. There are too many people with influence on both sides who insist on maximalist solutions, believing that they are 100 per cent. right and the other side is 100 per cent. wrong. That is not the way to conduct any negotiation, because it nips the flower of success in the bud before it has a chance to bloom. We believe that both Cypriot leaders have been negotiating with a degree of flexibility. We call on them to show yet more flexibility and imagination, more of the spirit of compromise, to crown the secretary-general's efforts with success, reunite the Republic of Cyprus and remove a cause of instability in the eastern Mediterranean.

We genuinely believe that a settlement is a possibility. True, Mr. Vassiliou and Mr. Dentkash may not yet have been able to achieve the understanding of each other's positions and the necessary compromises on the main issues that would allow the secretary-general's original 1 June 1989 target to be met. We believe that there has been genuine progress after so much effort, and we call upon both leaders to redouble their efforts and continue the talks after their next meeting with the secretary-general, which we understand is likely to be in late June. We believe that both sides are ready to continue talking, because they recognise that there is a great prize to be won by both their

communities. We hope very much that they will be able to agree on a draft outline settlement before their next meeting with Mr. Perez de Cuellar, which is the task they are engaged on in the present phase of the talks.

We are often urged to do more to assist the efforts to reach a settlement. Understandably, my hon. Friend urged us not to hold back. We believe that we are doing as much as is practicable, but we are always open to suggestions on how we should do more. I do not think that my hon. Friend would expect me to reveal the nature and detail of the diplomatic contacts with the parties directly concerned and all those others who have an interest in the Cyprus problem. I assure the House that they are continuous and extensive. Our policy and actions are based on one essential principle: that the secretary-general's mission of good offices, which he pursues by mandate from the Security council, represents the best prospect for achieving a settlement. Everything that we do is done with his support and in a way that does not cut across his and Mr. Camilion's efforts.

Beyond that, the biggest single demonstration of our active involvement remains our participation in the United Nations force in Cyprus. Our contingent, all of whose costs we absorb, is the largest in the force. The Unficyp has played and continues to play, a vital role in providing a background of stability against which Mr. Perez de Cuellar can pursue his initiative. I pay tribute to the work of the often very young British soldiers in that force. The British contingent and our other contributions to Unficyp, on which we shall spend about £23 million this financial year, are a living rebuttal of the charge that we are losing interest or are not doing enough.

We see no advantage in an independent British initiative on Cyprus, which some urge us from time to time to take. This would do no more than cut across the secretary-general's efforts and would be counter productive. I am sure that the policy of giving full backing to the Security Council-endorsed policy is right. It offers the only prospect of putting our influence with all concerned to its best use.

I do not think that my hon. Friend was urging us to cut across the initiative if it still had momentum. He was asking what would happen if it failed. If the talks break down, we shall be in a different ball game. My hon. Friend would not expect me to lay out in detail the strategy that we would follow. Although we hope that this contingency will not arise—I have argued that there is still a momentum and we hope that the next crucial stage builds on it—our historical role would not be abandoned. We would have to think carefully about our next steps and how best to use our considerable influence and concerns. We would try to do that in close consultation with the secretary-general, to whose tact and patience I pay tribute. We would seek to be guided by him and the experience that he has gained. We would analyse the position. I assure my hon. Friend that we would not at that point lose interest in Cyprus nor would it fall on our list of priorities. It is a difficult but solvable problem.

I take up my hon. Friend's point about Turkish settlers in the north. As many hon. Members are aware, this is a complicated issue. We receive much correspondence about it. There is no agreement on the numbers involved—perhaps one would not expect there to be—or on who is a settler and who is not. Greek Cypriot sources quote the figure, which my hon. Friend used, of 65,000. Turkish Cypriot sources go as low as 15,000. Our guesstimate is somewhere in between, at about 35,000. Turkish Cypriots claim that the figure includes large numbers of people who have been granted what they call "Turkish Cypriot citizenship", and the children that they have borne since settling on the island.

It is not for me to say who is right and who is wrong in this numbers game. This is an issue of vital concern to both sides which must be resolved before a settlement is reached. There is no way, in our view, that an accommodation can be reached, except in the context of the overall negotiations. Many other issues are of equal concern to one side or the other—for example, for the Turkish Cypriots, the need to find ways to overcome practical difficulties in the way of implementation of the freedom of movement, settlement and property rights is equally important and pressing.

Hon. Members will agree that we must look forward to the day when harmony prevails again in Cyprus and the tragic division of the republic ends. When that day comes, we shall continue to have the closest possible relations with the island, to our mutual benefit. If that happy outcome is achieved, not a little thanks will be due to the many people in this country who have not lost interest in the future of Cyprus since independence. This is reflected partly by the large Cypriot community in Britain, but in addition there is a long-standing feeling of affection for, and solidarity with, the people of Cyprus. Important strategic and other interests are at stake. Cyprus is an island that perhaps many of us first viewed through the writings of Lawrence Durrell, who painted an affectionate picture of how the underlying bonds between Cypriots and Britain survived even the dark days of war between some groups and the British colonial power. Those bonds will not be broken. The British Government will continue to attach great importance to their Cypriot policy and, in doing so, will have the support of the expertise available on the Back Benches, not least that of my hon. Friend.

Patients (Medical Files)

12.27 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I am pleased to have the opportunity to raise the issue of the right of people to access to their medical records. The debate has been occasioned by the recent publication by the Department of Health "Communicating Information to Patients and their Access to their own Manual Health Records". The House will agree that it is an important subject, developments are moving quite fast and therefore it is important to spend some time rehearsing some of the arguments in public to inform and promote the process of consultation now in hand.

Two years ago I sought to create a statutory right of access to medical records when I introduced my private Member's Bill, the Access to Personal Files Bill. That Bill is now an Act, sadly in a greatly reduced form. It provides a right of access to housing and social work records, but medical records are excluded as a result of Government objection to creating a statutory right of access to medical records. At the time, the Government supported the principle of access and would seek to encourage it on a non-statutory basis through discussions with the medical profession, and the draft code of practice on access to records, which the Department published earlier this month, and which is now undergoing consultation, is the result of such discussions.

I welcome the draft code of practice. It is certainly a step in the right direction. However, my welcome is seriously qualified. A voluntary code of practice is a very poor alternative to legislation because it cannot be enforced. It allows doctors who do not like the idea of patients seeing what is said about them—and there are many—to opt out altogether. I fear that that is precisely what will happen on the implementation of the draft code of voluntary practice.

Let me explain why I seek a statutory right of access. I wholeheartedly agree with the preamble to the code which states that, normally, the best way of informing patients about their conditions and treatment is by full discussion. That must be right, sensible and proper. I am sure that, if it is handled well, proper discussion will satisfy most patients most of the time.

Those of us who advocate patient access as a matter of right do not regard it in any way as a substitute for a patient asking his GP questions in the normal way. But I believe that a statutory right of access would supplement that process, and perhaps compensate for some of the potential shortcomings. A statutory right of access would exist for a patient who wanted to be 100 per cent. in the picture, who wanted to know all the details and to understand them, rather than to rely unquestioningly on medical advice. A statutory right would exist when a doctor could not meet a patient's expectations because he might be too busy to spend enough time with a patient, or, alternatively, when a doctor was being over-protective and wrongly shielding a patient who wanted to know the full recorded facts.

I fully accept that some people do not want to know the truth, but in my experience others who do have no access to it at present. A statutory right of access would be available to patients who suspect—sometimes wrongly—that the truth is being withheld and who would be satisfied only by access to the written record. A statutory right of access would exist for people who felt that their conditions were not being taken seriously enough and who wanted to check that their full medical history was being recorded and contained no mistakes. Finally, a statutory right of access would help patients who believed that their treatment had gone wrong in some way and wanted to know what had happened.

For all those reasons, it is important that we allow a statutory right of access to medical records.

As I said earlier, I am pleased that the Government endorse the principle of patient access, but, given that they accept the principle, I find it difficult to understand why they object to a statutory codified form of legislation. I am amazed that we should still be so tentative about legislation. People now have a legal right to see their social work and housing records. We have been promised regulations on access to education records later this year, so why are medical records so different?

There are significant though inconsistent rights to medical records already. As I am sure the Minister knows, if medical records are held on computer, patients have access to them under the Data Protection Act 1984. An increasing number of general practitioners are computerising their surgery records, and those who belong to a practice which has a computer can check the records for accuracy, see the details of any test results and talk to their doctors from a more informed position. All those benefits are denied to those whose records are held on paper in manilla folders. In addition, since this January, patients have had the right, enforceable under law, to see reports which their general practitioner sends to an employer or an insurance company. That right is available to patients under the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988, which I introduced through the private Members' procedure last year. Therefore, precedents already exist for a statutory code of access.

Lest the House is worried about the unfettered nature of the proposal and the problems that may flow from legislation rather than a voluntary code, let me say that the legislation will not mean that access is absolute and completely unrestricted. The order introduced under the Data Protection Act 1984 contains entirely reasonable and proper exemptions and exceptions. For example, a doctor can withhold information which might cause serious harm to the patient. It is right and proper that a doctor should have such a legal let-out. Information about other family members or individuals can also, quite properly, be withheld. Information which identifies someone who has spoken to the doctor in confidence about the patient can also be withheld. A sophisticated framework of exemptions and exceptions already exists.

Legalising access will not mean that important concerns will be overlooked. It will make it clear that doctors cannot refuse access simply because they do not like the idea. The law does not, and should not, give way merely because doctors are accustomed to a paternalistic style of medicine and are not prepared fully to share information. If patients think that that is happening, they may go to court to enforce their rights. That approach was adopted under the Data Protection Act and the Access to Medical Reports Act, and I cannot understand why the Government are backing off here and implicitly endorsing an approach that will allow doctors who do not like the idea to ignore patients' requests for access to their medical records.

I agree that the system will work better if it is embraced by the profession in a positive spirit. The signs are not

good that the code of practice will be so embraced. As the Minister knows, and as I said earlier, an agreed code was promised in April 1987 and has taken more than two years merely to see the light of day in draft form. Even now it apparently has only the profession's provisional support. I fear that rather than encouraging compliance in a positive spirit, a voluntary approach will lead to large scale opting out.

I have some specific comments to make on the draft code and should be obliged if the Minister would clarify those points which are still vague. First, as it stands, the draft code proposes to allow access only prospectively to what is recorded after it comes into force. I understand that there are good reasons for that.

The code contains a serious restriction. It seems that, under the draft code, patients will be unable to see everything recorded after the starting date, but will be limited to information about individual consultations or specific episodes of treatment. Someone who suspects that a mistake has been made in the records will be unable to go through them all to find it. Someone with a chronic illness or personal disability will be unable to review what has been written during a certain period, but will be allowed only small peeks at specific parts of their own medical records. Certainly no such restriction exists under the Data Protection Act, and there is no reason why it should possibly be justified here. I would be interested to hear the Minister's justification of it.

Secondly, in the draft code, health professionals are given much wider discretion to withhold information which they believe might harm the patient. As I said earlier, some exemptions and exceptions must be available to the health professionals so that they can protect patients when necessary.

Under both the Data Protection Act and the Access to Medical Records Act, the doctor must believe that there is a risk of serious harm to the patient's health before information can be withheld. The code of practice uses a different formulation. It says that information can be withheld where access would be likely to cause serious risk of harm. That is a simple but important difference. It means that if there is a real risk of minor harm, for example, of upsetting the patient, information can be withheld.

I hope that the Minister will be able to explain why the formulation used in previous legislation has been changed in that way because one argument of which the Department convinced me was that there is merit in having consistency throughout both the data protection legislation and the other Acts dealing with access to various personal files.

Thirdly, I notice that the code proposes that access will be permitted to allow patients

"to better inform themselves about their health but for no other purpose".

What does that exclusion mean? Suppose someone is applying for a disability benefit and wants to support his or her case by citing extracts from the medical record. Will that be permitted under the code? Suppose a patient wanted to document a complaint to the Health Service ombudsman, to a family practitioner committee or to the General Medical Council about the way in which he has been dealt with. Are they to be denied access under the specific part of the code that I mentioned earlier? Is the object of the exclusion clause to restrict the access of people who believe that they may have been the victims of a medical accident? If so, again I wonder why. The Minister would help and inform the process of consultation if he could say a word about the background thinking on the exclusion clause.

The Government may think that I am being slightly churlish about this because, of course, a voluntary code is a step in the right direction. It gives the right signals—and I support that—but it does not give very much more than a signal to the medical profession. I know that the Government want to see progress, and I very much appreciated the help that I received from the Department and from the Minister's predecessor in putting the Access to Medical Records Act on the statute book. I understand that that was not an easy thing for the Government to do. However, if the Government accept that the principle of access is correct, the logical conclusion is to make access a right that cannot be avoided without good reason. That would require legislation as a basic framework for enshrining the rights. I believe that those rights will come sooner or later, and I believe that the time to introduce them is now because otherwise these voluntary regulations will merely create a medical backwater that will allow doctors who do not like the idea to resist disclosures in future.

As far as I am concerned, the regulations are now on probation. If the profession does not respond positively, I warn it fairly and squarely that it will face a continuing clamour for statutory action to be taken as a matter of urgency to provide patients with the legal rights to which they are entitled, but which they are currently being denied.

12.43 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Roger Freeman): I congratulate the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on his success in the ballot and pay tribute to his intitiative in the past in this area and to his sustained interest in this subject, which we all respect.

Although I am a relative newcomer as a Health Minister, I have focused my mind on this subject recently thanks to the hon. Gentleman drawing my attention to it in a meeting that I had with him and other colleagues. It is an important subject and I assure him that I take it seriously, following through the commitments and promises made by my predecessor and other Government colleagues.

Although there has been no automatic right of access to manually stored medical records, the Department has always recognised that it is good practice for health professionals to be as open and informative with their patients as possible.

I fully accept that what we are talking about in this debate are manually stored records and not those on computers, which are already subject to the Data Protection Act 1984, and, indeed, medical reports which are subject to the legislation to which the hon. Gentleman referred. I would draw a distinction, as I am sure he would, between medical reports and medical records, by the very nature of the way in which they are prepared. Medical reports are specifically written for external consumption and are entirely different from the kind of medical records about which we are talking, which are very often hand-written and not put on computers. One of the regrets is that in the area of primary care we have not made

[Mr. Roger Freeman]

perhaps the advance that we should have made in providing computer assistance to general practitioners—both the hardware and the software—to store data about patients.

I can confirm that the Department of Health will be taking an initiative in this area to accelerate the wider use of personal computers by general practitioners. Only about 50 per cent. of doctors have access to computers, which I believe can play a valuable role not in storing the complete medical records of patients, but in storing key data—for example, for call and recall systems for screening, for providing a profile that might be useful in setting indicative budgets, and for managing their practices.

While supporting a policy of openness, the Government have not inclined towards the need to legislate to provide access to medical records. Apart from the need to protect those patients who might be susceptible to harm from the information itself, the procedures to provide a statutory right of access, combined with appropriate safeguards to ensure that information about third parties is fully protected, would be complex.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire was a little illogical. He welcomed the new draft code of practice, which we are putting out to consultation and which we hope will be adopted and operational from the end of the year, but he also argued that it would not work and that we should move to a statutory system. I believe, because we need the co-operation of doctors, that it would be better to move to a system of voluntary practice and to see how that works. I accept that there may be problems and that the House will return to the problem of individual cases of access. The Government do not rule out legislation for all time. However, we are firmly saying that we want the co-operation of the medical profession and that the best way to proceed at present is by way of a voluntary code.

In recognising those impediments to statutory provision for patients' access to medical records, the Government also acknowledge the view of those representing the interests of patients, including many Members of this House and in another place, that the current arrangements fall short of public aspirations and even greater openness must be achieved, on a voluntary basis if possible. As I have said, many representations have been made that, if that does not work, it must be achieved ultimately by statute. However, we should first try the voluntary code.

Hon. Members may remember that during the passage of the Access to Personal Files Act in 1987, there was not insignificant pressure to include medical records within the provisions of the Act. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Waddington), then Minister of State for the Home Department, was able to give a clear undertaking that Health Ministers would enter a dialogue with the profession. At the Committee stage of the Access to Personal Files Bill, he stated:

"If more openness is what hon. Members on both sides of the Committee want, they should know that they are pushing at an open door. The Government and the profession are in favour. Therefore, I am willing to give an undertaking today on behalf of my colleagues with responsibilities for health that they will enter into talks . . . at an early stage with a view to achieving substantive and timely progress in opening up medical records further on a non-statutory basis."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee C*, 1 April 1987; c. 60.]

I believe that the Department has honoured that undertaking, and has sought the agreement of the medical profession to a statement and code of practice concerning access by patients to their medical records. In the course of discussion, representatives of the profession recognised the need to encourage the profession in good communication with patients. Nevertheless, they conveyed serious reservations about a code giving patients the right to see their records and the dangers if patients were to rely on their own interpretation of doctors' notes rather than on the professional advice of their medical practitioners.

These anxieties were discussed with the profession's representatives in March 1988 by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Trade and Industry, then Minister of State for Health, and my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health. My hon. Friends noted the points made by the profession and advised that its proposals for giving more information without conceding access to the records would be unlikely to satisfy public expectations or parliamentary demands. The Department of Health then accepted the profession's suggestion that discussions should continue further.

I can assure the House that, in continuing the discussions, we were and are mindful that positive progress must be made. For that reason, in my contribution to the debate on the Access to Personal Files (Social Services) Regulations 1989 on 7 February this year, I advised the House that discussions on a voluntary code of practice on access to medical records were proceeding and that, although agreement had not yet then been reached, substantive progress had been made.

As the hon. Gentleman knows—he intervened in that debate—I gave an assurance that, if progress could not be made in negotiations at the official level, I would personally intervene. That intervention was not necessary, because, I am glad to say, with the willing co-operation of the medical profession, we produced a draft code, and it has been placed in the Library of the House.

I announced also the Department's proposals to consult over a three-month period with interested parties. It is important that, having accepted the principle of access to patients' manual records, such access should not be confined solely to medical records compiled by doctors, but should encompass records compiled by other health professionals about their patients. We are talking about more than general practitioners. The code of practice will therefore refer to manual health records, and consultation will be extended to representative bodies of health professionals other than doctors. The hon. Gentleman has probably seen in the annex to the draft code a list of the health professionals as defined. It includes registered medical practitioners, registered dentists, registered opticians, registered pharmaceutical chemists, registered nurses, midwives, health visitors and so on. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman and the whole House would welcome that.

The draft code of practice is a commendable compromise between what I believe most hon. Members would like to be achieved in removing obstacles to patients having access to information recorded about them and the

legitimate concerns by some of the medical profession's representatives for the implications of such a code for patient care.

I will now deal with the hon. Gentleman's four specific questions about the code of practice. It is a relatively brief document, which is out for consultation at the moment. The principle behind it is that it is the health professional's duty to inform patients about their condition.

Mr. Kirkwood: Of course.

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Gentleman says, "Of course." That will happen in most cases. It is a sensible way in which to proceed. The hon. Gentleman is concerned about the minority of cases in which that does not happen.

The code provides also that health professionals may judge that, normally, the most helpful way of informing patients about their condition and treatment and meeting their expectations is by full discussion. Health professionals may consider it necessary to show patients the information that is recorded about them. The hon. Gentleman and I would hope that that will happen in appropriate circumstances. However, the code states that those who remain dissatisfied must be allowed to see information recorded about them.

The hon. Gentleman's first question was about why that is prospective and not retrospective. General practitioners' manual records will be voluminous, extensive, make references to third parties, and may make unflattering remarks about a patients' lifestyle and whether advice has been taken. It is fair and sensible to operate the code of practice prospectively from the date on which it comes into force, which I hope to be by the end of the year. Then, the medical profession, whose co-operation we need on this subject, will be on proper notice that the information that they record at each consultation, after each diagnosis and after each hospital visit will be open to inspection. I believe that that is the fair, practical and proper way to proceed.

If the patient asks for access to his records his request must be in writing. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire asked why there was not wider right of access not just to episodes in the patient's clinical history, but to information relating to a number of years. He wanted to know why a patient could not go to his doctor and say, "I want to see my medical records for the years when I lived in place X, spanning years Y and those covering a specific series of ailments from which I suffered". We require the co-operation of the medical profession and, therefore, we must put ourselves in the position of the GP. He is a busy man and under the new GP contract——

Mr. Kirkwood: He will be even busier.

Mr. Freeman: No, he will not be even busier. That will not be the result of the new contract that we have negotiated or the changes that will be introduced in two years' time as a result of the White Paper.

We appreciate that doctors seek to do their best for their patients in terms of health promotion and care. They are, and always have been, busy people. Therefore, I believe that it is reasonable and sensible that patients' requests for access to their records should be specific and should be in writing. Doctors, their secretaries and the practice managers do not have the time to search through a whole range of material to provide a precis or a photocopy of it. Initially requests should be episodic and specific—they should relate to a particular ailment at a particular time.

I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will accept that computer records are specific and they are normally presented in a clear chronological, sometimes abbreviated, format. It is much easier to gain access to computer data than manual records which might not be organised in a coherent or even a legible manner.

A health professional responding to a request for access may, at his or her discretion, let patients see what was recorded about them prior to the code of conduct coming into operation. That is permissive.

The hon. Gentleman is right to say that access may be modified by witholding such part or parts of information as would, in the judgment of the health professional responding to a request, be likely to cause serious risk of harm to the physical or mental health of the patient or another person. The hon. Gentleman asked why we specify "risk of harm" as opposed to simply "harm". I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for drawing my attention to that. When I read the draft code of practice I did not appreciate the difference between its language and precise legislative language. During the consultation procedure I shall inquire as to whether any significance is implied by the langage used. I am not aware of any significant difference, but the hon. Gentleman's remarks are on the record and they will serve as part of the process of consultation.

Access should also be modified by withholding such part or parts of the information as would identify another individual, other than a health professional acting in that capacity. I did not catch all the hon. Gentleman's remarks, but I assume that the hon. Gentleman was concerned about that modification. The exclusion clause is designed to protect another individual, a third party, other than a health professional, to whom reference might be made. It might be a member of the family, an employee or an employer. It is sensible that a patient demanding in writing access to information about a particular episode in his care, should not have the right to obtain information written by his or her doctor about another individual. That is sensible, equitable and fair.

Initial reaction to the draft code indicated a broad level of contentment with the proposals from some non-medical and patient interest groups. However, some have also registered reservations, like those which have been raised today. We intend the consultation exercise to be meaningful and my officials will consider most carefully any comments that are received. The medical profession will be advised directly about the outcome of the consultation exercise which I hope will be completed shortly and enable the code to be introduced before the end of this calendar year.

Eastbourne Water Company

1 pm

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): The Eastbourne Water Company is one of the 29 statutory companies which provide fresh water to almost a quarter of the people in England and Wales. One hundred and thirty years ago, when Eastbourne Water was incorporated by Act of Parliament, it had 5,000 customers. Today, the company serves nearly 220,000 domestic customers as well as industry for the whole of my constituency and for parts of the constituencies of my hon. Friends the Members for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith), for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone), and for Bexhill and Battle (Mr. Wardle). They have authorised me to say that I speak for them as for myself this afternoon.

In January this year, the Eastbourne Water Company increased its charges by 19·5 per cent. In February it was taken over by a French company called SAUR. In April, now French-owned, it put up its charges by a further 15·8 per cent. amounting to an increase over 15 months of 38·4 per cent. Quite rightly, those increases have caused dismay to my hon. Friends, to me and to our constituents. That was the second highest increase in the kingdom. Only the West Kent company, with a 42 per cent. increase, has a more shameful record. West Kent, like Eastbourne, has recently been acquired by SAUR.

In his statement of 27 February 1989 published in the annual report of the Eastbourne Water Company, the then chairman said:

"At least half of the January increase of 19·5 per cent. could be attributed to the Government's policy of privatisation."

On 3 May, my three hon. Friends and I had a meeting with some of the directors of the company. The meeting took place in a Committee Room. It would have been a fascinating experience for you, Madam Deputy Speaker, had you been able to join us. We listened with disbelief as the managing director of the company told us in the presence of one of the newly appointed French directors that no other member of the board agreed with the chairman's statement or with the chairman's refusal to accept the invitation from my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Water and Planning to meet him in London. It was clear to me and my hon. Friends that the board, in their failure to stand up to the chairman, was composed of mice rather than men.

It was clear that the prospective privatisation of the water industry, bearing in mind in particular that the Eastbourne Water Company was already in the private sector, could have had nothing to do with the increase in the charges announced with effect from 1 January. My hon. and learned Friend the Minister wrote to me on 15 March stating:

"The increase he is proposing"—

the increase of 19·5 per cent.—

"cannot be justified by privatisation or anything to do with it."

I am pleased to say that the new chairman, in a letter to the Minister dated 15 May, a copy of which he was kind enough to send to me, has offered to meet my hon. and learned Friend. I welcome that warmly. What I do not welcome is the decision of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs not to refer these price increases to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. I wrote to my noble Friend Lord Young on 6 April. On 19 April he replied:

"You requested that the matter of the water charges increases should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Your request has received the most serious consideration but we do not propose to make such a reference. I understand the concern of your constituents, faced with a price rise of this order."

My noble Friend continued:

"The new pricing régime for the water industry introduced in the Water Bill does provide for the regulation of price increases. While these prohibitions will not have any retrospective effect, I understand that appropriate adjustments will be made to the price ceiling set initially by the Secretary of State where the price for this year cannot be justified."

I pause there to ask the Under-Secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan) whether he can reassure my three hon. Friends, me and our constituents that if, when my right hon. Friend reviews the charges that the Eastbourne Water Company will seek to levy with effect from 1 April 1990, he considers that the charges for this year are unreasonable he will require the Eastbourne Water Company to abate the charges for the next financial year. That is what was said by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs. I want to receive an identical assurance from my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East who is to reply to the debate.

Another aspect of my concern is the decision of my right hon. Friend, announced on 11 January, that there could be a reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission only if the assets of a privately owned water company exceeded £30 million. I have before me the *Official Report* for 11 January. In answer to a question from me, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment said that

"at present three water companies are controlled by non-British companies."—[*Official Report*, 11 January 1989; Vol. 144, c. 847.]

Since 11 January the position has changed dramatically. There are now 12, or perhaps even more water companies that are controlled by non-British companies. I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to tell us how many are controlled by those companies. In answer to a question by my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) on 10 April my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Water and Planning told the House that 12 of the statutory companies—that is getting on for half—were owned at that date by the French.

My right hon. Friend should reduce the figure of £30 million to £20 million. The asset value of the Eastbourne Water Company is approximately £20 million. It should have been possible for my right hon. Friend to refer to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission the proposed takeover of that company by the French company SAUR, which now owns four of our statutory water companies —Eastbourne, Mid Southern, Mid Sussex and West Kent; West Kent being the company which had the largest increase in the whole of the United Kingdom, and Eastbourne being the company which had the second largest increase in the whole of the United Kingdom.

One aspect of the takeover has caused me concern. I have sent the Minister a copy of page 36 of the offer document that was sent out before acquisition of the Eastbourne Water Company by SAUR. There we read:

"Eastbourne Water employees' share club was established in 1987 to facilitate the acquisition of ordinary stock by Eastbourne's employees."

I want to make it absolutely clear that I am strongly in favour of extending the opportunities for home ownership. I believe deeply in the concept of worker shareholders. I approve of the policy whereby those who are employed by the Eastbourne Water Company or by other companies within and without my constituency, have an opportunity to become shareholders. I have always believed that, and I believe it strongly today.

What worries me is that, at the time of the takeover, there was an acquisition not by those whom one might think were employees but by the then managing director who is presently the chairman, of the company. I wrote on 17 May to the chairman, Mr. Hoskins, and this is the question I put to him:

"Am I correct in concluding from page 36 of the recommended offer that in March and April last year you bought for £8,000 ordinary stock from the Eastbourne Water employees' share club and that subsequently you sold that ordinary stock for £240,000?"

I sent copies of the letter to my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Water and Planning and to my noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, with both of whom I have been in correspondence about the Eastbourne Water Company for many months.

Mr. Charles Wardle (Bexhill and Battle): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. He has already referred to me and our hon. Friends the Members for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) and for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone), and we wholeheartedly support his vigorous representations on behalf of Eastbourne Water's customers.

Does my hon. Friend agree that it is reprehensible that, at the meeting on 3 May here in the Palace of Westminster, the managing director of Eastbourne Water told us that he was unable to contain this year's price increases, that he had been unable to persuade the late chairman to meet our hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Water and Planning that he had been unable to prevent the late chairman from writing a chairman's statement for the annual report which was highly critical of Government policy and that he was unable to declare to us that he had bought and sold shares within a very short period of time? What are his customers to make of that? They have been saddled with a price increase of 38·4 per cent. I believe that they will discover that the new chairman, until recently the managing director, has dealt quickly in and out of the shares at a very considerable profit. Presumably he has no faith in the new controlling shareholders because he decided not to stay for the ride with his equity investment. What are customers to make of that?

Mr. Gow: The questions posed by my hon. Friend will be asked by some of the customers of Eastbourne Water Company.

My concern is that it was from a club, whose purpose was to offer opportunities for employees to become shareholders, that in March and April last year the then managing director bought the shares—£8,000 worth nominal of ordinary stock for which he paid £8,000—which he sold for £240,000 well under a year later.

Should there have been an opportunity for other employees to acquire shares? That is a matter about which I have already written to my hon. Friend the Minister. I have already read out to the House part of my letter dated 17 May and I want to read the reply dated 23 May, from the present chairman. It says:

"The figures in the offer document you quoted and your conclusions therefrom are correct."

I asked for a copy of the trust deed which set up the club, but no copy has been forthcoming. The chairman wrote to me saying:

"The share club was set up at short notice."

We are told in the offer document that it was set up in 1987. He went on to say that it was set up

"along the lines of an existing club in another water company. I am informed that the declaration of trust was still at the stage of a draft prepared by counsel for the trustees at the time the bid was made."

If the club was set up in 1987 and the bid was made in 1989, it took a long time to draft the document.

The letter went on:

"The next meeting of the trustees is expected to be an annual general meeting at which it is most likely a resolution will be proposed to wind up the club."

I have asked for a copy of the rules of the club and when I receive them, I shall send them to my hon. Friend the Minister.

When I arrived at the Department of the Environment in June 1985 I did not realise that, in addition to being the Minister responsible for housing, I would also be responsible for water. Since that time—I spent nearly two and a half years in my hon. Friend the Minister's office—I have retained a deep and concerned interest in the well-being of the water industry. Over the 15 years in which I have had the privilege to represent Eastbourne I have had a happy relationship with Eastbourne Water Company. It is a matter of deep regret that since January this year the trust that I used to have in the company has been eroded.

1.18 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Colin Moynihan): It is with some trepidation that I rise to respond to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) for today he is sporting his MCC tie. He has bowled a consistently difficult and tight line to my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department of Trade and Industry as well as my Department. I congratulate him and the England team on their winning streak. I shall try to keep the Government's wicket standing to the best of my ability.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne has dwelt in some detail on the increase in the charges imposed this year by Eastbourne Water Company and the circumstances of the takeover of that company. I shall discuss the increase in charges imposed this year by water companies in general and Eastbourne in particular. My hon. Friend asked whether the two price increases by the company earlier this year—20 per cent. from 1 January 1989 and a further 15·8 per cent. from 1 April—should have been referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Two forms of reference can be made in such cases: first, a reference under section 11 of the Competition Act 1980 but that covers efficiency, not prices; and, secondly a reference under section 51 of the Fair Trading Act 1973, which normally takes much time. Any recommendation would not have been retrospective and could not have been implemented before the operation of price control under the Water Bill. We did not rule out the possibility of reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission,

[Mr. Colin Moynihan]

but we believed that it was in everyone's interests for the issue to be sorted out as quickly as possible, and we sought to do so by voluntary means.

I should explain why Eastbourne Water Company was granted powers in December 1988 to fix a rate poundage for a three-month period, with the effect that consumers had two charge increases within a short time. As one of the 29 private water companies, Eastbourne is subject to statutory controls on many of its financial limits, which include controls on the amount of capital that it may hold, its rates of dividend and interest and the amount that it can put in reserves. They constitute an indirect control on charge increases because income that is surplus to the authorised limits must be used to reduce charges. At present, there is no direct control on the level of charges. The restrictions meant that Eastbourne could not move to a charging year beginning on 1 April without first obtaining the consent of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

There were sound reasons in favour of such a move, including the desirability of bringing the company's charging year into line with the majority of companies under the new regime of direct controls on charges. The Secretary of State gave his consent last December for the company to levy a three-month rate for this purpose. It raised a three-month rate from January 1989 and a 12-month rate from April. Due to the nature of the current controls, the maximum amount that the company could raise for the 15-month period from January 1989 to March 1990 was fixed. The company was unable, therefore, to raise additional money from customers by setting two rates for the period.

On 5 February, the Water Companies Association announced in a press release that its members were likely to raise their charges by 30 per cent. or more. In some quarters, increases as high as 50 per cent. or more were anticipated. My hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Water and Planning wrote on 7 February to each water company chairman, inviting those proposing increases of more than 10 per cent. to see him and to make the relevant financal information available to his consultants, Deloitte Haskins and Sells. Most of the chairmen responded to that invitation. As my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne has made clear, Eastbourne's chairman's response was different from that of the other chairmen.

My hon. and learned Friend was able to report the results of the discussions that he held to the House on 14 March in a written reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel). At that time, the average increase in all water company charges was estimated to be about 22 per cent. A later estimate of 23 per cent., based on more complete information, was given in a letter to my hon. Friend. I should emphasise that both figures related to the generality of water company charges, not those faced by domestic consumers paying on a rateable value basis—commonly called the water rate. The latter figures are being collated and will be reported to the House in due course.

My hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Water and Planning has, on several occasions, made clear his anxiety about the scale of increases. He was able to report to the House on 14 March that, as a result of his discussions with chairmen, the average increase in charges had been reduced by 5 per cent., which is equivalent to £16 million in water charges. His consultants' investigations were carried out with the full and voluntary co-operation of each company. Not all the companies accepted the report that the consultants made to the Department of the Environment. Water companies are independent statutory companies and, provided the charges that they propose are within their vires, the final decision lies with the board of each company. My hon. and learned Friend is unable to agree or disagree with companies' charges under the present legislation.

The Water Bill provides for a price control to be set, in the first instance by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and subsequently by the Director General of Water Services. In setting that control, account must be taken of the spending needs of each appointed undertaker, whether they are statutory water companies or successor companies to the water authorities, which we intend to privatise later this year. Those spending needs over the next 10 years or so are the subject of a far more detailed scrutiny than the exercise earlier this year, to which I have referred.

Each undertaker is required to submit detailed financial projections, supported by engineering studies, to show what is needed to enable undertakers to meet the standards of service that the law requires and the companies expect. I said, "what is needed"—the price control will take account only of what an efficient company needs to spend and will incorporate targets for efficiency savings which will take account of differences in achievements.

With regard to Eastbourne's charges, the company co-operated in the review of this year's increases and in providing information on its future spending needs to enable the price control to be set. However, the late chairman of that company fiercely maintained his independence under the existing statutes and declined all offers to meet my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Water and Planning to discuss the increases. I regret that, but I must remind the House that he was perfectly within his rights so to do.

As to the consultants' report, the company has informed its consumers that Deloitte, Haskins and Sells has agreed that the operating costs in its budgets were reasonable. Without going into the detail of that report, which must remain confidential to the company and the Government, I can say only that the company's statement is correct. That does not mean that every aspect of this year's increase by Eastbourne, or by any other company, was fully justified. I can reassure the House, as my hon. and learned Friend has already done, that before the price control is set, a much more searching financial and engineering scrutiny will be carried out. That work began several months ago and has yet to be completed, whereas the investigation into this year's increases was undertaken in days. Every undertaker will be examined with equal vigour, irrespective of the size of this year's increases.

To respond specifically to the first of the questions put by my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne, if, when setting K with effect from 1 April 1990 my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State considers charges for this year to be unreasonably high—for example, for the reasons outlined by my hon. Friend—charges could be abated. That is certainly a possibility and an important consideration for my right hon. Friend. To be precise,

Eastbourne's charges in 1990 will not necessarily be lower if its current charges are too high, but the K charges ceiling would be lower in that circumstance.

The possibility of insider dealing in relation to the securities of the Eastbourne water company was brought to the attention of my right hon. Friend some time ago. The information then available was not considered to be sufficient on which to base a decision whether to investigate under section 177 of the Financial Services Act 1986. Accordingly, as is the practice in such circumstances, officials asked the stock exchange to make some preliminary inquiries. I assure my hon. Friends the Members for Eastbourne and for Bexhill and Battle (Mr. Wardle) that such matters are treated seriously, but I cannot undertake to reveal whether any further investigation is being or is to be made. That is because, in the interests of efficiency and justice, our policy is that investigations of possible insider dealing should normally be kept confidential. However, I believe, on hearing my hon. Friends' contributions, that it is important that their contributions to the debate on this specific point are brought to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, and I will ensure that that is done.

On the merger policy and Eastbourne, it is often remarked, and is certainly not disputed by the Government, that the supply of water and sewerage services is a local monopoly and that the incentives of product competition, which usually work to improve efficiency and standards of service to the customer, cannot apply to privatised water companies.

Under our proposals in the Water Bill it will be for the Director-General of Water Services to monitor and protect the standard of services to customers and to ensure that essential infrastructure is maintained, and, bearing in mind the relative performance of companies in the industry to make periodic reviews of the K settings. If the director-general is to have a proper spread of comparative competition, there clearly needs to be an adequate number of independently owned and managed companies in the industry. Our special mergers policy is designed to safeguard that comparative competition. The £30 million asset test applies in existing merger legislation and, applied to the water industry, I am confident that it will ensure that there is an adequate number of companies for comparison. There is no merit in protecting every single company so that the entire structure is preserved like a prehistoric mammoth trapped in ice. That would simply remove the incentive to better management performance that private sector disciplines, including the possibility of takeover, will bring.

I hope that in a very brief response I have managed to cover some of the points raised by my hon. Friends. I am most grateful to them for bringing these issues to the attention of the House.

African Elephants

1.30 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, who is just approaching the Dispatch Box, is making quite a name for herself. I have just returned from having another look at the Roman baths at Huggin hill about which she was able to make a halfway decent announcement. The Roman baths are to be preserved, but unfortunately we will not have access to them. She has also done some good work in regard to the Rose theatre. While she is catching her breath, I should tell her that I have a few other campaigns that she might care to join me in pursuing—the preservation of county hall, the restoration of city-wide local government in London—if she sticks with me I shall make her famous.

Today, the Minister has the chance to cover herself in more glory by taking the political initiative to help to save the African elephant by imposing an immediate ban on all raw and worked ivory being imported into the United Kingdom. The plight of the African elephant is one of impending catastrophe. I have been campaigning on the matter for the past five years, and during that time perhaps as many as 500,000 elephants have been slaughtered in Africa.

I am grateful for the recent upsurge of public and political concern, and I should like to place on record the thanks of the entire House to the television companies, newspapers and organisations which have helped to generate the great tide of feeling which is sweeping across Europe in defence of those beautiful and gentle creatures, the elephants. The Worldwide Fund for Nature recently announced that it received about 20,000 letters and calls in one week in support of a ban and in protest against the slaughter of elephants.

The centre of the problem is the massacre of those beautiful creatures for their ivory. The truly criminal element is the illegal slaughter, but the legal culling is little better. In 1970 it was estimated that there were about 2·3 million elephants in Africa. In 1979 the number had dropped to about 1·3 million—the figures are very approximate. Today it is estimated that about 750,000 elephants remain in Africa, but a reply I received recently from the Minister for Overseas Development suggested that some estimates are as low as between 300,000 and 400,000. No one knows the exact number, but it is certain that the elephant is under threat. At the present rate of slaughter, which is running at an estimated 80,000 to 100,000 a year, by the year 2000 the African elephant will be all but extinct.

The methods used by poachers to obtain ivory turns even the strongest stomach. They use machine guns, rockets, mortars and poison to kill the animals and then they use chainsaws to cut off their heads. Sometimes elephants are mortally wounded but not yet dead. When I was in Washington recently, the international organisation Monitor told me about an incident that took place 11 years ago which is typical of what happened in the past. Thousands of elephants died in just one area of Zaire in 1978 after being poisoned. The mass killing took place in a vast forest west of Kisengani, in north-east Zaire. While the death toll was staggering for the elephants, it was

[Mr. Tony Banks]

virtually complete for all other animals over hundreds of square miles. The mass poisoning occurred in April and May of 1978.

According to a source in Kisengani, corrupt Government officials diverted 20 metric tons of pesticide that was to have been used for spraying the coffee plantations in the province. The highly toxic poison was delivered to gangs of poachers who went into the thick forests where large numbers of elephants still roamed. The pesticide was poured into the waterholes in the marshy areas where the elephants come to drink. Within days thousands of elephants were poisoned. It took up to a week for them to die. The sickened beasts staggered through the forest in agony. The poachers eager to get the ivory first frequently hastened death by running up to the weakened elephants from the rear and disembowelling them with machetes.

Witnesses say that hundreds of tusks poured into the town of Ngazi, which is at the end of the road from Kisengani. Each week during the poisoning massacre this was happening. Many of the tusks were just eight inches long, indicating that baby elephants died in large numbers. Nobody knows how many elephants died in those two months because many, if not most, probably died deep in the forest and were never found. That still goes on, but there are fewer elephants to persecute in such a way.

There are corrupt Governments and officials in Africa who have made millions out of the illegal ivory trade. African wars are in part, still being financed by the trade in elephant ivory, rhinoceros horns and other endangered species. Terrorist organisations, such as UNITA in Angola and RENAMO in Mozambique, are openly slaughtering elephants and processing the ivory through South Africa, Swaziland and other African countries. Dr. Jonas Savimbi, the leader of UNITA presented to President P. W. Botha an exact replica of an AK47 assault rifle, intricately carved in ivory—how obscene, but how typical since so many elephants had been killed by UNITA terrorists using AK47 rifles.

I welcome the Government's announcement of their intention to go for a ban on new ivory, first at the EC Environment Ministers meeting on 8 June in Luxembourg, and in October at the meeting of the convention on international trade in endangered species CITES, the so-called regulatory body on trade in ivory. However, that may be too little too late.

The laxity in applying existing CITES regulations to new ivory makes such a ban, if we are able to achieve it, close to unenforceable. Even if we achieve an agreement at CITES in October, the ban will not come into force until mid-January 1990. Dealers will stockpile, and at the present rate of slaughter another 40,000 to 50,000 elephants will die and there will be an enormous upsurge in poaching. We need a ban on all ivory, and we need it now.

The Government are wonderfully placed to give a lead to the world because Britain is crucial to the ivory trade. First, we are a major staging post in world ivory trade, including that which is traded illegally. The Department of the Environment, in consultation with CITES, has given retrospective clearance to ivory arriving in this country without valid documentation. There are cargoes at Heathrow and Gatwick airports which I claim on good authority began as illegal ivory. I am not satisfied that the Minister is being given the best and most impartial advice by CITES or her own departmental officials. I shall return to that theme on another occasion.

The Minister says that her Department checks on all ivory, but much of the so-called legal ivory starts off as illegal ivory. It is laundered through corrupt African Governments and officials. The way in which statistics on ivory are kept in this country is wholly unsatisfactory. I have just received a reply from the Department of Trade and Industry. I asked how much raw ivory, by weight and value, had gone through this country since 1979. The DTI's answer was:

"In 1988, imports of raw ivory were recorded as 12·1 metric tonnes. Information prior to 1988 is not available."

However, when I asked the DTI what was happening in Hong Kong, it was able to give me a run of figures back to 1984. How come I can get figures about what goes on in Hong Kong, but not about the trade in ivory in this country? Something must be done about that.

The figures which have emerged from Hong Kong show that Hong Kong has been importing raw ivory from a range of countries. I shall not give them all, but I notice that Somalia and the Ivory Coast are included. Yet in the reply to another question I also noticed that Somalia and the Ivory Coast appear among the 19 African countries where the EEC considers that the elephant population is incapable of sustaining commercial exploitation. How come? If we are told by the EEC that those countries do not have elephant populations sufficient to sustain trade in ivory, how come Hong Kong, for which we are responsible, is still accepting ivory into its shores?

The position of Hong Kong is absolutely crucial in all this because Hong Kong deals in more ivory than probably any other country, with perhaps between 50 and 75 per cent. of world trade. Indeed, 95 per cent. of the ivory entering Hong Kong is raw and comes from Japan, China, Taiwan and India among other places. If the ivory is carved, it goes to Japan, the United States of America and the EEC countries. Therefore, Hong Kong, with which we have close links, is very much at the centre. Belgian and French dealers are active in Hong Kong and a lot of ivory now comes from Francophone Africa, which is emerging as a major supplier. We in this country and therefore in this House have jurisdiction over Hong Kong until 1997. We must close down the ivory trade in Hong Kong.

One of the great obstacles that the Minister will face in attempting to secure an appendix I listing of the African elephant by CITES in October will be if any of the major trading countries enters a reservation. I want an assurance from the Minister that the United Kingdom will not on behalf of Hong Kong, enter a reservation. If we can get Hong Kong into line, we might just get the Japanese to follow suit. On this occasion, words fail me when I try to describe the Japanese role not only in the ivory trade but also in relation to whales. That country is venal. The British public should boycott Japanese goods until the Japanese stop decimating the world's animal resources in their typically wasteful and selfish manner.

I repeat my demands about the African elephants on behalf of all hon. Members and a growing tide of public opinion in this country and around the world. First, we should have a total and immediate ban on all trade in raw

and worked ivory in the United Kingdom as a prelude to a worldwide ban. Secondly, there should be a similar and immediate ban in Hong Kong.

Thirdly, there must be an investigation into the money received by CITES from ivory dealers and an investigation into the activities of CITES and into the Minister's own Department, the Department of the Environment, in inviting retrospective clearance to cargoes of illegal ivory in the United Kingdom. If the international regulatory body CITES, is receiving money from ivory dealers, the impartiality and objectivity of that body must obviously be questioned. I want the Minister to look into that carefully.

Fourthly, we need a programme of assistance to those African countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia and Mozambique which are desperately trying, against overwhelming odds in certain cases because of the activities of poachers, to protect their remaining elephant herds.

Obviously it is not the Minister's responsibility. She is responsible for the Department of the Environment, but she can talk to her right hon. and hon. Friends in the Foreign Office, and especially in the Ministry of Overseas Development, to ensure that those countries that request our assistance are given it. They need helicopters and Land-Rovers. I do not see why they cannot have British troops if they so request them. I should be quite happy to see the Special Air Service become involved in tracking down poachers. That would be a useful line of activity for it to engage in. It would certainly gain the support of the Opposition.

We in this country have done too little for too long to protect African elephants, but we cannot do too much now if we are to save the elephants from extinction. I do not normally make claims such as this because Members of Parliament who say, "I speak on behalf of the people of this country" are usually pompous fools, but on this occasion I cannot have that accusation levelled against me because the people of this country would welcome a dramatic political initiative from Her Majesty's Government. Opposition Members would certainly welcome it, and I am sure that Conservative Members would do so, too. The African elephant desperately needs it. It would be a crime against the world if the African elephant was slaughtered out of existence. I urge the Minister and the Government to act now.

1.44 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I am sorry that I missed part of the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). As usual, he was a little ahead of me. I want to endorse and fully support everything that he has said. It is awful that we, as a wealthy country in the west, along with others, have for too long allowed the importation of ivory when we know full well that it has come from smugglers and the illegal killing of elephants. The importation of ivory through Hong Kong is also a serious problem.

I hope that when the Minister replies she will be very robust in defence of the world's wildlife and will give us a commitment that the Government will do all that they can —including providing the money, and the resources, which were mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West, to those countries which are striving to uphold the elephant population and to preserve that wildlife. I hope that the Minister will show the people in this country that there is something quite awful about the fact that, despite the alleged progress in the world. every day a species dies out—every day a plant species is eradicated for ever. Yet we call a growth in civilisation the promotion of higher living standards. We need to understand that we cannot continue destroying one species after another at the present rate and expect to carry on living ourselves.

I believe that the understanding that my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West and others have shown for the African elephant is an example of the growing understanding that we must work with the world's natural systems and ecosystems rather than destroying and working against them, as the evil poachers and illegal dealers in the ivory trade are doing. What my hon. Friend has said has the overwhelming support of the people of this country and, indeed, of people from all over the world. For many the plight of the African elephant has become a symbol of the plight of the world's wildlife in the same way as the panda was the symbol of the World Wildlife Fund when it was established 30 years ago.

1.46 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): Frankly, we are all agreed that the plight of the African elephant is extremely serious and that it is a creature that we all hold most dear. I was trying to identify what it is about the elephant that is so loveable, so endearing and makes us all respond so warmly and strongly to the present situation. I was reading the other day that it is

"their grandeur, their gentleness, their intelligence, even their humour."

It was said that there is a strange affinity between the life cycle of the elephant

"their family affection and loyalties, their mutual aid, even the respect they show to their dead closely resemble the better aspects of human behaviour."

It appears to lack the more unacceptable aspects of human behaviour, but shares-many of the more acceptable ones.

I especially endorse the remarks about the Worldwide Fund for Nature. It is a privilege to have the headquarters of that organisation in my constituency. I have worked closely with it on a number of subjects. I especially pay tribute to its work in protecting the African elephant. It has worked over the years with the European Community and, indeed, in partnership with the Overseas Development Administration, on a number of practical subjects, which, as the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) rightly said, is part of the secret of protecting the species. I want especially to pay tribute to David Shepherd, the wildlife artist and author, who has worked on behalf of the African elephant. He has specialist knowledge and he has made an evocative and powerful case on its behalf.

In recent weeks and months the hon. Member for Newham, North-West has raised a number of topics on which I hope I have been able to offer some encouragement and assistance on behalf of the Government. There is no doubt that in the area of animal welfare and the protection of wildlife the hon. Gentleman has a long-standing reputation of identifying areas that need particular attention.

We are all united in our concern about the plight of the African elephant. We are fully committed to the protection of all endangered species and have demonstrated that

[Mrs. Virginia Bottomley]

commitment through our active participation in the implementation of the convention on international trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora—CITES.

We were one of the original signatories to the convention in 1973. It entered into force in July 1975 and since that time the United Kingdom has played its part in strengthening CITES controls, bringing more species under its protection and encouraging other countries to accede to it.

For example, at the 6th conference of the parties to CITES in 1987, the United Kingdom was successful in securing the conference's agreement to the inclusion, under CITES, of 20 species of bustards, nine species of butterfly, and the medicinal leech. I am pleased to say that another species of butterfly was transferred from appendix II to appendix I. Over 400 species of flora and fauna are listed in appendix I alone, including the Indian elephant, several species of dolphin, the rhinoceros, the alligator, and orchid.

We have fulfilled our role by attendance at the biennial conference of the parties, the meetings of the standing committee and the important African elephant working group, which was set up to consider ways in which to improve the protection of this species. The next meeting of the group will take place in Botswana in July.

Within the European Community we attend the regular EC CITES committee meetings, and we played a key part in initiating a review of the implementation of the EC regulations, which apply CITES throughout the Community. In the light of that review, the regulations will be revised to clarify and tighten existing controls.

We work in close co-operation, of course, with our scientific advisers, the Nature Conservancy Council and the royal botanic gardens at Kew. Both organisations have justly deserved reputations in the conservation world, and we frequently call on their expertise. We have regular meetings with them, usually prior to EC meetings. Our scientific advisers attend the EC CITES scientific working group, which advises the EC CITES committee on the scientific aspects of its work.

The Government have become increasingly concerned about the reported decline in the number of African elephants, and it is important to view it within the working of CITES. As the hon. Gentleman said, figures are notoriously difficult to rely on, but it seems that there are fewer than 700,000 African elephants remaining, and many estimates are between 300,000 and 400,000. We have been actively involved in promoting the survival of the African elephant, through strengthening controls on imports and exports of ivory and through aid to those African producer countries seeking to protect their elephant populations. The African elephant has been listed on appendix II of the convention since 1977. Under the terms of the convention, trade in ivory may take place only if certain strict criteria are met.

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Mrs. Bottomley: I will not give way. I have little time left. The hon. Gentleman has already spoken, and I should like to deal properly with the subject.

In 1985, CITES parties recognised the increasing threat to the African elephant, and the United Kingdom was instrumental in introducing stricter controls on trade in ivory. They included the quota system and the establishment of the Ivory Trade Monitoring Unit, which is based in Lausanne at the CITES secretariat and to which the United Kingdom annually contributes £5,000. Under the system, most producer countries set quotas agreed by CITES for the export of raw ivory. The ivory is appropriately marked, and exports beyond the quota or of unmarked raw ivory have to be checked with the secretariat in Lausanne to ensure that the export is within the agreed quota and that the documentation is in order.

We in Europe, however, considered that that was not enough. The EC CITES regulations set a higher standard of protection than that of the convention for many species, including the African elephant. For example, the convention requires import permits only in the case of appendix I species; under the EC regulations, import documents are required for all species covered by the CITES appendices. The EC regulations also prohibit several commercial activities, such as sale, in respect of the most endangered species. For the African elephant and certain other species, import permits may be issued only when the import will not have a harmful effect on the conservation of the species or on the population of the species in the country of origin.

In May 1988, the Community agreed to ban the commercial import of ivory from 18 African countries, and it has recently increased it to 19. We have also supported an additional tightening of controls with the Community.

Despite those extra controls, we are conscious of concern about their effectiveness. We are, for example, aware of concern—also expressed by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West—about the control of the ivory trade in Hong Kong. In most matters the Hong Kong Government exercise a high degree of autonomy. That includes trade in endangered species, and they apply CITES controls through their own specific legislation. In view of the transfer of sovereignty in 1997, we are understandably keen to encourage this autonomy. We have been in touch with the Hong Kong authorities about the Government's decision to support a ban on trade in new ivory and the reasons for it. The Hong Kong Government have informed us that they are considering their own position on the issue.

Hong Kong has strictly adhered to all of the conservation and enforcement measures called for by CITES and recently has strengthened its controls on the import of worked ivory. The only ivory which may legally be imported into Hong Kong at present is that which comes from a CITES-approved source and is subject to the issue of a licence.

Mr. Tony Banks: If it is a matter of entering a reservation to CITES at the meeting in October, can Hong Kong enter a reservation on its own or are we the signatories on behalf of Hong Kong to CITES? Therefore, should any such reservation be entered through us?

Mrs. Bottomley: I understand that we are the parties to CITES. We have had discussions with Hong Kong and I can tell the hon. Gentleman of many of the steps taken by the Government to tighten their control over the ivory trade. I understand that in Hong Kong all applications are handled with extreme care to ensure that only legal ivory is exported or imported. On arrival, shipments are physically checked by staff of the Agriculture and Fisheries

Department to ensure that they are accompanied by the necessary CITES documents. The ivory itself is inspected to ensure that it matches with the numbers, weight and markings. In any case of doubt, the consignment is detained pending investigation or clarification with the CITES secretariat.

We have also made representations to the Government of the United Arab Emirates, to encourage them to tighten controls on the ivory trade which passes through their country.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West has criticised the licensing system in the United Kingdom, particularly in respect of two recent cases concerning ivory. It is not possible to go into the full detail of the cases because such matters are dealt with confidentially, but I assure the House that we strictly implement all CITES controls and those of EC regulation 3626/82. We do not allow the import or export of raw ivory which has not first been approved by the CITES secretariat. The Department of the Environment, acting as the managing authority under CITES, takes these obligations extremely seriously and exercises them rigorously. It applies great care to each case.

When the consignment to which the hon. Gentleman referred arrived in this country, we were concerned because the documentation and the markings on the tusks did not accord with the requirement of the ivory trade control unit. We consulted the unit which in turn consulted the management authority of Zaire. We were advised that the ivory was legal and we were given revised tusk numbers. An official of the Zairean embassy re-marked the tusks, observed, I hasten to add, by representatives of the Customs and Excise and of the Department of the Environment. The official working on behalf of the Department of the Environment behaved with absolute propriety and with great care throughout the proceedings.

Mr. Tony Banks: What about the Zairean Government?

Mrs. Bottomley: If the hon. Gentleman wishes to comment about the behaviour of any other parties to this matter, it is for him to make representations to them.

The Department of the Environment is thoroughly committed to the workings of the arrangements and to the preservation of wild life in general.

The hon. Gentleman stated that the secretariat receives funding from ivory traders. That is in line with the wishes of the conference of the parties. At the sixth conference a resolution was passed urging trader groups, among others, to contribute to the secretariat.

The legitimate traders have been as keen as we are to see the illegal trade stamped out. They have made a valuable contribution to the secretariat's work. Through those contributions, the secretariat has been able to function more effectively. We have no evidence of corruption. Indeed, I am sure that the international community as a whole would join our rebuttal of any suggestion of corruption within the secretariat. It performs a difficult and arduous task and it relies a great deal on the professional dedication of its staff.

The secretariat has already done much to assist the plight of endangered species and without it their plight would be much worse than it is today. I can assure the hon. Member for Newham, North-West that we will be urging the European Community to take action together to ban the import of raw ivory prior to the decisions of the CITES meeting. Furthermore, when we go to CITES, we will make representations to the effect that, rather than wait the normal 90 days for the resolution to take effect, we should act immediately to preserve and protect the African elephant.

I hope that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West will be encouraged in the belief that the Government, through their commitment to help the African elephant, are prepared with our partners to take all further steps that are necessary to ensure that this noblest of animals continues to play a part in our world heritage for future generations.

Rate Support Grant (Basildon)

2 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): There is nothing quite so stimulating as addressing a full House. Obviously this is such an occasion this afternoon. I am proud to represent Basildon, which I believe is the finest town in the country. I am proud of our many achievements, but I am certainly not proud about what I have next to tell the House—indeed, I am absolutely disgusted about it. Socialist-controlled Basildon district council has just imposed on its ratepayers the largest rate increase in the country of 57·2 per cent. People are rightly outraged about that and those who have been party to such irresponsibility should be thoroughly ashamed of themselves.

I want to take this opportunity to put the record straight about who is to blame for this absolutely shocking state of affairs, as many lies have been spread throughout the constituency on this subject. The rate increase has nothing to do with the provision of essential services; it has much more to do with the enhancement of leisure facilities. Socialists under their different labels are entirely to blame for the massive rate increase through their irresponsible fiscal mismanagement which I will describe.

Constituents have asked me why Basildon's rates were not capped this year. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister, when she replies, will confirm that, through creative accountancy and by drawing upon its reserves, the council failed to meet the Department's criteria.

In previous years Basildon's rates were capped. There was obvious disappointment that they were not included in the capping procedure this year. I made my maiden speech on the Rates Bill and I expressed my wish then that the present system of rates should be replaced by the community charge. I am delighted that the present unfair rates system will be replaced by the community charge next year. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will make it clear that, where taxpayers' money is spent, the local council should be called to account for its fiscal management.

At the moment, all sorts of leaflets and news items are being spread locally conveying to ratepayers what the level of community charge will be. Somehow the myth is being spread that the level of community charge is entirely the Government's responsibility,. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will take the opportunity today to put that right.

I also believe that no one in future should be able to pass the buck and blame others for the level of community charge. I strongly believe that the community charge is good news for Basildon. It is certainly good news for the country at large. It will spread the burden of the cost of local services much more widely. Only a minority of people bear the cost of those services at the moment.

During the last year, Basildon council has been described as a hung council. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) has some experience of that. Throughout the past year the casting vote has been held by the chairman of the council, but in reality what happened has been farcical. A Liberal councillor suddenly announced that in future he would sit as an independent. In practice, this so-called independent councillor voted with the Labour members of the district council on every conceivable occasion. The Labour district council did not have the guts to take responsibility for its actions, so—surprise, surprise—after the local elections in May this so-called independent announced that he was going to join the Labour party. However, I have just been advised that not all the Labour councillors are aware of the fact that he has been allowed to join the Labour party. The suggestion, therefore, must be: watch this space.

The council's behaviour has been quite extraordinary. Despite all that has happened, at its first meeting the council went on a massive spending spree. I voted to increase members' allowances, something which the Conservative group on the council has long opposed. The meeting was not held in the council chamber, which was available. Instead, it was held in the Olivier room of the new Towngate theatre, thus involving even more expense.

There is no doubt in my mind that the cost of building and maintaining the new Towngate theatre is a significant reason for Basildon district council having imposed the largest rates increase in the country—57·2 per cent. The old Towngate theatre was razed to the ground. In its place we have the most expensive municipal theatre in the country. It cost £8·5 million. Of course, we did not have the money to build the theatre. As we could not afford to build it, the money had to be borrowed. A private company has been set up to manage the theatre. Its board consists of councillors and other interested parties.

The stark reality of the enterprise is that even if every seat were occupied on every day of the year, we would still lose money. As that reality dawns on our community, many questions are rightly being asked. Who is responsible for having embarked on such a financially stupid scheme in the first place? Who was responsible for designing the theatre? Who approved the final plans? Who gave the advice which, presumably, councillors saw fit to take at the inception of the scheme? Who has been responsible for managing the theatre's affairs from the day that it opened? The Towngate theatre has so far received about £1·5 million in support for the current year, £900,000 of which relates to repayment of the debt charge.

The Labour group did not incorporate a council chamber in the new town hall. It believes that a council chamber is dead space for most of the time, so in future full council meetings are to be held in the theatre's Mirren studio. I believe that all hon. Members will be shocked to hear that in future council meetings in Basildon will be held in the theatre. I believe that that is a gross insult to the democratic process which we all support, and that Basildon will become a municipal laughing stock.

Local people will never forget the brutal way in which the old Towngate theatre was razed to the ground. It was part of the Basildon culture. The local community was attached to the old building. I do not think that the staff's feelings were considered. Many local residents find it patronising and insulting that it is suggested that, with the advent of the new theatre, culture and sophistication have been brought to Basildon. We find that deeply offensive. I can think of nothing that is less in keeping with this new development than the awful banner which has been displayed across the £8·5 million building and the dirty old caravan which looks as though it has been abandoned outside the main entrance.

All manner of questions should be asked. Those who have been responsible for what has happened should be brought to account. Nobody should be allowed to walk away from the issue until a full, proper and independent inquiry has been held. I am advised that the losses on

revenue last year were £650,000 and that a debt payment of £1,147,000 had to be serviced, courtesy of the burdened ratepayers of Basildon.

I am not attacking the concept of a theatre in Basildon. We have always enjoyed very successful theatre. I applaud the arts and enjoy the entertainment that is provided by local groups, but as a Basildon ratepayer I am outraged by what I believe has happened regarding the financial viability of the new Towngate theatre, bearing in mind the huge rate increase that we have suffered.

It is now rightly being asked what proper services the Labour party will sacrifice to satisfy its ego and to continue its support of the theatre. My hon. Friend the Minister, who has responsibility for new towns, has had to grapple with several difficult issues involving Basildon during the past year. Perhaps the most appalling example of Socialist hypocrisy are the lies that have been spread, and which have frightened new town commission tenants about the security of their tenure. The lies are endless, but despite repeated assurances to the contrary from my hon. Friend the Minister, the elderly, who are among the most vulnerable in our community, have been frightened, and local Socialists have continued to stick to the line that new town commission tenants will lose their security of tenure.

The episode is all the more disgraceful when one considers that the Labour party was offered new town commission properties when there was a Labour Government. Unlike the council in Harlow, it refused. I believe that, as a result of that decision, Basildon has lost a considerable amount of income which we could have used to great effect.

In spite of the local financial crisis, the Socialist council intended to spend £35,000 of ratepayers' money on a so-called tenants' ballot. It has just had the nerve to send out, at the expense of ratepayers, letters congratulating tenants on something that the Labour party was responsible for starting. The letters were sent out in envelopes depicting a champagne bottle. That is a disgrace and the people responsible for the outrage should be called to account.

The so-called tenants action group is described as non-political but local people know that the organisers are Labour party activists. I am advised that in the recent local elections the disgraceful Militant organisation was active in some parts of the constituency. I thought that Militant was proscribed by the Labour party. How is it that a candidate is allowed to stand under the Labour party banner when we know that he is supported by Militant? The tenants action group leaflet was distributed locally by the Labour party and at the bottom the leaflet says that it has been donated at the expense of *Morning Star* publications.

The role of local government officers has also been questioned by some people. Local government officers have always enjoyed a proud history of political neutrality and I have always thought that they approached their duties in a thoroughly responsible and professional manner. Therefore, we have a fine tradition that should be encouraged and which, we hope, will flourish. However, the relationship between local government officers and elected representatives should be clear. It is for the latter to tell the former what to do, obviously after taking advice. It should not be the other way round. Elected representatives should be seen to run things and officers should never be put in a compromising position by making political statements that cannot be backed up through the ballot box.

The Socialist authority, in its never-ending desire to spend money, continues to interfere in areas for which it has no statutory responsibility. It has recently set up a Health Service monitoring and liaison panel, an anti-poll tax committee and a transport committee, and it has now had the cheek to set up a committee to monitor the activities of the Commission for the New Towns.

We know that all those committees are a cloak behind which to knock the Government. That is what it is all about and it is all at the expense of Basildon's hard-pressed ratepayers. The style of Socialists in Basildon has always been to take the credit for things for which they have no responsibility and to avoid criticism for those things for which they should rightly be taken to task. That is highlighted by the fact that they have no concept of what voluntary work is all about. They simply sit there handing out money regardless, and they believe that people should be paid for everything they do.

Council proceedings have become so farcical that, to avoid political change, area management such as has been suffered in Walsall and Tower Hamlets has now been adopted at a huge cost to Basildon's ratepayers. Control of spending has been given to area management committees which Socialists hope will remain in the control of Socialist activists.

Basildon's direct labour organisation has just lost £634,000. I know that the Department of the Environment is looking at what action to take over that financial failure. Grandiose schemes, which did not materialise, were heralded by the council.

I hope that a sensible conclusion is reached about the completion of the roofing of our town centre. It is essential that both sides hold constructive talks and that commitments given to established traders are honoured.

We are currently celebrating 40 glorious years since the birth of Basildon as a new town. It is a wonderful place in which to live because of the strength of the local community. I certainly do not wish it to be broken by the financial mismanagement that we are suffering at the hands of the Socialists.

2.20 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) on securing this Adjournment debate to highlight the recent high rate increase in Basildon and the predicament in which the community finds itself. It is fortunate to have as its Member of Parliament such a champion of its interests.

I congratulate and strongly support my hon. Friend on his persistent efforts over the past few years to bring to light the irresponsible and extravagant expenditure of Basildon district council, which until last year was Labour-controlled but only recently has become hung—an apt description of the difficulties in which it finds itself, which it is foisting on local residents. Efficient management, good common sense and more accountability are needed on Basildon district council.

My hon. Friend told us that Basildon increased its local rate by over 57 per cent. for 1989-90 to finance a huge increase in spending of 87 per cent. My hon. Friend mentioned its spending on leisure activities. It seems to me

[Mrs. Virginia Bottomley]

that its leisure activity is spending other people's money. That increase is the largest rate increase of any shire district and well above the average increase of 12 per cent. for shire districts. The local rate for Basildon—78·1 p—is the third highest in England. Only Harlow and Wear Valley, which are Labour-controlled districts, have higher rates. In contrast, hon. Members will be interested, but scarcely surprised, to learn that the average increases in local rates between 1988-89 and 1989-90 is almost 14 per cent. among Labour shire authorities compared with only 9 per cent. among Conservative authorities.

Those figures highlight the extreme profligacy of Basildon district council with its ratepayers' money. To understand how the huge rate increase occurred, I shall give the House the basic facts behind it and show that it has nothing to do with the Government but was the result of decisions taken by the council purely and simply to make ratepayers pay for its numerous and extravagant schemes.

Basildon district council has a long history of excessive spending. Throughout the 1980s, total expenditure was well above the amounts assessed for grant-related expenditure. Average spending over GRE since 1983-84 has been a staggering 80 per cent., and in two of the past three years expenditure has been over double the assessed GRE level. That is clearly excessive by any standards and is a heavy burden for the ratepayers of Basildon to carry.

The district's needs are assessed in the same way as those of every other shire district. The assessment measures what an authority needs to spend to provide a standard level of service at a common rate poundage, taking account of the characteristics of the area. It is an objective method based on indicators of need. Of course, there can be, and often are, argument and discussion about precise detail. Hon. Members will be aware that officials are reviewing, with the associations, the methodology for a set of simplified needs assessments to be used under the new revenue support grant system.

Basildon's excessive spending led the Secretary of State to rate-cap it each year between 1985-86 and 1988-89. By 1988-89 we had reined rates back to a level below that in 1985-86. But in 1989-90 it was not possible for us under the Rates Act 1984 to cap Basildon. I understand the frustration of many local residents. Section 2(2)(a) of the Rates Act exempts an authority from designation for rate limitation in any financial year if its total budgeted expenditure for that financial year does not exceed a threshold which is statutorily updated each year. This is because authorities with low expenditure in absolute terms have only a relatively small impact on the level of rates which ratepayers actually pay. The Rate Limitation (Designation of Authorities) (Exemption) Order 1988 set the threshold for designation in 1988-89 for capping in 1989-90 at £13·1 million. Basildon's budgeted total expenditure figure of £13 million is just below the threshold for capping.

Although Basildon will receive no block grant in 1989-90 because of its excessive expenditure relative to GRE levels, I should point out that the 1989-90 rate support grant settlement would have allowed Basildon to reduce its local rate by 3 per cent. without the use of balances, had it held its spending roughly constant in real terms. However, even a decrease of 3 per cent. would still have left Basildon ratepayers facing one of the highest rate poundages, but it would have been a welcome step in the right direction. Clearly, there was no need for such a substantial rate rise.

I greatly regret the misinformation and scaremongering on the community charge. Labour local authorities that are spending highly know only too well that the writing is on the wall. With the introduction of the community charge, the community will be well and truly in charge. High-spending, profligate authorities will be exposed for what they are to the local charge payers. The system will be fairer. It will restore local accountability and local residents will know what they should do in the local elections.

I am sure that my hon. Friend hopes that the residents of Basildon will take the good advice of the citizens of the county of Essex and ensure that they elect Conservative representatives, who will conduct themselves efficiently and effectively, have a responsible attitude towards local charge payers' money and provide the best value for money together with high-quality services. We have estimated that, had the community charge been in operation in 1988-89, the charge in Basildon would have been about £267, £65 more than the community charge for spending at need. I stress that those figures are merely illustrative. The level of community charge depends upon the spending policies of the local authorities. Basildon's charge payers will be free to vote for the policies that they want and the party that puts them forward.

My hon. Friend referred to the fact that the ratepayers are now paying the price for excessive capital commitments during the 1980s, using deferred purchase arrangements. We all know much about all those policies seeking to take the waiting out of wanting—live now, pay later. The chickens are coming home to roost.

In recent years, Basildon has entered into substantial deferred purchase arrangements for capital programmes, totalling at least £44 million. These include the Towngate theatre, referred to by my hon. Friend, the Basildon centre and the Markham Chase centre. I share his concern that even if every seat of the theatre were filled for every day of the year it would still make a loss, as he said earlier this week. The district auditor outlined the financial impact of these schemes on the ratepayers of Basildon in his report of July 1987. He estimated that the payments falling due in 1989-90 from deferred purchase schemes would be equivalent to adding 19p to the rate in 1989-90—a rate which I have already said was very high compared with other shire districts. We estimate that these payments could account for around two thirds of the recent rate increase in Basildon.

Basildon district council has obviously entered into huge financial commitment and, now that the payments have to be made, the reality of the arrangements is hitting home. The Government have given public warnings many times about the inevitable financial consequences of authorities buying today and paying tomorrow. We have made it clear that local authorities must provide for the debts that they have chosen to incur.

In 1987 Parliament passed legislation designed to remove the advantage within the capital control arrangements for local authorities to enter into deferred purchase agreements. It seems unlikely that authorities would now imprudently use such arrangements. Under the new capital finance arrangements for local authorities

which we propose to bring into force from 1 April 1990 deferred purchase arrangements will be treated as a credit arrangement similar to borrowing.

I thank my hon. Friend for the opportunity to comment on the situation in Basildon. I note that the slogan on the headed notepaper used by the council is, "Caring and winning through". I hope that the Council will take it to heart and provide the ratepayers and future community chargepayers with more responsible financial management. I have no doubt that the new community charge system will bring about greater accountability——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment lapsed, without Question put.

SOUND BROADCASTING

Ordered,

That, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 129 (Select Committee on Sound Broadcasting), the Select Committee on Televising of Proceedings of the House shall have power to give directions and perform other duties in accordance with the provisions of the Resolution of the House of 26th July 1977, in relation to sound broadcasting, and to make recommendations thereon to the House.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Wednesday 7th June, notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (1)(b) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), Motions in the name of Mr. Secretary King relating to Northern Ireland may be proceeded with, though opposed, for one and a half hours after the first of them has been entered upon; and if proceedings thereon have not been previously disposed of, Mr. Speaker shall, at the expiration of that period, put any Questions necessary to dispose of them.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

HOUSE OF COMMONS (SERVICES)

Ordered,

That Standing Order No. 125 (Select Committee on House of Commons (Services)) be amended, in line 10, by inserting after the word 'House', the words 'to adjourn from place to place'; in line 22, by inserting after the word 'House' the words 'to adjourn from place to place, subject to the approval of the committee'; in line 41, by inserting after the word 'Offices' the word 'and'; and in line 44, by leaving out from the word 'it' to the end of line 45.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

Flight Path Patterns (RAF Upper Heyford)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

2.30 pm

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): I last raised this issue in the House on 30 November 1988, as reported at columns 849-56 of *Hansard*. As the time for the debate is limited, I shall not repeat the full background to the anxieties that caused me to seek a further debate on this important issue. As I wish to raise a considerable number of issues and some of them are complex, I shall understand if my hon. Friend the Minister is unable to respond to them in full today and chooses to write to me. I hope that he will reflect on what I have to say and will not shut the door on my suggestions but will give them some consideration and time.

The House will recall that there was a change of flight path at RAF Upper Heyford resulting in a substantial increase in aircraft noise suffered by local people. The chief environmental health officer of Cherwell district council reported the matter last October, stating:

"The nature and magnitude of the noise really has to be experienced for its effects upon people trying to lead a normal life to be truly appreciated . . . As a direct result of the changed aircraft departure routes on 1 June 1988 the rural communities . . . have suffered severe adverse effects by the introduction of aircraft noise levels far in excess of those which previously prevailed. The changed flight paths have not reduced the high noise levels already experienced by other villages . . . but has in some cases increased the level being experienced . . . Cherwell District Council . . . some years ago advised that new building should not be permitted in areas subject to noise levels in excess of 75 dBA . . . and this view has been upheld by Inspectors at Planning Inquiries. It is therefore obvious that noise in excess of that level should not be brought to existing settlements."

As a consequence of the change in flight paths, substantial increases in noise were brought to existing settlements and that led to the debate last November. During that debate my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health, then the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces, undertook that there would be a full study of the costs and implications of realigning the runway. That study was completed earlier this year and my hon. Friend the Minister told a meeting of representatives of local communities that the cost of realigning the runway would be at least £300 million. That meant that it would be impossible. Undoubtedly that was a deeply disappointing result for the many people who had hoped that it might be possible to find a technical solution to enable noise levels to return to something similar to what they were prior to 1 June last year.

Following my hon. Friend's announcement, there are a number of continuing worries. First, there is still concern at the original decision to change the flight paths. There is a suspicion that the change was carried out not for reasons of safety but for convenience, or in anticipation of new planes, further planes or new weapons systems being introduced at Upper Heyford. Part of that suspicion arises because of conflicting accounts about who requested the change in flight paths.

In a letter to me last July, my hon. Friend the present Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health said:

[Mr. Tony Baldry]

"F111s . . . no longer have enough extra thrust to perform manoeuvres with acceptable reserves for safety sufficient to meet the stringent safety margins required by the United States air force."

Yet, last October, Colonel Nameth of the United States Air Force department in Washington wrote to a local resident saying

"the Ministry of Defence proposed a change in the take off pattern"

and that

"the Ministry of Defence has recently adjusted the flight paths for RAF Upper Heyford."

Clearly, the Government's prime responsibility towards the communities around the base must be to ensure that flying activities are carried out as safely as possible. If the old flight paths have become unsafe, clearly the United States Air Force and the Ministry of Defence were under a duty of care not to allow planes to continue to fly on them.

Given that a sizeable number of local people remain unconvinced about the merits of the original decision, I hope that some effort will be made in the near future by the Royal Air Force commander at Upper Heyford, Squadron Leader Rice, and by the United States Air Force commander, Colonel Downer, to provide an opportunity for briefing local people about why the changes were made. Perhaps they could give local people a chance to meet and question some of the pilots involved. It must be in the best interests of both the United States Air Force and the Ministry of Defence for local people to be confident that the original changes in flight paths were taken with their best interests at heart and for no other reason.

There is also concern to ensure that planes adhere to the correct existing flight paths and that, within the present parameters, everything possible is done to reduce noise disturbance. I had a constructive and positive meeting with Colonel Downer and Squadron Leader Rice last week. I am grateful to both of them for their positive approach to these difficulties. I was glad to hear that they have set up a noise abatement group of senior officers at the base to give consideration to any ideas which might reduce noise levels. That demonstrates that people working at the base are conscious of the increasing impact that their activities have on local communities and are starting to think about noise and how it might be reduced.

I was also glad to hear that the amount of afternoon and early evening flying is to be substantially reduced. One of the most irksome matters for local people has been the considerable amount of later afternoon and early evening flying around the base, particularly in the summer months when planes return from missions and carry out practice circuits and bumps around the base. I was told that those activities have now been scrubbed, and when planes return to the base they will simply land.

There has also been concern about whether the planes adhere sufficiently strictly to the present designated flight patterns west of the base. I have been told that, whenever flying activity takes place there, a pilot will be sent to Steeple Aston to stand on the designated flight path between Steeple and Middle Aston to monitor the planes flying overhead.

It is also proposed to erect a large white banner on the correct flight path between Steeple and Middle Aston to act as a further visual aid to pilots. While to the outsider that may seem somewhat quaint, any measure which can help to reduce the noise impact on people living nearby is obviously to be welcomed and is worth trying.

It will be in everyone's interest if Squadron Leader Rice can have regular meetings with representatives of local communities to take forward any sensible suggestions to help ameliorate noise levels and also, if possible, to establish much quicker and more effective lines of communication and information to local vilages about what is happening, about to happen and has happened, at the base.

The recent F111 incidents were an example of when, for most people, the only immediate information available was received in dribs and drabs on the radio and in the press. By definition, much of it was hearsay and second hand and led to speculation and rumour.

It must be possible to establish an effective network to disseminate information regularly and, when necessary, speedily through local communities from the base. I am sure that local people would willingly co-operate with such a move if it meant that they could be given more speedily the information that they as local people need about these matters.

I hope that progress with Squadron Leader Rice and Colonel Downer has been positive, but there are one or two areas in which progress has not been as positive. The first relates to compensation for Ardley. Ardley is a comparatively small village to the east of the base and has been perhaps one of the worst affected villages. It has a sizeable number of houses within the 83 dbn contour. The Ministry of Defence has offered to purchase those houses at market values. I understand that once purchased they will be relet to American service personnel.

Many people in Ardley feel that it is unfair and unjust that, whereas a house on one side of the road may fall within the 83 dbn contour and thus be available for purchase, a house which is literally on the other side of the side of the road and which happens to be outside the 83 dbn contour, but by definition must be within a very high noise contour, is not eligible for purchase. It would be fairer and more just if every householder in the immediate parish of Ardley could have the opportunity of his or her property being sold to the Ministry of Defence at market value because otherwise my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces will encounter some hard cases and people who feel, rightly, that they have not been treated fairly or justly.

The people of Ardley have not brought this upon themselves. The village has existed for a long time. The noise levels are not of the people's making, but inevitably if, as I suspect will happen, a sizeable number of people sell their houses because of the intolerable noise levels, the nature and character of the village will change considerably. The village shop, garage and church are all within the 83 dbn contour. It will be much more sensible if all home owners in the village were given the opportunity of selling their property. It could then be rightly and fairly said that anyone who purchased that property thereafter and moved to the village did so with full knowledge and understanding of the nuisance involved.

My hon. Friend will doubtless say that that would create a precedent. In effect, the decision by the Ministry of Defence to offer compensation along the lines that are similar to those in the Land Compensation Act 1973 is itself a precedent in many ways. If the Ministry of Defence feels unable to offer to purchase the homes itself, I

understand that the United States Air Force is short of accommodation. The housing estate that it has been using in Bicester is shortly no longer to be available to it. I hope that my hon. Friend will consider having discussions with the United States Air Force to see whether it would be prepared to purchase those houses from its budget.

Many people whose homes fall within the 83 dbn contour have lived in Ardley for many years and have children attending the local schools. They are finding the present noise levels intolerable and wish to move, but they regard the period of one year in which they have to make the decision to move as a tight time frame. I hope that my hon. Friend will consider extending that period. Indeed, there are precedents for that, such as what happened in Yeovilton. Such an extension would ensure that people did not feel that their only option was to be rushed out of their homes.

Everyone in Ardley has been put in an intolerable position. It is difficult for those of us not in that position to conceive of it. People in Ardley, both individually and as a community are having to contend with a whole host of difficulties about their future. I hope that my hon. Friend will give consideration—I am sure that he will—to whether the Ministry of Defence could extend the compensation provisions so that everyone in Ardley could be included.

There is then the question of compensation for what in the law of nuisance is described as the loss of quiet enjoyment of one's property. For those who live, for example, in rented accommodation—council tenants and others—the compensation arrangements recently announced by my hon. Friend will be of no real benefit. I should have thought that it would be sensible for those living within the 75 plus dbn contour to be offered a straightforward one-off lump sum payment as compensation for what, in effect, is the loss of the quiet enjoyment of their properties. In due time, of course, if those houses are sold or people move, the people coming new into the area will know the position, but the people who are living there at present have no means of knowing that what had hitherto been tolerable levels of noise would become intolerable. In those circumstances, it would be considered much more fair and just if those people were to receive a single lump sum compensation payment for what has materially and seriously affected the quality of life that they are able to enjoy.

There are continuing concerns about Dr. Radcliffe's school, which is a Church of England school at Steeple Aston. It has a roll of approximately 150 pupils aged 5 to 11 years. It is now almost immediately under the new flight path to the west. My hon. Friend has visited the school and knows its exact location.

I have seen a letter of 24 May, written by Mr. Topps of the Ministry of Defence Land Agents to Mrs. Simmons, who is chairman of the school's governors. I am sure that my hon. Friend has seen that letter, so, as time is short, I do not intend to go through it in great detail. I do not believe that Mr. Topps's letter is a fair summary of the history of the matter. When it became apparent that the noise levels over Steeple Aston were becoming intolerable, my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) fairly came to Steeple Aston. He visited Dr. Radcliffe's school and sought Treasury permission to offer payment for that school to have proper noise insulation. That, obviously, was a sensible and straightforward approach to the matter, and the approach that anyone would have hoped would be taken. The school governors and the parents understood that, and supported the fact that there should be a full technical survey to see whether it would be possible to insulate the school.

In due course that survey was completed and there was a meeting at Dr. Radcliffe's school, which a large number of people attended, because there was much interest in the school. As it is a Church of England school, there were representatives from the diocesan education authority. there were also representatives from Oxfordshire county council, as the local education authority, the trustees of the Dr. Radcliffe trust, governors and others who were concerned, including representatives of the Ministry of Defence and the PSA and the technical advisers who had carried out the technical survey.

It was only at that time that the local education authority and others had the opportunity to consider the implications of the technical survey. I am bound to say that the general consensus was that the proposals were costly and that there was no guarantee that such expense, once incurred, would materially improve the school's environment. What is more, it became apparent in the intervening period that both teachers and parents had become increasingly apprehensive about the number of planes that were flying immediately above the school, and, therefore, that was another factor that had to be taken into consideration.

Following that meeting, the school governors unanimously resolved that, rather than spending large sums of public money on seeking an expensive system of noise insulation, which would probably not solve the problem, they would much prefer that the school be moved. That approach is now supported by Oxfordshire county council as the local education authority. From Mr. Topps's letter, I understand that the Ministry is not prepared to support such an approach.

I hope that my hon. Friend will reflect upon the matter. By definition, any change to the school will need the endorsement of the local education authority and, doubtless, of the Department of Education and Science. I hope also that my hon. Friend will consider the Dr. Radcliffe school and the other issues, and ensure that his officials consult officials in the Department of Education and Science on the best way forward. I understand my hon. Friend's concern that the technical survey has already incurred a sum of money, but there will be greater concern if thousands of pounds are spent on insulating the school only for a modest improvement. Parents and staff would still be worried about children being taught in that environment.

To a greater or lesser degree, everyone in north Oxfordshire supports the fundamental principle that my hon. Friend and I support, that the first duty of the realm is the defence of the realm. Over the years, there has been full appreciation of the contribution that RAF Upper Heyford has played and continues to play in the nation's defence. As I have made clear on previous occasions, that public good must be balanced against the numerous collective private interests of the thousands of people who live around the base. One of the Government's functions is to seek to reconcile the public good and private interests as best as possible.

The change in the flight path has led to a substantial increase in aircraft noise. What was once tolerable has now become intolerable for many people. There is said to be no relief from the noise. Frustration has increased because of

[Mr. Tony Baldry]

recent incidents. For instance, on 9 May, shortly after take-off, an F111 developed engine problems and jettisoned fuel, which then ignited, causing the plane to have the appearance of a fireball when it landed. On 19 May, part of a wing flap fell off an F111 during a flight close to Banbury.

Such frustrations and concerns are causing increasingly large numbers of people in north Oxfordshire to question the reason for having a major military airfield in one of the fastest growing areas in the United Kingdom. Over the past year, local people have been patient. I trust that my hon. Friend will today be able to meet some of their specific and immediate concerns, and ensure that everyone considers that he is being treated fairly and justly and that every step is being taken to ensure that they can lead their lives with as little inconvenience from the base as is humanly possible in the circumstances.

I appreciate that I have taken more time than is customary in an Adjournment debate, and I apologise for that. I am sure that my hon. Friend will recognise that several matters of concern should have been outlined. In many instances, I have been able to outline them only briefly and in headline form. If my hon. Friend feels that I have not accorded him sufficient time to respond fully to my constituents' concerns, I hope that he will take time to reflect and to write to me in due course or that we will have further meetings. I thank my hon. Friend and his officials for their courtesy in recent weeks and months. My hon. Friend found this problem on his desk when he moved to his present position. I hope that he will continue to make efforts to find solutions to these difficult problems.

2.53 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Michael Neubert): My hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) is to be congratulated on again raising this issue on the Adjournment. I know that many people in his constituency are concerned about the problem of military aircraft noise at RAF Upper Heyford. I hope this debate will give me the opportunity to clarify some of the issues involved and answer some of the points raised by my hon. Friend, who made his case with characteristic clarity and who continues his staunch defence of his constituents' interests.

I do not intend to go over the history of this issue in detail, not least because my predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman), did so in debate on 30 November and because I am left with only seven minutes for my response today and time will undoubtedly run out on me. However, as the principal events have been brought into question, I believe that it would be useful if I were to set out those events that led up to the change in take-off patterns and those which have taken place since.

Early last year the Ministry of Defence received a submission from the headquarters of the United States Third Air Force at RAF Mildenhall on behalf of RAF Upper Heyford. This submission set out the reasons why they, as operators of the F111, believed that the take-off patterns then being used by aircraft of the 20th tactical fighter wing based at RAF Upper Heyford no longer met the necessarily high safety standards of the United States Air Force, and why they therefore believed their use should be discontinued. I will come onto the reasons for this in more detail later in my speech. The submission requested the approval of the Ministry of Defence to this proposal. After very careful consideration in the Ministry of Defence, including advice from Royal Air Force experts and further consultation with the United States Air Force, my predecessor gave his approval to the proposed changes —to be made with effect from 1 June 1988.

The new take-off path to the west was subsequently modified in mid August to relieve some of the impact on Steeple Aston. However, local people, particularly in Steeple and Middle Aston and Ardley, still felt the noise levels to which they were being subjected were too high. Their campaign therefore continued and my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury suggested during the debate on 30 November that the Ministry examine the possibility of realigning the runway at RAF Upper Heyford to determine whether this offered a solution to the problem. In responding to that debate, my predecessor agreed to undertake a full study of the costs and implications of such a project and to examine whether there were any other technical means by which the situation might be improved.

A thorough and careful study was carried out by my officials with the help of the Property Services Agency and the United States Air Force. The conclusion it reached was that, although it might be technically feasible to realign the runway at RAF Upper Heyford, it was not in fact practical because it would redistribute the noise to other villages, have significant operational penalties for the 20th tactical fighter wing and involve enormous costs—a minimum of £150 million for the project itself, plus other costs of a similar order to base the aircraft elsewhere during the work. The study was not able to identify any other technical means by which a solution to the problem might be found.

As my hon. Friend has said, I visited RAF Upper Heyford on 19 April, when he was present, to announce the results of the study. I made it clear at that meeting that we and our American colleagues very much regret the noise and disturbance to which the residents of the local community around the base are subject. I can assure the House that the decision to introduce new departure routes at the base was made only after very careful consideration of the position and with the interests of safety in mind. However, there appears to be some confusion still about the reason for the change and it might be helpful if I explain the background.

The old take-off routes required the aircraft to make a sharp banked turn to the right immediately after take-off, followed by one to the left. Sharply banking an aircraft requires the pilot to produce enough lift by pulling back on the stick both to overcome gravity and make the turn. Producing more lift also increases the drag on the aircraft so the pilot normally adds power to maintain air speed. However, immediately after lift off, the pilot has already applied maximum power, so his only remaining alternative is to sacrifice climb performance. This S-bend manoeuvre therefore reduced the safety margin of the take-off, because it meant that if the pilot did encounter a problem on take-off he was climbing less steeply and therefore the time available to cope with any emergency was reduced. While this reduction in the take-off pattern was small when the old take-off procedure was first introduced, subsequent changes led to a further deterioration in the safety margins of this manoeuvre to a point where they became unacceptable.

Changing operational requirements had led to an increase in the weight of the F111 aircraft based at RAF Upper Heyford so that, for example, an aircraft on a typical operational sortie is about 6 per cent. heavier now than it would have been 10 years ago. This is partly due to a change to safer, though heavier, fuel and partly due to changing operational requirements which have increased the payload that the aircraft is required to carry. Because some of this weight increase is due to the carriage of additional external stores there has also been an associated increase in the drag factor. It was those factors which led to the reduction in safety margins to the point where the only prudent course was for the United States Air Force to request a reversion to a conventional straight out pattern and for the Ministry of Defence to agree to that request. The straight out pattern, as modified last August, restores the safety margins for the foreseeable future. I should perhaps stress, in view of some suggestions which have been made, that the decision was taken purely in the light of current circumstances with the sole aim of maintaining the safety of flying operations from the base.

That brings me to the second issue that I hope to clarify and that concerns the future of the base. There has been a great deal of speculation in the press in recent weeks about what may or may not happen at the base in the future, but the truth is quite straightforward. We are currently considering with our NATO partners what adjustments need to be made to our forces in Europe in the wake of the intermediate nuclear forces—INF—treaty. However, no decisions have yet been taken and the Government have not agreed to any changes to the role or aircraft of the 20th tactical fighter wing at RAF Upper Heyford; nor have we agreed to any expansion or additions to the facilities there to support new or additional aircraft. Any works under way at the base relate to the aircraft currently stationed there——

The motion having been made at half-past Two o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order, till Tuesday 6 June, pursuant to the Resolution of the House of 22 May.*

Adjourned accordingly at Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 15 May 1989

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Special Needs

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he plans to take to ensure that special needs provision is protected within the framework of local financial management of schools.

Mr. Butcher: Circular 7/88 on local management of schools makes clear that LEAs will be expected to reflect in their LMS formulae the incidence of pupils with special educational needs in their schools. This will include both non-statemented pupils with learning difficulties and statemented pupils where provision for the latter is delegated to schools. It will be open to LEAs to propose to except from delegation provision for statemented pupils where they judge this to be the best way of ensuring that resources are targeted on the needs of the individual pupils concerned. Authorities may also choose to continue to manage centrally the range of advisory and support services associated with special needs provision.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what he plans to do to ensure that resources are allocated within local financial management of schools to pupils with special educational needs but without statements of special educational needs.

Mr. Butcher: Paragraph 115 of circular 7/88 on local management of schools makes clear that LEAs will be expected to reflect in their LMS formulae the incidence of pupils with special educational needs in their schools. This will include non-statemented pupils with learning difficulties. Where the numbers of such pupils vary between schools it will be open to LEAs to include a specific factor in their formulae designed to target resources according to the additional need to spend of certain schools.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to ensure that the provisions made in section 19 of the Education Reform Act concerning the power of headteachers to temporarily exclude pupils with special needs from the national curriculum or to request that statements be made on such pupils is not misused.

Mr. Butcher: My Department has issued for comment by 31 May draft regulations to be made under section 19 of the Education Reform Act governing temporary exceptions from the national curriculum for individual pupils. These include the following proposals for safeguards against misuse.

A head teacher must give a special direction before lifting or modifying any national curriculum requirements in respect of an individual pupil for the purpose of assessment or reassessment for special educational needs. The special direction must include the headteacher's reasons for judging that the pupil has or probably has special educational needs requiring the making or amendment of a statement. Copies must be sent to parents, the school governing body and the LEA. Parents will have the right of appeal to the governing body, which may overturn the headteacher's decision. There will be strict time limits on the duration of directions and the scope for renewals.

A copy of the draft regulations has been placed in the Library.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to allocate additional resources for the training of teachers and others in the implementation of the national curriculum in respect of children with special educational needs.

Mr. Butcher: Additional support for training teachers to implement the national curriculum is available through the LEA training grants scheme; £47·5 million is available for this purpose in the current financial year. It is for local education authorities to decide how much to spend, within this total, on training in respect of children with special educational needs.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what criteria were used in the selection of the membership of the NCC task group on special educational needs.

Mr. Butcher: It is for the National Curriculum Council, and not for my right hon. Friend to determine the selection of members of task groups.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) when he plans to publish the revision of circular 1/83; and whether he can indicate the results of the consultation process in respect of the draft revision;

(2) whether he plans to give advice to local education authorities on the proper conduct of appeals in the light of the contents of the National Deaf Children's Society report entitled "A Mockery of Needs";

(3) whether, in the light of the contents of the National Deaf Children's Society report entitled "A Mockery of Needs" he will take further steps to ensure that parents of children with special educational needs receive accurate up-to-date information and adequate support at diagnosis following the provisions made in section 10 of the Education Act 1981; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The Department of Health, the Welsh Office and this Department have received a substantial number of responses to the draft circular to replace circular 1/83. They have indicated a general welcome to the provision of new guidance to local education authorities, health authorities and social services departments on the procedures to be followed in the implementation of various provisions in the Education Act 1981. They have made a number of detailed observations which are now being considered by the Departments. The contents of the National Deaf Children's Society's report will also be taken into consideration. We hope to issue the new circular within the next few months. Guidance on the conduct of local appeals is included in the code of practice on appeals prepared by the local authority associations and the Council on Tribunals.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many appeals under section 8(6) of the Education Act 1981 against the special educational provision set out in the statement of special educational needs he has received since 1983 in respect of *(a)* all children with statements of special educational need and *(b)* deaf children with statements of special educational needs; and how many of these appeals have gone in the parents' favour.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend has received 150 appeals under section 8(6) of the Education Act 1981 since 1983. It is not possible to identify from the Department's records how many of those appeals were in respect of deaf children. My right hon. Friend has amended the statement of special educational needs in 34 of those appeals. Decisions have yet to be taken on 25 appeals.

Schools Examination and Assessment Council

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to ensure representation from special education sectors on the Schools Examination and Assessment Council.

Mr. Butcher: Last year Professor Peter Mittler, director of the centre for educational guidance and special needs at the university of Manchester, accepted my right hon. Friend's invitation to become a member of the Schools Examination and Assessment Council.

Departmental Property

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the property costs, including rent, asset replacement and rates of his Department in total, in each standard both in total and per square foot for each year since 1983.

Mrs. Rumbold: Information in the precise form requested is not available without incurring disproportionate cost. The Department has, however, paid the Property Services Agency for accommodation and services under the property repayment system since 1 April 1984. Under these arrangements, annual charges for accommodation, including those incurred by non-departmental public bodies sponsored by the Department and Her Majesty's inspectorate, have been as follows:

1 *Financial year*	*2* *Area sq ft*	*3* *Opportunity cost-rent*	*4* *Contribution in lieu of rates*	*5* *Club subscription for minor works and maintenance*	*6* *Administration charges on 5*	*7* *Total annual costs*
		£	£	£	£	£
1984-85	193,239	3,857,031	2,887,683	760,741	181,927	7,687,382
1985-86	180,616	3,569,792	2,522,640	786,386	187,534	7,066,352
1986-87	178,222	3,616,573	3,076,339	768,223	182,250	7,643,385
1987-88	178,990	3,730,160	3,022,937	631,163	157,269	7,541,529
1988,89	182,423	3,934,872	2,969,576	945,710	234,804	8,084,962

Departmental Plant and Equipment

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when the last revaluation of plant and equipment employed by his Department was carried out; and what plant and equipment asset replacement charges are incurred by his Department.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department, like most other Government Departments, operates cash-based systems which enable Parliament to be satisfied that amounts of cash voted to be spent on certain activities have been so spent. There has, therefore, been no overall need, apart from those limited areas where repayment to transactions are conducted, to maintain comprehensive up-to-date valuations of plant and equipment, the purchase cost of which is tightly controlled through the cash accounting system and plant and equipment asset replacement charges are often not entered in the accounts.

Radiation

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the research commissioned by his Department into the relationship between cancer and radiation in the last 30 years.

Mr. Jackson: Since 1976 the Medical Research Council, which receives its grant-in-aid through my Department, has supported a total of 191 projects relevant to the relationship between cancer and radiation—both in its own establishments and through its grant schemes. I am arranging for a list of these research projects to be sent to the right hon. Member and for a copy to be placed in the Library.

I regret that it is not possible to provide details of research conducted prior to 1976.

Vice-Chancellors and Principals

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the average salary paid to all those vice-chancellors or principals at United Kingdom universities, for whom data are collected, in 1989 and each of the last five years.

Mr. Jackson: The Department does not collect information on the salaries of vice-chancellors or principals.

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to allow city technology colleges to introduce selection based on attainable levels at the age of 11 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: Pupils admitted to city technology colleges represent a wide range of abilities and will have demonstrated their aptitude to benefit from the particular type of education to be offered. In time, national assessments at age 11 will provide evidence of the distribution of attainment on entry to CTCs.

Tranquillisers

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects the study being carried out by the Institute of Psychiatry into benzodiazepines will be completed; and whether it will be published.

Mr. Jackson: The Institute of Psychiatry is currently carrying out several studies related to benzodiazepines. It is anticipated that they will be completed by September 1989. The researchers would be expected, as is the usual practice, to disseminate their findings through appropriate professional journals.

Teachers (Incentive Allowances)

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Erith and Crayford of 8 May, *Official Report*, columns *298-99*, if information from the 1988 secondary staffing survey can be used to test the accuracy of his Department's expectations in relation to the automatic award of incentive allowances in October 1987 for that sector, without reference to the DTR data mentioned in his reply; if he will publish a table showing comparative figures for entitlement to such allowances *(a)* derived from the results of the 1988 secondary staffing survey and *(b)* his Department's plans; if he will, by other means, estimate the number of each rate of incentive allowance awarded automatically in secondary schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Data from the 1988 secondary school staffing survey can in due course be compared with the assumptions in circular 8/87 about the number of teachers in secondary schools who would receive an incentive allowance automatically in October 1987. Such data are not yet available and, for a number of reasons, will not provide a precise measure of the accuracy of the assumptions in the circular. Information from the 1987 database of teacher records will enable more reliable comparisons to be made, and will shortly become available. There are no other practical means of estimating the number of allowances awarded automatically in that year.

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Erith and Crayford of 8 May, *Official Report*, columns *298-99*, if information from the 1987 primary staffing survey will be used to test the accuracy of his Department's expectations in relation to the automatic award of incentive allowances in October 1987 for that sector, without reference to the DTR data mentioned in his reply; if he will publish a table showing comparative figures for entitlement to such allowances *(a)* derived from the results of the 1987 primary staffing survey and *(b)* his Department's plans; if he will, by other means, estimate the number of each rate of incentive allowance awarded automatically in primary schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department does not plan to compare the assumptions in circular 8/87 about the number of teachers in primary schools receiving an incentive allowance automatically in October 1987 with data from the 1987 primary school staffing survey. Information from the 1987 database of teacher records will enable more reliable comparisons to be made, and will shortly become available. There are no other practical means of estimating the number of allowances awarded automatically in that year.

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Erith and Crayford of 8 May, *Official Report*, column *299*, what is the estimated planned cost of incentive allowances in financial years 1988-89 and 1989-90 on a similar basis to that reply, distinguishing the amount and proportion in each year attributable to the automatic award of allowances in October 1987.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information is as follows:

Estimated cost[1] of incentive allowances in ordinary schools

	1987-88[2]	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
Total cost (£ million)	113	319	366
Costs attributable to the automatic award of incentive allowances in October 1987 (£ million)	106 (94 per cent.)	[3]236 (74 per cent.)	[3]250 (68 per cent.)

[1] Costs are cash values for financial years and include employers' on-costs.
[2] 1 October 1987 to 31 March 1988.
[3] These figures assume that all the teachers who received an incentive allowance automatically in 1987 continued to teach in ordinary schools and to be paid the same allowance. They are therefore overstated because in practice a significant number would have been promoted or ceased to work in such schools.

University Students

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) how many full-time students there were in *(a)* British and *(b)* Scottish universities for each year since 1973;

(2) how many full-time women university students there were in *(a)* British and *(b)* Scottish universities for each year since 1973.

Mr. Jackson: The information requested is shown in the following table:

Full-time students in universities in Scotland and Great Britain
Thousands

Academic year beginning in	*Scotland*		*Great Britain*	
	Total	*Of which women*	*Total*	*Of which women*
1973	39·0	13·8	244·1	77·7
1974	39·7	14·6	250·6	82·5
1975	40·5	15·2	261·3	87·7
1976	41·6	15·9	271·8	92·5
1977	42·3	16·2	280·5	97·1
1978	43·0	16·7	288·4	102·2
1979	43·3	17·2	292·7	107·3
1980	44·4	18·0	298·7	112·4
1981	45·0	18·7	300·2	115·4
1982	44·8	18·9	295·4	115·7
1983	44·8	18·9	291·7	115·0

Academic year beginning in	Scotland Total	Scotland Of which women	Great Britain Total	Great Britain Of which women
1984	45·3	19·0	290·6	116·0
1985	46·2	19·3	295·5	118·4
1986	47·2	19·7	301·3	121·8
1987	48·3	20·5	305·4	125·2

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many full-time university students of *(a)* Asian, *(b)* African and *(c)* other ethnic minority origins there were in (i) British and (ii) Scottish universities for each year since 1973, excluding foreign students.

Mr. Jackson: This information is not at present collected centrally. It will be collected for students starting undergraduate courses in 1990.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many full-time students from social groups IIIM, IV and V there were in the British universities for each year since 1973; and how many of them registered in courses of Scottish universities.

Mr. Jackson: The number of home university students accepted through the Universities Central Council on Admissions (UCCA), and who were from social groups III M, IV and V since 1977 in the United Kingdom are shown in the following table. Comparable figures for Scottish universities are not readily available. Nor are figures for earlier years.

Numbers of home acceptances through UCCA from social classes III M, IV, V

	Numbers (000's)
1977	14·8
1978	14·9
1979	15·4
[1]1980	14·0
1981	11·8
1982	11·8
1983	12·3
1984	13·0
1985	14·3
1986	14·4
1987	14·7

[1] A new coding system was introduced in 1980. Figures for earlier years are not strictly comparable.

School Watch Video

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the cost of the poster advertising the school watch video sent to every chair of every school governing body.

Mr. Butcher: The cost of printing and distributing copies of the poster to all chairs of school governing bodies was £4,883, borne equally by the Department and Municipal Mutual Insurance Ltd., which jointly sponsored the project.

THE ARTS

Arts Festival

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Minister for the Arts how many additional annual arts festivals have been established since 1979.

Mr. Luce: The publication "Arts Festival in Great Britain" estimates that in 1989 there will be more than 600 festivals taking place in Great Britain which have a professional performing element. Information on the number of arts festivals that were held in 1979 is not available.

Touring Fund

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will make a statement on the United Kingdom touring fund.

Mr. Luce: The Arts Council's Great Britain touring fund was established in 1987-88 with £1·5 million from the extra £5 million that I made available to the Council for Incentive Funding and Touring. In its first year, the fund enabled more than 60 extra weeks of touring across all art forms. Figures are not yet available for 1988-89, but they are expected to show a further increase.

Library Services

Mr. Ray Powell: To ask the Minister for the Arts what assessment he has made of the effects of the proposal to charge for obtaining and notifying the availability or non-availability of an item reserved on those living in rural areas, ethnic minorities, and those whose library service is limited or poorly provided for in circumstances beyond their control.

Mr. Luce: I have considered carefully the comments made by respondents to the library Green Paper. I have also taken account of library authorities' current charging policies on reservation fees. I intend that authorities should continue to have discretion to decide whom to charge, and whom to exempt or offer concessionary rates of charging, subject only to a maximum limitation. I will in due course consult on what that limitation should be.

Mr. Ray Powell: To ask the Minister for the Arts what evidence is available on *(a)* the time and quality of personal assistance to users given by libraries and library staff, *(b)* the number of requests for assistance that cannot be met within half an hour and *(c)* the effect of the likelihood of charging to particular classes of use or user.

Mr. Luce: I intend to consult local authority associations, and other bodies as I consider appropriate, about these and other issues before introducing any regulations.

TRANSPORT

Radioactive Material (Transport)

56. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what further measures he is planning to introduce to regulate the transport of radioactive material.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The transport of radioactive material is carried out in accordance with national and international regulations which are under continuous review. The United Kingdom takes a leading part in the review process which is administered by the International Atomic Energy Agency, of which the United Kingdom is a member state.

The list of the current regulations in force for the transport of radioactive material is as follows:

REGULATIONS FOR THE TRANSPORT OF RADIOACTIVE MATERIALS

International recommended regulations

International Atomic Energy Agency's safety series No. 6
Regulations for the safe transport of radioactive materials 1973 edition (as amended)
As above but 1985 edition
International Atomic Energy Agency's safety series No. 80
Schedule of requirements for the transport of specified types of radioactive material consignments (companion to safety series No. 6 1985 edition)
International Atomic Energy Agency's safety series No. 37
Advisory material for the application of the IAEA transport regulations 1982 edition (for 1973 IAEA regulations) and 1987 edition (for 1985 IAEA regulations)

NATIONAL REGULATIONS AND CODES OF PRACTICE FOR THE TRANSPORT OF RADIOACTIVE MATERIALS BASED ON THE IAEA SAFETY SERIES NOS. 6 AND 37

Road

The Radioactive Substances (Carriage by Road) (Great Britain) Regulations 1974 (SI 1974 No. 1735)
The Radioactive Substances (Carriage by Road) (Great Britain) (Amendment) Regulations 1985 (SI 1985 No. 1729)
The Radioactive Substances (Carriage by Road) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1983 (SR 1983 No. 344)
The Radioactive Substances (Carriage by Road) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1986 (SR 1986 No. 61)
The Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985 (SI 1985 No. 1333)
Code of practice for the protection of persons against ionising radiations arising from any work activity
Code of practice for the carriage of radioactive materials by road

Sea

The Merchant Shipping (Dangerous Goods) Regulations 1981 (SI 1981 No. 1747)
The Merchant Shipping (Dangerous Goods) (Amendment) Regulations 1986 (SI No. 1069)
Report of the Standing Committee on the Carriage of Dangerous Goods in Ships 1978 ("The Blue Book") Class 7

Air

The Air Navigation Order 1985 (SI 1985 No. 1643)
The Air Navigation (Dangerous Goods) Regulations 1985 (SI 1985 No. 1939)
The Air Navigation (Dangerous Goods) (Amendment) Regulations 1986 (SI 1986 No. 2129)

Ports

The Dangerous Substances in Harbour Areas Regulations 1987 (SI 1987 No. 37)
All the above are obtainable from Her Majesty's Stationery Office

Rail

British Rail list of dangerous goods and the conditions of acceptance for carriage by freight train and by passenger train or similar service (Class 7)
Obtainable from British Railways Board, Melbury house, Melbury terrace, London NW1 6JU

Inland Waterways

British Waterways Board terms and conditions: Dangerous Goods BWB 1981, and Schedule of Dangerous Goods ("The Green Book") BWB 1981 (Class 7)
Obtainable from Freight Services Division, Central Administration Office, British Waterways Board, Melbury House, Melbury terrace, London NW1 6J

INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS AND CODES FOR THE TRANSPORT OF RADIOACTIVE MATERIALS BASED ON IAEA SAFETY SERIES No. 6

Road in Europe

European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR) (Class 7)

Rail in Europe

Convention concerning the International Carriage by Rail (COTIF) Appendix B, Uniform rules concerning the contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Rail (CIM) Annex 1, Regulations concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Rail (RID) (Class 7)
The above are obtainable from Her Majesty's Stationery Office

Sea

International Maritime Organisation (IMO) International Maritime Dangerous Goods Code (IMDG Code) (Class 7)
Obtainable from International Maritime Organisation, Albert Embankment, London SE1

Air

International Civil Aviation Organisation's Technical Instructions for the Safe Transport of Dangerous Goods by Air (Class 7)
Obtainable from IAL Distribution Agent, Lambourne Woodlands, Newbury, Berks RG16 7TW

Motorway Repairs

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what plans he has to undertake a review of departmental procedures relating to motorway repairs, in respect of *(a)* evaluating the costs of delays to road users, and *(b)* the potential for keeping at least two motorway lanes open during repairs;

(2) what studies he has undertaken of the costs to road users of long delays caused by motorway repairs; and what action he has taken and plans to take, following such studies;

(3) if he will make it his policy always to keep open at least two motorway lanes during motorway repairs.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department is continually looking at ways of improving its procedures, including the programming and timing of roadworks, traffic management at roadworks and the time taken to execute works. A number of improvements have been introduced in recent years, such as better layouts for contraflow systems, mobile lane closures and lane rental contracts.

The costs of traffic delays expected at major roadworks are assessed using the Department's computer model QUADRO (queuing and delays at roadworks). Bonus payments to contractors for early completion of lane rental contracts, or charges to contractors for late completion, are based on QUADRO assessments. Since lane rental contracts were introduced in 1984 we estimate that they have saved about 2,000 days of delay worth £35 million to road users.

Current developments include improvements to QUADRO, a new computerised system for the co-ordination and scheduling of roadworks, and traffic management experiments designed to increase lane capacity through roadworks.

Our policy is not to reduce three-lane carriageways to one lane except where this is unavoidable, and then normally only in off-peak periods, often at night.

Deaf Drivers

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to resist European Commission proposals which would bar deaf people from driving minibuses and light goods vehicles.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There is no justification on road safety grounds for tougher controls on the drivers of minibuses and light goods vehicles. We are pressing the European Commission at every level to avoid placing unnecessary restrictions on them. We can see no justification for preventing deaf people from driving such vehicles.

We want to maintain and enhance mobility for special needs groups and common interest groups. We do not want unnecessary additional driving and medical tests. We aim to protect our present arrangements in the

negotiations in the Council of Ministers. I am sending a copy of this question and answer to the new Commissioner for Transport.

Motorways (Lighting)

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department's current standard for motorways of dual-four lane width stipulates that they should be continuously lit.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department's current standard for motorways of dual-four lane width does not stipulate that they should be continuously lit. The provision of lighting on motorways has first to be justified by economic and environmental assessment. For new and improved motorways of more than dual-three lane width a special case can be made.

M25

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many of the noise bunds and barriers alongside the M25 are *(a)* earth bunds with planting and *(b)* walls or fences.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information is as follows:

	Miles
Noise bund	15·5
Noise barrier	13·5
Noise barrier on bund	3·0

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when, pursuant to his answer of 24 April, *Official Report*, column *447*, he expects to be able to list the latest available traffic flows using the M25 entry and exit slip roads; and whether he will at the same time list in the *Official Report* the matching main carriageway flows in each direction between interchanges.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: These traffic flows will be made available when the report of the M25 review is published.

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state, for the M25 traffic flows listed in the *Official Report* on 24 April, columns *445-46*, the factors his Department uses for correcting for seasonal effects; from what source these are derived; and how these factors differ from those used for other trunk roads and motorways.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The M25 traffic flows were adjusted for seasonal and other effects by scaling to automatic counts for the full year. Complete annual counts are not generally available for other roads. Annual average daily flows are usually estimated from 12-hour counts using a common set of adjustment factors for each road class. These factors are derived from analysis of regular monthly censuses at 170 core sites.

Manchester Airport (Rail Link)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the rail link to Manchester airport.

Mr. Portillo: We expect to receive an investment submission from British Rail shortly.

Advertising

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much advertising air time his Department purchased with each commercial television company in each of the last five years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information requested is commercially confidential.

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much has been spent by his Department on advertisements on commercial television in each of the last five years, listed by each television company.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The spending by the Department of Transport on television advertising in each of the last five years is as follows:

Financial year	*Privatisation*	*Non-privatisation*	*Total*
1984-85	Nil	1,552,810	1,552,810
1985-86	Nil	Nil	Nil
1986-87	2,731,544	Nil	2,731,544
1987-88	3,701,725	2,191,494	5,893,219
1988-89	Nil	1,725,128	1,725,128

Information on expenditure with individual television companies is commercially confidential.

Accident Black Spots

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will estimate the cost of accidents at accident black spots each year; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will estimate the number of people *(a)* killed and *(b)* seriously injured at accident black spots each year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information is not available.

Definitions of casualty sites vary widely between local authorities. Many authorities bring new locations currently not considered as bad into their lists as higher priority sites are progressively treated. An attempt to compile a list would be misleading.

Accident investigation and prevention schemes remain one of the most cost-effective ways of reducing casualties. Existing advice to local authorities on AIP work is now being supplemented by new guidance being prepared jointly with the Institution of Highways and Transportation on an areawide safety engineering.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate the average cost of small improvement schemes at accident black spots; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The average cost of small improvement schemes at casualty sites is difficult to determine because local highway authority definitions vary. The best indication can be found in the Department's transport and road research laboratory report "Accident reduction and prevention programmes in Highway Authorities—1987".

From a sample of accident investigation and prevention schemes for which complete data were available, the authors found that the average cost per scheme is about £6,000 for non-trunk roads and £12,000 for trunk roads.

The distribution of scheme costs is wide and when all costed schemes are considered, almost 60 per cent. of urban and 75 per cent. of rural schemes cost less than £5,000.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Football Pool Betting Duty

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much the Exchequer has raised from football pool betting duty in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Lilley: Following is the information:

	£ million
1979-80	136·1
1980-81	157·0
1981-82	176·0
1982-83	199·3
1983-84	204·9
1984-85	217·9
1985-86	235·2
1986-87	254·2
1987-88	275·2
1988-89	278·9

MIRAS

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will take steps to allow the interest on semi-commercial mortgages taken out on premises which contain a shop and living accommodation, to be set against income tax under the MIRAS system.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No.

Student Grants

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequ whether, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Taunton on 20 April, *Official Report*, columns *232-33*, he has any plans to enable parents affected by the abolition of tax relief on increases in parental contributions for students to cancel existing covenants sothat the students' application for grants might be assessed in accordance with the new scale instituted after the 1988 Budget.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have no such plans.

Earnings

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update to April 1989 the information on net earnings provided in his reply of 10 February 1987 to the then hon. Member for Fulham, *Official Report*, columns *177-78*.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Estimates of the levels of earnings at the top 5 per cent. point of the earnings distribution are not published. The information in the table is based on estimates of these levels derived from published figures in the relevant new earnings surveys. Results of the survey in April 1989 are not available yet so estimates for April 1988 are given in the table. Earnings levels are for men or women as appropriate paid at adult rates with pay unaffected by absence. Taxpayers are assumed to have no reliefs or allowances other than the appropriate personal allowances.

Earnings after Tax, National Insurance Contributions[1] and Child Benefit (£ per week)

	April 1979[4]	April 1988
Single man		
At current prices	114·17	333·26
At constant April 1988 prices[2]	222·45	333·26
Married man[3]		
At current prices	117·98	344·72
At constant April 1988 prices[2]	229·88	344·72
Married man[3] with two children under 11		
At current prices	125·98	359·22
At constant April 1988 prices[2]	245·46	359·22
Single woman		
At current prices	72·23	209·20
At constant April 1988 prices	140·74	209·20

[1] At the contracted in rate.
[2] By reference to the retail price index.
[3] Assuming no wife's earnings.
[4] Under the Finance Act 1979 tax regime.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update to 1989-90 the information on real net earnings provided in his reply of 10 April 1986 to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) *Official Report*, columns *193-94*.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Information is given in the tables:

	Multiples of average earnings[1] ½	1	2	5	10
	Income tax and Income tax and NIC as percentages of gross earnings				
Single					
1956-57					
Tax	10·4	16·6	24·8	40·5	55·2
Tax + NIC	14·0	18·9	26·0	41·0	55·4
1978-79					
Tax	21·0	25·0	29·5	50·5	66·6
Tax + NIC	27·5	31·5	33·7	52·2	67·5
1989-90[2]					
Tax	17·6	20·1	25·1	34·1	37·0
Tax + NIC	25·0	28·0	29·9	36·0	38·0
Married					
1956-57					
Tax	5·1	11·2	22·0	38·9	54·2
Tax + NIC	8·6	13·5	23·1	39·4	54·4
1978-79					
Tax	5·4	21·3	27·2	48·8	65·7
Tax + NIC	21·9	27·8	31·4	50·5	66·5
1989-90[2]					
Tax	13·4	17·3	22·9	33·2	36·6
Tax + NIC	20·8	25·2	27·7	35·1	37·5
	Changes in real net earnings after Income Tax and NIC (1956-57 = 100)				
Single					
1978-79	124·9	125·3	132·8	120·1	108·3
1989-90[2]	168·9	172·0	183·4	210·1	269·6
Married					
1978-79	126·8	123·9	132·4	121·1	109·0
1989-90[2]	168·0	167·7	182·3	207·4	265·6

[1] Average earnings are those for full time males working a full week at adult rates in all occupations. They are £92·80 per week in 1978-79 and assumed to be £273·10 in 1989-90, an increase of 8¼ per cent. on average earnings in 1988-89 and an increase of 7½ per cent. on 1988-89 (the increases used by the Government Actuary in assessing the level of the National Insurance Fund as described in paragraph 3·02 of the Autumn Statement 1988).
[2] Income tax rates and allowances used for 1989-90 are those

proposed in the 1989 Budget. The calculations also assume post-October NIC rates; before October people earning more than £115 per week will pay an additional £3·01 per week.

VAT (Charities)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what representations he has had from Oxfam concerning the effect of value added tax regulation changes on its fund-raising capability; and if he will state what steps he proposes to take which will help offset any losses which may reduce the capability of Oxfam, and other similar voluntary bodies, to undertake their work.

Mr. Lilley: I have received no representations from Oxfam about the new VAT exemption for charity fund-raising events which my right hon. Friend announced in his Budget speech on 14 March and which came into effect on 1 April. I have, however, received a number of representations from Oxfam supporters about the EC Commission's proposals for tax approximation by 1992, which would mean an end to the present VAT zero-rating for donated goods sold in charity shops. These proposals require the unanimous agreement of all member states and the Government will not accept proposals which remove our ability to retain zero rates.

Government Debt

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much of the 1988-89 budget surplus was used to pay off the national debt; what are the details of the debts paid off; how much is estimated to have gone into reinvestment, and what is the basis for that estimate; how much is estimated to have gone into consumer expenditure; and what is the basis for that estimate.

Mr. Lilley: The Budget surplus in 1988-89 was forecast in the Financial Statement and Budget Report to have reduced the outstanding stock of net public sector debt (a more meaningful measure in modern circumstances than the national debt, strictly defined) by some £14 billion from £171 billion at end March 1988 to £157 billion at end March 1989.

Outturn figures for net public sector debt outstanding at the end of 1988-89 will not be available until later in the year. However, details of net transactions in debt are available in the May *Bank of England Quarterly Bulletin* (table 7). This shows that the majority of the reduction in debt outstanding was in the form of a net repayment of British Government securities (gilts).

In 1988-89 the large PSDR meant that the Government made net purchases of gilts so as to ensure it had a broadly neutral impact on liquidity. It is unlikely that this policy will have had any significant effect on consumers' expenditure. Also, in these circumstances it is only possible for individuals to reinvest in gilts to the extent that they are purchased from existing holders. There is no information readily available on transactions of this sort.

Mortgages (Tax Relief)

Mr. Clay: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the total cost of mortgage interest tax relief in 1989-90, *(b)* the average value of relief per mortgagor, and *(c)* the numbers receiving mortgage relief broken down in the following income ranges: under £4,000, £4,000 to £5,000, £5,000 to £6,000, £6,000 to £7,000, £7,000 to £8,000, £8,000 to £9,000, £9,000 to £10,000, £10,000 to £12,000, £12,000 to £15,000, £15,000 to £20,000, £20,000 to £25,000, £25,000 to £30,000 and over £30,000.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 10 May 1989]:* Latest estimates for 1989-90, based on the assumption that interest rates remain at current levels for the rest of 1989-90, are given in the table. These are based on projections to 1989-90 of information in the 1986-87 survey of personal incomes and the 1986 family expenditure survey and are provisional. The estimates include mortgages formerly under the option mortgage scheme which are now subsumed within MIRAS.

Tax units[1] receiving mortgage interest relief by range of total income 1989-90

Range of total income	*Numbers receiving mortgage interest relief (thousands)*	*Average value of relief to mortgagor (£)*	*Total cost of relief (£ million)*
Under £4,000	480	480	230
£4,000 to £5,000	160	490	80
£5,000 to £6,000	170	490	90
£6,000 to £7,000	270	500	130
£7,000 to £8,000	410	620	250
£8,000 to £9,000	430	640	280
£9,000 to £10,000	420	650	270
£10,000 to £12,000	860	660	570
£12,000 to £15,000	1,400	660	910
£15,000 to £20,000	1,880	720	1,350
£20,000 to £25,000	1,200	720	870
£25,000 to £30,000	610	860	520
Over £30,000	1,010	1,200	1,200
TOTAL	9,300	730	6,750

[1] Single persons and married couples.

Tax Allowances

Mr. Clay: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by how much the value of income tax personal allowances has increased in real terms since 1979; and how this amount has been distributed to each band of income taxpayers, both in total and in amount per taxpayer.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 10 May 1989]:* Since 1978-79, the basic income tax personal allowances

have increased in real terms by over 25 per cent. If, for 1989-90, personal allowances were to be reduced to their indexed 1978-79 levels total income tax liability would be increased by some £4·4 billion, distributed as follows:

Income range £ per annum	Single Person Total £ million	Single Person Average per taxpayer[1] £ per annum	Married one-earner couple Total £ million	Married one-earner couple Average per taxpayer[1] £ per annum	Married two-earner couple Total £ million	Married two-earner couple Average per taxpayer[1] £ per annum
Less than 5,000	300	110	20	120	[2]—	—
5,000—10,000	600	130	310	190	110	210
10,000—15,000	320	140	360	220	350	290
15,000—20,000	100	130	190	210	460	290
20,000—25,000	40	130	90	210	360	310
25,000—30,000	20	180	50	270	230	340
30,000—50,000	20	210	90	330	280	370
Over 50,000	10	210	40	330	70	380
Total	1,410	140	1,140	220	1,860	320

[1] Taxpayers liable to tax when personal allowances are reduced to their indexed 1978-79 levels. Married couples are counted as one taxpayer.
[2] Less than £5 million.

Taxation

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update, to take account of the 1989 Budget, the information on tax changes contained in his reply of 21 October 1986 to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) *Official Report*, columns *807-8*.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 10 May 1989]:* I refer the hon. Members to my reply to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on 4 April 1989 at column *8*.

Mr. Clay: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the reductions in income tax liabilities, 1989-90 income levels, of the proposed 1989-90 allowances, thresholds and rates in relation to the 1978-79 regime indexed to 1989-90 showing *(a)* the number of tax units, *(b)* the total amount of reduction and *(c)* the average reduction per tax unit in each of the following income ranges: under £5,000, £5,000 to £10,000, £10,000 to £15,000, £15,000 to £20,000, £20,000 to £30,000, £30,000 to £50,000 and over £50,000.

Mr. Clay: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the tax threshold, *(b)* tax free income and *(c)* break-even points at current prices, at 1949-50 prices and constant prices, as a percentage of average manual earnings for a single person, married man without children, married man with two children and married man with four children in 1978-79 and 1989-90.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 10 May 1989]:* The information is in the table.

Income tax thresholds, tax free income and break-even points

Tax year	Threshold at current prices £	Threshold at 1949-50 prices £	Threshold as percentage of average manual earnings[1] per cent.	Tax free income[2] at current prices £	Tax free income at 1949-50 prices £	Tax free income as percentage of average manual earnings[1] per cent.	Break-even point[3] at current prices £	Break-even point[3] at 1949-50 prices £	Break-even point[3] as percentage of average manual earnings[1] per cent.
Single person									
1978-79	985	171	22·0	985	171	22·0	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1989-90[4]	2,785	214	23·5	2,785	214	23·5	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Married man—no children									
1978-79	1,535	266	34·3	1,535	266	34·3	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1989-90[4]	4,375	336	36·9	4,375	336	36·9	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Married man—with two children[5]									
1978-79	1,735	300	38·8	2,002	346	44·7	2,727	472	61·0
1989-90[4]	4,375	336	36·9	5,129	394	43·3	7,391	568	62·4
Married man—with four children[6]									
1978-79	2,035	352	45·5	2,570	445	57·5	3,836	664	85·8
1989-90[4]	4,375	336	36·9	5,883	452	49·6	10,407	800	87·8

[1] Average manual earnings are for full-time males aged over 21 working a full week.
[2] Tax-free income is defined as the tax threshold plus child benefit.
[3] Break-even point is the level of income at which income tax liability is equal to the money received through child benefit. It therefore gives the level of income above which the family pays more income tax than it obtains in benefits for children. Break-even points are not appropriate for families without children.
[4] On the basis of the 1989 Budget proposals. Estimates of thresholds and break-even points as a percentage of earnings are provisional.
[5] Both children aged under 11.
[6] Two children aged under 11, one aged between 11 and 15 and one aged 16 or over.

Mr. Clay: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the reductions in income tax liabilities, at 1989-90 income levels, of the proposed 1989-90 allowances, thresholds and rates in relation to the

1978-79 regime indexed to 1989-90 showing *(a)* the number of tax units, *(b)* the total amount of reduction and *(c)* the average reduction per tax unit for the top 1 per cent., 5 per cent., 10 per cent. and 20 per cent. of taxpayers and the bottom 1 per cent., 5 per cent., 10 per cent., 20 per cent. and 50 per cent. of taxpayers.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 10 May 1989]:* The information is given in the table. I regret that estimates for the bottom 1 per cent. and the bottom 5 per cent. of taxpayers are not available. Child tax allowances, which were being phased out in 1978-79 have been excluded from the comparison. The estimates are based on the projection of the 1986-87 survey of personal incomes and are therefore provisional.

Reductions in income tax liabilities in 1989-90 compared with the 1978-79 indexed tax regime

Point of income distribution[1] in 1989-90	*Number of units[2] paying tax in 1989-90* '000s	*Total reduction in tax compared with the 1978-79 indexed regime* £ million	*Average[3] reduction in tax compared with the 1978-79 indexed regime* £ per year
Top 1 per cent.	210	5,450	25,340
Top 5 per cent.	1,070	9,030	8,400
Top 10 per cent.	2,130	11,290	5,250
Top 20 per cent.	4,260	14,200	3,320
Bottom 10 per cent.	2,130	370	120
Bottom 20 per cent.	4,260	900	170
Bottom 50 per cent.	10,650	3,730	320
All taxpayers	21,300	23,260	1,030

[1] Based on numbers of tax units expected to pay tax in 1989-90.
[2] Married couples count as one unit.
[3] Average reductions are calculated by reference to the estimated number of tax units who would be liable to pay tax under the indexed 1978-79 regime, this number is some 1,200,000 greater than the numbers paying tax in 1989-90, some 900,000 in this income range below £5,000 and 300,000 in the range £8,000-£10,000.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Legal Aid (South Yorkshire)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Attorney-General how much has been paid each year at current prices in the county of South Yorkshire during the last 10 years, from the legal aid fund; how many Queen's counsel, junior counsel and solicitors have received such payments in each year; and if he will show in his answer what percentage this is of the national expenditure in such payments.

The Attorney-General: This information is not available in the form requested. Regional data are available only by circuit or Crown court (in the case of criminal legal aid in the higher courts) and by legal aid area (in the case of all other forms of legal aid).

Mr. Colin Wallace

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Attorney-General if he plans to prosecute Mr. Paul Foot and Mr. Colin Wallace for offences under the Official Secrets Act in relation to the publication of the book "Who Framed Colin Wallace?"; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Consideration is being given to the contents of the book.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

South Africa

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the South African Government urging the ending of the state of emergency.

Mrs. Chalker: We have made many representations calling on the South African Government to lift the state of emergency. Similar representations have been made jointly with our European partners, most recently on 20 April this year.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to support the immediate and unconditional release of all detainees and the lifting of the restrictions imposed on recently released detainees in South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: We have made frequent representations to the South African Government, urging that all those detained without trial should be charged or released unconditionally.

Advertising

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much advertising air time his Department purchased with each commercial television company in each of the last five years.

Mrs. Chalker: None.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Tropical Forests

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government have any plans to veto EEC schemes which would aid the destruction of the tropical forests; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: We oppose schemes in developing countries where environmental concerns are likely to be dealt with inadequately or which have unacceptable environmental costs; however, we do not have a veto on Community aid projects as they are decided by qualified majority. We favour the use of aid available under the Community's programmes for measures to promote the sustainable management of tropical forests.

Rain Forest Conservation

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will list those projects for which development aid has been provided to assist in rain forest conservation by Her Majesty's Government; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list the amount of development aid provided by Her Majesty's Government to assist in rain forest conservation in each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will list the amount of development aid per project, the nature of the project, and to whom aid has been provided by Her Majesty's Government to assist in rain forest conservation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: Details of the Overseas Development Administration's activities to protect rain forests are given in a supplement to the December 1988 issue of "British Overseas Development", copies of which are in the Library.

Identifiable expenditure on bilateral aid for all types of forestry for the calendar years 1983 to 1988 was:

	Expenditure by		*£ thousands*
	Overseas Development Administration	*Commonwealth Development Corporation*	*Total*
1983	2,103	2,502	4,605
1984	4,360	1,968	6,328
1985	5,825	1,217	7,042
1986	7,329	7,973	15,302
1987	6,449	3,490	9,939
1988	(not yet available)	3,391	

Expenditure on training and some other technical co-operation in the forestry sector could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when assessments are made of the effects of providing aid for rain forest conservation programmes; what is the latest assessment; what consideration is being given to increasing the funding of such projects; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Overseas Development Administration's projects in the forestry sector are closely monitored by our project managers and specialist advisers. We have made no general evaluation of the impact of our rain forest conservation activities but we are nonetheless very much aware of the local and global importance of rain forests. As part of our forestry initiative we have identified more than 20 countries where there are good prospects for new British aid-funded activities to promote all types of forestry. We are increasing our funding for forestry research and are encouraging British charities to put forward more forestry projects for joint funding.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what cost benefit analysis has been undertaken of the most effective methods of assisting rain forest conservation by Her Majesty's Government; what conclusions were drawn; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Overseas Development Administration has not undertaken any general cost benefit analysis of methods of assisting rain forest conservation. We discuss with individual Governments their countries' needs and Britain's ability to help. Potential projects are subject to economic, social and environmental appraisal.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on comparative rain forest depletion in *(a)* Brazil and *(b)* other parts of the world.

Mr. Chris Patten: The latest internationally comparable figures relate to 1976-80. Deforestation rates for tropical moist forest by region and worldwide were:

Tropical closed moist forest

	Area lost (millions of hectares/year)	*Percentage of total area*
Africa	1·20	0·59
Asia Pacific	1·61	0·61
Latin America	3·30	0·54
Worldwide	6·11	0·57

Brazil's deforestation rate for all closed forest and open woodland was 2·32 million hectares or 0·5 per cent. per year. The Brazilian rate has increased during the 1980s but I am not aware of any agreed figures relating to rain forest alone.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Departmental Property

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the property costs, including rent, asset replacement and rates, of his Department in total, in each standard both in total per square foot for each year since 1983.

Mr. Forth: Information in the form requested is not available except at disproportionate cost. However, the Department has paid the PSA for accommodation and services under the property repayment system (PRS) since 1 April 1984. Under these arrangements, annual charges for the accommodation occupied have been as follows:

(1) Financial year	*(2) Area sq ft (million)*	*(3) "Opportunity cost" rent £ million*	*(4) Contribution in lieu of rates £ million*	*(5) Club subscription for minor works and maintenance £ million*	*(6) Administration charge in respect of (5) £ million*	*(7) Total £ million*
1983-84	5·5	24·1	17·3	5·3	1·5	48·1
1984085	4·6	22·6	17·0	5·6	1·3	46·6
1985-86	4·4	23·9	16·1	6·2	1·5	47·7

(1) Financial year	(2) Area sq ft (million)	(3) "Opportunity cost" rent £ million	(4) Contribution in lieu of rates £ million	(5) Club subscription for minor works and maintenance £ million	(6) Administration charge in respect of (5) £ million	(7) Total £ million
1986-87	4·4	26·6	17·4	6·2	1·4	51·5
1987-88	4·3	30·2	17·5	5·1	1·3	54·1
1988-89	4·4	35·1	17·8	8·0	1·9	62·8

Departmental Plant and Equipment

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when the last revaluation of plant and equipment employed by his Department was carried out; and what plant and equipment asset replacement charges are incurred by his Department.

Mr. Forth: The Department follows standard civil service accountancy practices which enable Parliament to be satisfied that amounts of cash voted to be spent on certain activities have been so spent. Where assets such as plant and equipment are used in connection with fee-earning services, their written down value is recorded annually in memorandum trading accounts. Proposed expenditure on replacements is reflected in the annual estimates submitted to Parliament.

PRIME MINISTER

British Intelligence (History)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to her answer of 11 April, *Official Report*, column *442*, what forms of publication of Sir Michael Howard's volume on the history of British intelligence are being considered.

The Prime Minister: Publication will be in the series of official histories of British intelligence in the second world war, of which volumes I to III have already been published.

President Ortega

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Prime Minister what consultations took place with the United States Government prior to her recent meeting with President Ortega of Nicaragua.

The Prime Minister: We have regular consultations with the United States Administration on a wide range of topics, including central America.

Nicaragua and Nigeria

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if, during her recent meetings with *(a)* the President of Nicaragua and *(b)* the President of Nigeria, she raised the need to reduce the size of their respective armed forces;

(2) if she discussed human rights in their respective countries with *(a)* the president of Nicaragua and *(b)* the president of Nigeria during their visits last week;

(3) if she discussed democracy in their respective countries with *(a)* the president of Nicaragua and *(b)* the president of Nigeria during their visits last week.

The Prime Minister: President Ortega of Nicaragua was in the United Kingdom during a European tour to seek support for his actions following the commitments he made in the Esquipulas II and subsequent agreements in the central American peace process. The subjects of democracy, the rights of the opposition and the need to reduce the size of the armed forces were in consequence discussed extensively during my meeting with him.

President Babangida of Nigeria is in the United Kingdom on a state visit. My meeting with him focused on United Kingdom-Nigerian relations, economic matters and regional issues. In addition, I discussed with him the transition process towards civilian rule now under way in Nigeria.

Mr. Bernard Ingham

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list in the *Official Report* all the posts which come within the authority of Mr. Bernard Ingham as head of the Government information service.

The Prime Minister: The Head of the Government Information Service is responsible for the information officer management unit, comprising eight staff headed at grade 5. His wider duties in relation to the staff of the Government information service were set out in my answer to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on 7 March at column *483*.

Overseas Aid (Malaysia)

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Prime Minister what was the content of the exchanges that took place between the British and Malaysian Governments over a new overseas aid package, preceeding the signing of the memorandum of understanding on arms sales in September 1988.

The Prime Minister: There are continuous exchanges between the British and Malaysian Governments on aid, including offers of support for projects under the aid and trade provision. The Malaysian Government are well aware from these exchanges that we continue to be willing to support eligible projects from this source.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if she will place in the Library the memorandum of understanding and letters between the Governments of the United Kingdom and Malaysia relating to an overseas aid package discussed in the autumn of 1988;

(2) what principles guided her discussions with the Malaysian Government prior to signing an agreement on an overseas aid package.

The Prime Minister: There is no memorandum of understanding between the British and Malaysian Governments on aid; offers of support are made for specific projects on a case-by-case basis.

Malaysian State Airline

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Prime Minister on what basis she intervened to secure the Malaysian state airline, MAS, additional landing rights in Britain earlier in the current year.

The Prime Minister: The recent air services negotiations with the Malaysian Government were conducted by officials of the Department of Transport under the authority of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Prime Minister what were the compensation terms offered to British Airways for its agreement to increased landing rights for the Malaysian state airline, MAS.

The Prime Minister: As is normal in air services negotiations, the agreement with Malaysia was based on a broadly balanced package of opportunities for the airlines of both countries. British Airways has the opportunity to operate additional services between the United Kingdom and Malaysia and to work together with MAS to develop traffic on the route.

Arms Deal (Malaysia)

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Prime Minister what risk has been created for the British Exchequer by the underwriting of the Malaysian arms deal by Government agencies; and if she will list the risk underwritten by each and every agency.

The Prime Minister: To the extent that ECGD becomes involved in supporting arms sales to Malaysia it will do so on the basis of its normal approach to the risks involved and its financial objective of operating its credit insurance schemes at no net cost to public funds. No other Government agencies will be involved in underwriting risks in connection with this business.

Tornado Aircraft (Malaysia)

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Prime Minister (1) over what period of time the payment for the Tornado aircraft, supplied to the Malaysian Government, is to be spread as specified in the memorandum of understanding signed in September 1988;

(2) why Tornado aircraft were sold to the Royal Malaysian air force at a unit cost of almost £40 million; and what is the unit price for the same aircraft purchased by the RAF;

(3) what knowledge she has of commissions paid in connection with the sale of Tornado aircraft to the Malaysian Government to *(a)* Prime Minister Maliativ Mohammed's Umno Barv party, *(b)* the Sultan of Johore, *(c)* the Sultan of Pahang and *(d)* to the ruler of Negri Sembilan.

The Prime Minister: Contracts have not yet been signed for the sale of Tornados to the Royal Malaysian Air Force. Such contracts would in any event be subject to commercial confidentiality.

Mr. Charles Powell

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister whether she will now transfer Mr. Charles Powell from her office.

The Prime Minister: No.

SCOTLAND

Health and Social Services (Expenditure)

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each year since 1979 the total health and personal social services *(a)* current expenditure (gross) and *(b)* capital expenditure (net); and if he will give those totals adjusted by the HCHS pay and price deflator.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information in the format requested is not fully available. As I have already indicated to the hon. Member in my letter of 30 March 1988, there is no index which relates to the movement of pay and prices within the Health Service in Scotland. The Department of Health maintains indices for pay and price movements in England but the composition of expenditure on hospital and community health services in Scotland —particularly the proportions accounted for by the various categories of staff costs—differs from that in England.

Details of expenditure broken down into current (gross) and capital (net), are given in the following tables.

Total expenditure on health and personal social services in Scotland

	Current (gross) £ million cash	*Capital (net) £ million cash*
[1]1979-80	—	—
1980-81	1,537	78
1981-82	1,726	108
1982-83	1,865	116
1983-84	1,995	122
1984-85	2,135	137
1985-86	2,264	151
1986-87	2,426	129
1987-88	2,651	129
[2]1988-89	2,912	146

[1] Complete figures are not available.
[2] Provisional outturn.

BMA (Negotiations)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who from his Department attended the negotiations between the Secretary of State for Health and the British Medical Association, the outcome of which was announced on 5 May.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Appropriate officials.

Health Care (Rural Areas)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his current plans to safeguard the provision of health care in rural areas.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The proposals in the Scottish new contract, published on 12 April (copies of which are available in the Library) were devised to take account of the special circumstances of Scottish doctors, and in particular those who practise in the less-populated areas. These proposals, which are reflected in the agreement announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health on 5 May, have been accepted by the profession's negotiators. This will ensure that patients in rural areas not only continue to receive the present high

standards of health care, but will also be able to take advantage of the additional services which their GPs are encouraged to provide under the new arrangements.

GPs (List Sizes)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average general practitioner's list size that he is aiming to create if the proposals for Health Service reforms are implemented.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government's proposals for Health Service reforms are not intended to create a national average list size for general medical practitioners in Scotland.

NHS Reform

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will introduce in Scotland pilot schemes to test the proposed Health Service reforms before full implementation.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I shall be looking for progress on implementing some aspects of the White Paper "Working for Patients" (Cm 555), notably medical audit, to be made as quickly as possible. On other aspects, for example, self-governing hospitals and GP practice budgets, the pace will be influenced by the voluntary nature of the processes.

Asbestos Burning (Edinburgh)

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken to monitor the effects on patients and staff at Liberton and Southfield hospitals as a result of the burning of asbestos at the protein fractionation centre in south Edinburgh.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There is no evidence that the incineration of filters containing asbestos emitted harmful asbestos fibres. The protein fractionation centre, in conjunction with the Health and Safety Executive, is carefully examing the incineration procedure which was used until February. When the results of this examination are complete, it will be possible to assess whether there is a requirement to monitor the health of patients and staff at the local hospitals.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much material containing asbestos was burnt at Edinburgh's protein fractionation centre from 1979; and what steps were taken to evaluate the risk involved prior to the decision to incinerate materials.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The filters incinerated between 1979 and February 1989 (when incineration ceased) weighed about 15,500 kg and contained about 5,000 kg of asbestos. The protein fractionation centre has used asbestos filters in the manufacturing process for blood products since 1975. Used filters may contain potentially-harmful viral material and it is essential that the method of disposal effectively eliminates any hazards. In 1975, high temperature incineration in a multi-stage incinerator was adopted as the safest method of disposal of these and other biologically contaminated materials. This decision was taken in the wake of the serious hepatitis outbreak in Edinburgh (1969-71) and the recommendations of the subsequent Rosenheim report (1972) and was also supported by the local authority department of environmental health. In 1978 the World Health Organisation (WHO) promulgated the requirement that biological waste of this type must be incinerated or autoclaved.

Brewing Industry

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, if he has any plans to review relevant landlord and tenant legislation in Scotland in the light of the proposals of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission for changes in the control of public houses by the brewing industry.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: While the Landlord and Tenant Acts of 1927 and 1954 do not extend to Scotland, I am considering the implications for Scotland of the relevant proposals in the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the supply of beer (Cm 651) in consultation with my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mathematics (Northern College)

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what instructions were given to the research team at Northern college dealing with the assessment of advancement programme on second round mathematics as to whether it could discuss with anyone the design and conduct of the 1988 research.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The contract with the Northern college is covered by the standard conditions governing the award of grants for projects in the assessment of achievement programme. The design and conduct of the 1988 assessment of achievement programme mathematics project was discussed with the project's steering committee and with the assessment of achievement programme central support unit at the Scottish Council for Research in Education. The research team described their work at the annual conference of the Scottish Educational Research Association in 1988.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) whether pupils in grant-aided schools were *(a)* tested in 1983 and *(b)* included by Northern college in the assessment of achievement programme 1988 sample survey of second round mathematics;

(2) what discussions took place involving the steering group responsible for the research programme covered by the Northern college on changes in performance at P4 and P7 between 1983 and 1988 before the interim report was requested.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the answers which I gave on Friday 12 May 1989.

Parent Teacher Council

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State responsible for health and education met with the Scottish Parent Teacher Council in November 1988.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I addressed the annual conference of the Scottish Parent Teacher Council on 5 November 1988.

Work-related Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the total amount of money spent on work-related Government training schemes in each of the years 1983 to 1988 inclusive.

Mr. Lang: The information which is available is given in the following table:

Government work related training
Total expenditure in Scotland by programme or scheme

£ million

	1983-84	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
Adult Training (including TOPS in 1984-85)	n/a	24·6	17·0	21·0	20·1	12·4
New Job Training Scheme (scheme ended August 1988)	—	—	—	n/a	2·5	2·1
Employment Training	—	—	—	—	—	46·8
Community Programme	n/a	70·5	88·3	103·7	138·6	74·5
Voluntary Projects Programme	n/a	0·9	1·1	0·9	0·9	0·8
Youth Training Scheme	n/a	75·1	78·0	83·9	93·4	102·7

Notes:
n/a—Not available.
The figures given in the table are all provisional and rounded to the nearest £0·1 million. Expenditure was not disaggregated to a Scottish level until 1984-85.

Advertising

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which advertising agency has been chosen to deal with the Scottish Office advertising campaign.

Mr. Rifkind: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) on 7 March 1989, at column *483*.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* his estimate of the sum to be spent on Scottish Office advertising in the coming year 1989-90.

Mr. Rifkind: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) on 15 March 1989, at column *226*.

Smoking (Children)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give an estimate of the proportion of children in Scotland who smoke; and what information he has on comparable figures for other parts of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In 1986 the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys carried out, on behalf of the Health Departments, a third national survey of smoking among secondary school children (the 11-15 age group). Twelve per cent. of sampled pupils in Scotland said that they smoked regularly (at least one a week) and 5 per cent. occasionally (less than one a week). The equivalent figures for England and Wales were 10 per cent. and 5 per cent.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what initiatives are being taken in Scotland to discourage young people from smoking following the Prime Minister's announcement on 25 January of a £2 million per year campaign to reduce the number of children who smoke over the next four years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The announcement of 25 January referred to a five-year teenage anti-smoking campaign for England and Wales funded by the Department of Health and Health Education Authority. In Scotland the Scottish health education group will spend some £280,000 on anti-smoking material and campaigns during the current financial year. The Scottish Committee for Action on Smoking and Health will receive grant-in-aid of £40,000 in 1989-90. Both organisations undertake anti-smoking initiatives directed at the young.

Drinking Water

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who is responsible for the collection of information about *(a)* lead, *(b)* nitrates, and *(c)* other toxic chemicals in drinking water is Scotland; and what are the penalties for not properly discharging such responsibilities.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Responsibility for the quality of public drinking water and related matters lies with the water authorities, the regional and islands councils. The district and islands councils carry out this function in relation to private water supplies. EC directive 80/778/EEC, the drinking water directive, requires regular monitoring of the quality of water intended for human consumption including the presence of lead, nitrates and other toxic substances. There are no specific penalties for failure to discharge these responsibilities.

The Water Bill now before Parliament provides for regulations to be made which will define the duties of the water authorities, including monitoring and recording the quality of drinking water and making the information publicly available. Regulations are now being prepared for consultation.

NHS Reform

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the status of the Government's detailed proposals for changes to the general practitioners' terms of service and remunerations system in Scotland, in light of the agreement between the Secretary of State for Health and the British Medical Association announced on 5 May.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The agreement announced on 5 May was the outcome of negotiations to which my right hon. and learned Friend was party. I have welcomed it as dealing with all the major outstanding issues on the basis of the proposals I made to Scottish doctors on 12 April.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the decision announced on 5 May by the Secretary of State for Health that rural practices would be taken out of negotiations with the British Medical Association and referred to the central advisory committee on rural practice payments supersedes the announcements on rural practices contained in the new contract document published by his Department.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No. The central advisory committee's remit does not extend to Scotland. The Scottish rural practices fund committee has kept the equivalent Scottish scheme under regular review and that will continue to be the case. The new contract issued by the Scottish Home and Health Department makes it clear that the Government consider that payments from the fund are well targeted to meet the needs of rural doctors in Scotland.

Road Improvements

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many road improvements have been carried out in Scotland between May 1979 to April 1989; where these projects were undertaken; what was the source of the funding; how many new products are planned at present; and what is the total value of each project completed, in progress and planned.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 9 May 1989]:* Information on trunk road schemes costing over £1 million is given in the following tables. Costs have not been provided for planned starts on an individual basis as these will vary depending on a scheme's actual year of start and other factors, but the total value of planned starts is estimated to be around £1,200 million. In addition to the schemes listed, a substantial number of schemes costing less than £1 million have been completed (to the value of approximately £70 million), are in progress or planned. On a small proportion of these a private sector contribution was made or is a possibility. It would require disproportionate effort to list all minor schemes completed since May 1979, in progress and planned.

In the same period some £1,097 million has been spent on new construction and improvement, including structural maintenance, of local roads (this total includes a provisional figure for 1987-88 and an estimate for 1988-89). Information on specific local schemes is not held centrally. Provision for the current and two following years is planned to be about £140 million in each year.

Major trunk road schemes costing over £1 million
Schemes completed May 1979 to April 1989

£ million

Scheme		*Region*	*Cost*
A1	Broxburn-Skateraw	Lothian	[1]3·0
A1	Ayton Bypass	Borders	5·1
A1	Penmanshiel Improvement	Borders	3·4
A1	Tranent Bypass	Lothian	12·3
A1	Musselburgh Bypass	Lothian	16·9
A7	Canonbie Diversion	Dumfries and Galloway	5·4
A7	Synton to Mossend	Borders	1·3
A74	Johnstonebridge to Dinwoodie Lodge	Dumfries and Galloway	1·8
M74	Draffan to Millbank I	Strathclyde	27·5
M74	Draffan to Millbank II	Strathclyde	9·2
M74	Draffan to Millbank III	Strathclyde	10·9
A742	Greenock to Inverkip	Strathclyde	[2]7·7
A75	Carsluith Diversion	Dumfries and Galloway	1·5
A75	Collin Diversion	Dumfries and Galloway	3·8
A75	Gatehouse-of-Fleet Bypass	Dumfries and Galloway	9·0
A75	Creetown Bypass	Dumfries and Galloway	5·2
A75	Bridge of Dee Diversion	Dumfries and Galloway	2·6
A75	Castle Douglas Bypass	Dumfries and Galloway	6·2
A75	Ringford Bypass	Dumfries and Galloway	2·5
A76	Bargower	Strathclyde	3·0
A77	Bridgemill Diversion	Strathclyde	3·0
A78	Dundonald Camp-Monkton	Strathclyde	10·0
M8	Baillieston to Glasgow City Boundary	Strathclyde	10·7
M8	Starlaw Junction	Lothian	1·8
A82	Strathfillan Manse	Central	1·3
A82	Carnoch to Craigrannoch I	Highland	1·7
A82	Eos Eonan to Derrydarroch	Central	2·1
A82	Carnoch to Craigrannoch II	Highland	1·7
A82	Dubh Eas Diversion II	Central	1·1
A82	Auchentullich to Polnaberoch	Strathclyde	1·4
A82	Camus Nan Clais to Hollybank	Strathclyde	9·5

Scheme		Region	Cost
A82	Arden to Auchentullich	Strathclyde	1·6
A82	Auchendennan to Arden	Strathclyde	1·5
A83	Shira Bridge	Strathclyde	1·5
A830	Annat to Drumsallie	Highland	1·7
A830	Mallaig to Kinsadel I	Highland	4·6
A830	Polnish to Lochailort	Highland	3·3
A835	Silverbridge to Gorstan	Highland	2·9
A835	Maryburgh to Brahan	Highland	4·3
A835	Contin Diversion	Highland	1·8
M876	North Broomage to Bowtrees	Central	17·0
A9	Calvine to Highland Regional Boundary	Tayside	25·4
A9	Crubenmore to North of Kingussie	Highland	6·0
A9	Avielochan to Slochd	Highland	6·3
A9	Dalmagarry to Bogbain	Highland	6·1
A9	Cromarty Bridge	Highland	5·7
A9	Blackford Bypass	Tayside	3·6
A9	Aviemore to Granish	Highland	4·9
A9	Ardullie to Foulis	Highland	1·6
A9	Pitlochry Bypass I	Tayside	15·1
A9	Pitlochry Bypass II	Tayside	6·5
A9	Charlestown to Tore	Highland	7·3
A9	Tore to Haryburgh	Highland	7·3
A9	Kessock Bridge	Highland	29·1
A9	North of Kingussie to South of Aviemore	Highland	8·9
A9	Regional Boundary to Drumochter Lodge	Highland	1·8
A9	Burnside to Broxburn	Tayside	3·8
A9	Killiecrankie to Calvine I	Tayside	17·1
A9	North of Guay to Tynereich	Tayside	5·7
A9	Auchterarder/Aberuthven Bypass	Tayside	7·5
A9	Evanton Bypass	Highland	5·7
A9	Perth Western Bypass	Tayside	4·4
A9	Dalreoch to Burnside	Tayside	9·7
A9	Killiecrankie to Calvine II	Tayside	26·6
A9	Alness Bypass	Highland	4·6
A9	Dornoch Northern Approach Roads	Highland	2·8
A9	Dornoch Southern Approach Roads	Highland	5·4
A9	Mound Bridges	Highland	3·7
M9	Longdye to Pirnhall	Central	10·2
M90	Arngask to Muirmont	Tayside	13·2
A92	Bourtreebush to Aberdeen City Boundary	Grampian	7·4
A92	Thornton Bypass I	Fife	3·4
A92	Thornton Bypass II	Fife	6·3
A92	Stonehaven Bypass	Grampian	14·5
A92	East Fife Regional Road I	Fife	11·6
A92	East Fife Regional Road II	Fife	7·3
A92	Murcar to Balmedie	Grampian	8·7
A929	Powrie Brae Improvement	Tayside	6·4
A929	Tealing to Tarbrax	Tayside	6·4
A929	Kingsway to Powrie	Tayside	4·0
A94	Parkford Improvement	Tayside	2·7
A94	Stracathro	Tayside	1·5
A94	Balnabreich to St. Ann's	Tayside	2·1
A94	Syde and Pert Improvement	Grampian	3·0
A94	Scotston to Candy	Grampian	7·0
A94	Laurencekirk Bypass	Grampian	7·9
A94	Forfar Bypass	Tayside	12·3
A952	Auchenten to Standinstones	Grampian	2·1
A952	Invernettie Diversion	Grampian	2·0
A96	Auchmill Road Improvement II	Grampian	1·5
A96	Elgin Relief Road	Grampian	3·4
A96	Tyrebagger Hill	Grampian	1·3
A96	West Adamston Improvement	Grampian	1·2
A96	Auldearn Bypass	Highland	1·9
A96	Bucksburn to Tyrebagger I	Grampian	4·2
A96	Forres Bypass	Grampian	4·7
A972	Kingsway Improvement I	Tayside	3·0

Scheme		Region	Cost
A972	Kingsway Improvement II	Tayside	1·3
A972	Kingsway Improvement III	Tayside	3·0
Total 99 schemes			597·9

Notes:
Funding source central Government unless otherwise stated.
[1] Blue Circle Cement.
[2] IBM (UK) contributed £1·5 million.
All costs given are final scheme costs which have not subsequently been uprated to a common price basis.

Major trunk road schemes costing over £1 million
Schemes in progress 1 April 1989

£ million

Scheme		Region	Cost
A7	North Middleton Bypass	Lothian	3·1
A75	Annan Bypass	Dumfries and Galloway	17·0
A75	Glenluce Bypass	Dumfries and Galloway	6·8
A75	Dumfries Bypass	Dumfries and Galloway	20·3
A77	Balsalloch-Balcreuchan	Strathclyde	3·1
A82	Luss-Camais Nan Clais	Strathclyde	10·4
A835	Garve Railway Bridge	Highland	1·5
A9	Dunblane Bypass	Central	18·7
A9	Dornoch Firth Bridge	Highland	12·0
A9	Dunbeath Bridge	Highland	4·9
A92	Ellon Bypass/Tipperty	Grampian	6·4
A92	East Fife Regional Road III and IV	Fife	20·0
A94	Candy to Stonehaven	Grampian	6·1
A94	Upper Northwaterbridge to Oatyhill	Grampian	6·4
A94	Parkford to Balnabreich	Tayside	10·0
A96	Inverurie Bypass	Grampian	10·5
Total 16 Schemes			157·2

Notes:
1. All schemes funded by central Government.
2. All costs given are latest estimate of cost.

Major trunk road schemes costing over £1 million
Planned future starts

	Scheme	Region
A1	Tower-Dunglass	Borders
A68	Newtown St. Boswell's Bypass	Borders
A68	Ancrum House/Harrietfield	Borders
A68	Dalkeith Bypass	Lothian
A7	Dalkeith Bypass	Lothian
A7	Langholm Bypass	Dumfries and Galloway
A701	Ae Bridge	Dumfries and Galloway
A701	St. Ann's Bridge	Dumfries and Galloway
A701	Locharbriggs to Amisfield	Dumfries and Galloway
A702	Hillend Improvement	Lothian
A73	Hyndford Bridge	Strathclyde
M74	Scheme lengths yet to be determined	31km in Strathclyde; 60km in Dumfries and Galloway
A75	Carrutherstown to Hetland	Dumfries and Galloway
A75	Halfway House to Shennanton	Dumfries and Galloway
A75	Dervaird Lock to Barlae	Dumfries and Galloway
A75	Dunragit Bypass	Dumfries and Galloway
A75	The Glen Improvement	Dumfries and Galloway
A76	Carronbridge Bypass	Dumfries and Galloway
A76	Auldgirth to Whitespots	Dumfries and Galloway
A76	Burnside to Allanton diversion	Dumfries and Galloway
A76	Kirkconnel/Sanquhar Bypass	Dumfries and Galloway
A76	Cumnock/Auchinleck Bypass	Strathclyde
A76	New Cumnock Bypass	Strathclyde
A76	Manchline Bypass	Strathclyde
A77	Bennane Hill Bypass	Strathclyde
A77	Maybole Bypass	Strathclyde
A77	Girvan Bypass	Strathclyde
A77	Ardmillan	Strathclyde
A77	South of Ballantrae to Auchencrosh	Strathclyde
A77	Ayr Road Route	Strathclyde
A77	Fenwick to B764	Strathclyde
A77	B764 to Malletsheugh	Strathclyde
A78	Ardrossan/Saltcoats Bypass	Strathclyde
M8	St. James Interchange	Strathclyde
M8	Baillieston to Shawhead	Strathclyde
M8	Shawhead to Newhouse	Strathclyde
M8	Newbridge to Edinburgh	Lothian
M80	Stepps Bypass	Strathclyde
M80	Stepps-Haggs	Strathclyde
A82	Luss Bypass	Strathclyde
A82	Hollybank to Tarbet	Strathclyde
A82	Crianlarich Bypass	Central
A82	Transport Centre Fort William to Kennels	Highland
A828	Appin to Achnacone House	Strathclyde
A828	Creagan Bridge Diversion	Strathclyde
A83	Inveraray Bypass	Strathclyde
A830	Mallaig to Kinsadel II	Highland
A830	Kinloid to Kinsadel	Highland
A830	Lock Nan Uamh to Polnish	Highland
A830	Kinloid to Loch Nan Uamh	Highland
A835	Contin to Garve	Highland
A87	Dornie Bridge	Highland

	Scheme	Region
A9	Broomhill to Logie Easter	Highland
A9	Windyhouse to Borgue Bridge	Highland
A9	Portgower to Greenpark	Highland
A9	Berriedale	Highland
A9	Crackaig to Culgower	Highland
A9	Logie Easter to Garrick Bridge	Highland
A9	Helmsdale to County Boundary	Highland
A9	Brora Bypass	Highland
A9	Greenloaning to Blackford	Tayside
A9	Bridge of Allan Connnection	Central
A91	Auchtermuchty Bypass	Fife
A92	Preston to Balfarg	Fife
A92	Bankhead Interchange	Fife
A92	Rosyth Bypass	Fife
A92	Balmedie to Tipperty	Grampian
A929	Tarbrax to Forfar	Tayside
A94	Stracathro Junction	Tayside
A94	Brechin Bypass	Tayside
A952	Inverugie to Balmoor	Grampian
A952	Midmill	Grampian
A96	Bucksburn Diversion	Grampian
A96	Keith Bypass	Grampian
A96	Lhanbryde Bypass	Grampian
A96	Blackburn Bypass	Grampian
A96	Kintore Bypass	Grampian
A96	Inveramsay to Pitcaple	Grampian
A96	Nairn Railway Bridge Replacement	Highland
A985	Kincardine-on-Forth	Fife

Total 94 schemes costing an estimated £1,200 million.

Note:
It is expected that these schemes will be funded by central Government.

WALES

Companies (Jobs)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on how many occasions since June 1987 he has intervened when companies operating in Wales have been bought up by companies from outside Wales, leading to a transfer of jobs away from Wales; and under which powers he acted in each case.

Mr. Peter Walker: My Department is consulted by the Office of Fair Trading about merger cases that are being considered under the provisions of the 1973 Fair Trading Act and which involve companies that have an interest in Wales. Since June 1987 substantive representations have been made in relation to six cases so far as is known none resulted in a move of jobs from Wales.

NHS Staff

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each year since 1979 the numbers of staff expressed as a whole-time equivalent and as actual full-time and part-time members in the categories *(a)* ancillary, *(b)* administration and clerical, *(c)* nurses and midwives and *(d)* professional and technical.

Mr. Grist: The requested information, which relates to 30 September each year, is given in the tables:

	Numbers of staff Full-time	Part-time	Whole time equivalents
(a) Ancillary Staff—NHS Wales including WHCSA			
1979	7,602	7,307	11,879
1980	7,593	7,606	11,989
1981	7,381	7,728	11,839
1982	7,240	7,954	11,784
1983	7,045	7,897	11,559
1984	6,498	7,806	10,964
1985	6,212	8,009	10,757
1986	5,797	7,847	10,210
1987	5,400	7,864	9,810
1988	4,942	7,519	9,117
(b) Administrative and Clerical Staff—NHS Wales including WHCSA			
1979	5,259	1,584	6,221
1980	5,376	1,631	6,279
1981	5,409	1,676	6,390
1982	5,437	1,755	6,437
1983	5,481	1,779	6,481
1984	5,545	1,879	6,626
1985	5,589	2,067	6,787
1986	5,600	2,244	6,924
1987	5,694	2,375	7,087
1988	5,909	2,426	7,279
(c) Nursing and Midwifery Staff—NHS Wales including WHCSA			
[1]1979	16,275	11,228	23,031
1980	16,902	11,792	24,366
1981	17,946	11,785	25,362
1982	18,390	11,956	25,909
1983	18,583	11,745	25,981
1984	19,005	11,751	26,448
1985	19,486	11,965	27,014
1986	19,553	12,123	27,187
1987	19,892	12,588	27,764
1988	19,947	12,936	27,920
(d) Professional and Technical staff—NHS Wales including WHCSA			
1979	3,197	963	3,621
1980	3,370	1,005	3,737
1981	3,448	1,059	3,849
1982	3,615	1,079	4,018
1983	3,786	1,078	4,161
1984	3,904	1,104	4,466
1985	4,070	1,152	4,649
1986	4,123	1,274	4,771
1987	4,338	1,316	4,993
1988	4,384	1,398	5,111

[1] In 1979 standard contract hours for this staff group were 40 hours per week; this was reduced to 37·5 hours for 1980 and subsequent years.
WHCSA—Welsh Health Common Services Authority.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each year since 1979 *(a)* the number of acute beds available and *(b)* the number of non-acute beds available in each district health authority and SHA; and if he will give the national total for each year.

Mr. Grist: The information is given in the table:

Average daily available beds	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Acute:									
Clwyd	1,420·5	1,434·4	1,391·1	1,400·8	1,399·3	1,371·2	1,342·6	1,337·2	1,354·9
East Dyfed	761·8	763·9	740·9	742·2	741·6	708·1	690·1	694·9	692·9

Average daily available beds	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Gwent	1,517·9	1,541·4	1,548·9	1,535·4	1,515·1	1,478·9	1,466·2	1,388·7	1,388·0
Gwynedd	686·2	687·8	681·7	683·6	670·4	685·6	716·5	718·7	705·1
Mid Glamorgan	1,915·8	1,886·6	1,859·4	1,842·4	1,846·1	1,844·1	1,835·5	1,813·5	1,784·4
Pembrokeshire	245·7	246·5	248·7	254·2	264·1	260·8	261·1	266·6	258·0
Powys	292·2	240·4	226·8	229·2	241·5	237·4	237·7	221·0	220·3
South Glamorgan	1,864·9	1,826·3	1,818·4	1,820·3	1,864·1	1,851·4	1,839·3	1,751·0	1,753·7
West Glamorgan	1,428·3	1,447·8	1,455·1	1,440·4	1,450·0	1,398·2	1,421·3	1,448·0	1,399·9
Wales	10,133·3	10,075·1	9,971·0	9,948·5	9,992·2	9,835·7	9,810·3	9,639·6	9,557·2
Non-Acute:[1]									
Clwyd	1,632·0	1,580·5	1,600·3	1,525·2	1,551·0	1,522·3	1,469·0	1,431·9	1,335·8
East Dyfed	1,336·5	1,300·2	1,273·8	1,057·9	1,127·3	1,092·0	1,079·9	1,063·3	969·9
Gwent	2,364·7	2,381·9	2,286·9	2,178·1	2,176·3	1,194·6	2,153·2	2,120·1	2,113·1
Gwynedd	883·3	880·5	863·1	845·6	843·3	856·9	894·1	911·2	905·0
Mid Glamorgan	3,027·6	2,977·8	2,933·5	2,883·7	2,876·9	2,904·8	2,808·7	2,684·9	2,597·2
Pembrokeshire	220·6	220·1	212·0	219·1	211·3	209·3	206·3	206·4	198·1
Powys	973·3	940·0	933·8	914·9	846·8	849·4	819·5	793·4	779·8
South Glamorgan	1,718·7	1,688·4	1,702·5	1,702·6	1,703·0	1,691·9	1,707·1	1,709·3	1,644·2
West Glamorgan	1,166·0	1,158·8	1,162·9	1,165·8	1,146·9	1,151·3	1,181·9	1,126·1	1,110·3
Wales	13,322·7	13,128·2	12,968·8	12,492·9	12,482·8	12,472·5	12,319·7	12,046·6	11,653·4

[1] Includes geriatrics, younger disabled, obstetrics, GP maternity, mental illness, mental handicap, adolescent psychiatry, mental illness children, psychogeriatric and elderly mentally infirm.

NHS (Capital Projects)

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of each capital project costing more than £1 million *(a)* actually under construction and *(b)* at the proposal or planning stage; if he will give the estimated date of completion for each project; and if he will break this list down by each DHA.

Mr. Grist: The details, as provided by DHAs in their 10-year capital programmes, are shown in the tables:

(a) Captial Projects Under Construction

District health authority and project	Estimated completion date
Clwyd	
1 Chirk Community Hospital	March 1990
East Dyfed	
2 Llanelli Hospital	1989-89
Gwent	
3 Royal Gwent Hospital Development Scheme VI	November 1989
Mid Glamorgan	
4 Prince Charles Hospital Development Scheme	August 1990
South Glamorgan	
5 Llandough Hospital Obstetrics Unit	May 1989
6 UHW Paediatric Cardiac Unit	1991
West Glamorgan	
7 Tonna Hospital Development	May 1991
8 Morriston Hospital Development (Phased)	1992-93
9 Singleton Hospital West Ward Block	1991
10 Singleton Hospital Physical Medicine Department	1991

(b) Capital Projects at the Proposal or Planning Stage

District health authority and project	Estimated completion date
Clwyd	
1 Phase 2, Wrexham Maelor Hospital Development	Part of 10 year development scheduled for completion 1999
2 Ysbyty Glan Clwyd—Mental Illness Unit	1992-93
3 Ysbyty Glan Clwyd—Phase II Development (Obstetrics and Gynaecology)	1992-93
4 Deeside Community Hospital—Phase I	1991-92
East Dyfed	
5 Llanelli Hospital—Phase II	1993-94
Gwent	
6 Ebbw Vale Community Hospital—Phase I	1991
7 Royal Gwent Hospital—Scheme VII	1993
8 Islwyn Community Hospital	1994
9 Chepstow/Caldicot Community Hospital	1997
10 Torfaen Community Hospital	1995
Gwynedd	
11 West Mon Community Hospital	1997
12 Ysbyty Gwynedd—Phase II Development	1991-92
13 Druid/Cefni Hospital Amalgamation	1991
14 Garth Angharad Interim Development	1990-91
15 East Dwyfor/North Merionydd Community Hospital	2001
Mid Glamorgan	
16 Aberdare Hospital Elderly Unit	1990-91
17 Ystrad Fechan Community Hospital	1991
18 East Glamorgan Hospital Geriatric Unit	1991
19 Princess of Wales Hospital Development—Scheme II	1995
20 Ystrad Mynach Hospital Development	1989-90
21 Proposed Rationalisation of Hospital Services in Rhondda/Taff Ely. Proposals currently the subject of Secretary of State consideration	
Pembrokeshire	
22 Withybush Hospital—Psychogeriatric Wards	1991-92
Powys	
23 Brecon Hospital	1992
24 Machynlleth Hospital—Phase I	1990-91

	District health authority and project	Estimated completion date
South Glamorgan		
25	Radical Reorganisation of Hospital Services over next 10 years is proposed including the establishment of a new DGH and four neighbourhood hospitals. Proposals are currently the subject of Secretary of State consideration.	2000
26	UHW—Replacement Energy Sources	1991-92
27	Development of Catering Services	1993-94
West Glamorgan		
28	Singleton Hospital—East Ward Block	2001
29	Singleton Hospital Out-Patients Department	1994-95
30	Singleton Hospital—Reorganisation of Operating Department	1993-94
31	Singleton Hospital—Staff Residences	1991-92
32	Morriston Hospital—Scheme 4 (Burns and Plastics and Associated Works)	1993
33	Tonna Hospital Development	1991-92
34	Neath/Port Talbot DGH	1999

Health and Personal Social Services

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for each year since 1979 the total health and personal social services *(a)* current expenditure (gross) and *(b)* capital expenditure (net); and if he will give those totals adjusted by the HCHS pay and price deflator.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is as follows:

Total Health and Personal Social Services

£ million

	Current expenditure (gross)	Capital expenditure (net)
1978-79	460·1	27·4
1979-80	544·3	29·9
1980-81	692·8	37·5
1981-82	779·2	45·8
1982-83	856·5	50·5
1983-84	913·3	54·2
1984-85	979·9	58·5
1985-86	1,047·6	59·5
1986-87	1,124·6	66·7
1987-88	1,252·7	69·8
1988-89	1,403·3	64·8

Separate pay and price factors are not maintained for Wales. The hospital and community health services pay and price deflator, maintained for England by the Department of Health, is an index of inflationary pressures on current expenditure in the hospital and community health services alone. It would be inappropriate therefore to apply this index to total health and personal social services expenditure.

Standard Business Rate

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the level of the standard business rate which will come into force in Wales in April 1990.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have made no such estimate. It will not be possible to make an estimate until I have the results of the revaluation of non-domestic property.

European Tourist Year

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if the Wales tourist board will have a direct involvement in developing the European Tourism Year 1990.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Yes. The Wales tourist board is represented on both the United Kingdom steering committee and the United Kingdom national examining committee.

Work-related Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the total amount of money spent on work-related Government training schemes in each of the years 1983 to 1988 inclusive.

Mr. Peter Walker: The following figures represent expenditure by the Manpower Services and the Training Commission on work-related Government training programmes in Wales in the relevant financial years. Records are kept on the basis of the standard financial year for accounting for Government expenditure. This year runs from 1 April to 31 March.

	£ millions
1983-84	44·2
1984-85	58·1
1985-86	55·8
1986-87	71·5
1987-88	79·6

Health Expenditure

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of expenditure in real terms in *(a)* Wales and *(b)* Gwent regional health authority annually since 1979 indicating what proportion of that expenditure relates to (i) wage inflation, (ii) debt charges, and (iii) committed capital expenditure.

Mr. Grist: It is assumed the hon. Gentleman wishes to compare expenditure in real terms by Gwent district health authority with that by all health authorities in Wales since 1979-80. The information is given in the table.

£000

	Gwent DHA		*Wales*	
	Revenue	*Capital*	*Revenue*	*Capital*
1979-80	88,997	4,146	579,298	43,213
1980-81	97,485	1,736	631,042	48,132
1981-82	98,339	3,979	639,077	53,673
1982-83	100,031	4,864	648,467	59,995
1983-84	101,612	4,348	659,229	60,630
1984-85	102,224	4,696	667,978	59,171
1985-86	101,574	4,374	674,539	58,822
1986-87	105,146	7,320	704,376	63,765
1987-88	109,122	6,910	742,014	60,570

Note: All figures are expressed at 1987-88 outturn prices. 1987-88 is the latest year for which information is available.
Source: Health Authorities Annual Accounts.

Health authorities' accounts do not disaggregate outturn expenditure on salaries and wages between sums attributable to pay inflation and sums attributable to changes in the numbers and mix of staffing. Health authorities do not raise finance from private sources and are therefore not subject to debt charges.

Hospital Wards

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many hospital wards are not in use in *(a)* Wales, *(b)* Gwent and *(c)* Newport due to staff shortages.

Mr. Grist: Information is not available centrally in the form requested.

Medical Staff

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* doctors and *(b)* nurses were employed in (i) Newport (ii) Gwent and (iii) Wales in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Grist: The available information is given in the table. Information on medical and dental staff is not centrally available below district health authority level. Nursing and midwifery staff figures are not available below district health authority level prior to 1980.

	Medical and dental staff[1]		*Nursing and midwifery staff*[1,2,3,4]		
	Gwent	*Wales*	*Newport*	*Gwent*	*Wales*
1979	318	2,181	n/a	3,663	23,031
1980	321	2,234	1,018	3,964	24,366
1981	330	2,308	1,096	4,061	25,362
1982	338	2,353	1,107	4,141	25,909
1983	342	2,404	1,272	4,221	25,981
1984	340	2,420	1,329	4,312	26,448
1985	340	2,465	1,309	4,351	27,014
1986	345	2,470	1,316	4,354	27,187
1987	[5]359	[5]2,488	1,364	4,337	27,764
1988	n/a	n/a	1,391	4,310	27,918

n/a—Not available.

[1] NHS directly employed staff. Whole-time equivalents in post as at 30 September.

[2] No adjustment has been made for the change in working hours (from 40 to 37½ hours per week) during 1980.

[3] Based on NHS pay records for staff paid at the Royal Gwent, St. Woolos and Allt-yr-yn hospitals and at community pay units in Newport. It is not possible to adjust for staff paid at one unit working partly at another.

[4] Learners are excluded because they are mostly paid (ie recorded) at one central point and it is hence not possible to break doen their numbers by hospital.

[5] Provisional.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest available figures for waiting lists in *(a)* Gwent and *(b)* Newport for (i) trauma, (ii) orthopaedic, (iii) general surgery and (iv) eye, ear and throat operations also in comparison with the other counties in Wales and in comparison with 1979.

Mr. Grist: Available information on in-patient and day case waiting lists is given in the table:

	Traumatic and orthopaedic surgery		*General surgery*		*Ear, nose and throat*		*Ophthalmology*	
	1979	*1988*	*1979*	*1988*	*1979*	*1988*	*1979*	*1988*
(a) In-patient waiting list as at 31 March								
Gwent	1,396	1,859	1,677	1,749	2,064	840	650	767
Newport[1]	812	1,751	1,338	601	1,216	840	435	767
Clwyd	493	879	663	1,193	314	1,756	708	284
East Dyfed	637	575	620	1,093	348	812	416	418
Gwynedd	461	163	575	831	247	355	486	390
Mid Glamorgan	2,709	1,163	2,780	2,188	2,266	1,790	3,147	359
Pembrokeshire	207	908	306	1,572	401	—	243	—
Powys	20	—	19	—	12	—	13	—
South Glamorgan	1,697	1,877	571	1,397	1,968	957	1,244	552
West Glamorgan	3,454	1,224	2,762	1,231	3,978	651	197	738
(b) Day-case waiting list as at 31 March								
Gwent	103	67	185	£99	—	11	121	160
Newport[1]	—	55	103	6	—	11	121	160
Clwyd	156	111	410	642	5	51	—	50
East Dyfed[2]	124	48	180	161	4	13	—	20
Gwynedd	43	48	338	286	—	3	70	117
Mid Glamorgan	270	—	331	100	10	—	17	—
Pembrokeshire	—	462	—	212	—	50	—	13
Powys	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
South Glamorgan[3]	—	113	29	500	—	55	—	25
West Glamorgan	114	82	41	132	2	—	3	—

[1] People waiting for treatment at Royal Gwent and St. Woolos hospitals.

[2] Includes Pembrokeshire for 1979.

[3] Excludes figures for the University hospital of Wales.

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what new measures he is proposing to reduce the hospital waiting lists in Gwent.

Mr. Grist: In order to assist Gwent health authority in reducing hospital waiting times in its district the Welsh Office has offered £220,000 to the authority for the continuation of the initiative in orthopaedics during the current financial year. In addition, Welsh Office officials will be meeting representatives of health authorities, including Gwent, to discuss the establishment of treatment centres as envisaged in the Welsh chapter of the White Paper "Working For Patients".

Hospitals (Gwent)

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to allocate more funds to hospitals in Gwent.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend announced in January allocations for the current financial year. The authority's initial revenue cash allocation for 1989-90 is £127·4 million, an increase of 5·8 per cent. over last year; in addition the authority is expected to achieve cost improvements and generate additional income equivalent to a further 1·3 per cent. of its recurrent revenue allocation. The authority's capital allocation is £7·3 million, an increase of nearly 43 per cent. over 1988-89.

Community Charge (Injunction)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the implications for his Department's publications of the High Court decision to grant a temporary injunction to Greenwich borough council in respect of a Department of Environment leaflet on the poll tax; and whether he will make it his policy to delay the publication or distribution of any Welsh Office document on the poll tax pending a full hearing of the case.

Mr. Grist: The decision by the High Court relates solely to the leaflet produced by the Department of the Environemnt entitled "The Community Charge (the so-called Poll Tax) How It Will Work For You".

The bilingual leaflet "Your Guide to the Community Charge", which is being distributed in Wales, is separate and different. I have no plans to halt its distribution.

Overseas Residents

Mr. Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money has been obtained from overseas residents in total, and in each of the health authorities, since the inception of the charging scheme.

Mr. Grist: The income received from overseas visitors by district health authorities in Wales since the inception of the charging scheme on 1 October 1982 has been as follows:

£ thousands

	1982-83	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*[1]
Clwyd	—	2·6	1·7	5·2	−2·9	9·4
East Dyfed	—	0·7	1·4	6·6	2·0	0·9
Gwent	—	4·2	6·3	19·7	9·3	6·6
Gwynedd	—	4·8	2·9	12·0	2·4	15·4
Mid Glamorgan	—	2·5	0·6	0·0	—	0·2
Pembrokeshire	—	—	1·3	3·8	0·1	2·0
Powys	—	0·3	0·6	0·4	—	—
South Glamorgan	1·4	16·8	29·8	17·6	−0·4	28·4
West Glamorgan	0·4	7·4	4·4	−0·1	0·1	4·1
Wales	1·8	39·3	49·0	65·2	10·6	67·0

[1] Latest year for which the information is available.
Source: Health Authorities Annual Accounts.

Advertising

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much advertising air time his Department purchased with each commercial television company in each of the last five years.

Mr. Peter Walker: Advertising air time purchased with each commercial television company in each of the last five years is commercially confidential.

ENVIRONMENT

Water Authorities (Fords)

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the responsibility of water authorities or other bodies for the maintenance of fords.

Mr. Howard: Water authorities have no responsibility for the maintenance of fords. Where a ford has been dedicated as a highway maintainable at public expense, responsibility for its maintenance rests with the highway authority.

Advertising

Mr Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much has been spent by his Department on advertisements on commercial television in each of the last five years, listed by each television company.

Mr. Ridley: My Department advertised on commercial television as follows:
—in September 1984 at a total cost of £516,000 (including production charges)
—in April 1989 at a total cost of £1 million (including production charges)

No television advertising appeared between 1985 and 1988. The sums paid to individual stations is a matter of commercial confidentiality.

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much advertising air time his Department purchased with each commercial television company in each of the last five years.

Mr. Ridley: I have nothing further to add to the reply that I gave earlier today because the sums paid to individual stations is a matter of commercial confidentiality.

Water Privatisation

Mr Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who will pay the water bill incurred by the fire brigade putting out *(a)* domestic and *(b)* industrial fires once the water authorities are privatised.

Mr. Howard: Clause 79 of the Water Bill will prohibit water undertakers from charging for water taken from a public hydrant or from private premises for fire fighting purposes.

Departmental Property

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the property costs, including rent, asset replacement and rates, of his Department in total in each standard both in total and per square foot for each year since 1983.

Mr. Ridley: Information in the form requested is not available except at disproportionate cost. However, central DOE has paid the PSA for accommodation and services under the property repayment system (PRS) since 1 April 1984. Under these arrangements, annual charges for the accommodation occupied have been as follows:

Figures in brackets are costs per square foot

Year	Rent and rates		Total cost	
	£ million	£	£ million	£
1984-85	22·9	(9·8)	26·7	(11·4)
1985-86	22·5	(10·1)	26·7	(12·0)
1986-87	18·2	(8·4)	22·5	(10·4)
1987-88	19·3	(8·7)	23·9	(10·7)
1988-89	19·7	(8·8)	25·7	(11·6)

Departmental Plant and Equipment

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the last revaluation of plant and equipment employed by his Department was carried out; and what plant and equipment asset replacement charges are incurred by his Department.

Mr. Ridley: The Department of the Environment operates a cash-based system which enables Parliament to be satisfied that the amounts of cash voted to be spent on activities have been so spent. There has, therefore, been no overall need to maintain comprehensive up to date valuations of plant and equipment, the purchase cost of which is tightly controlled through the cash accounting system.

Rights of Way

Dr. Glyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has had to make a legal definition of the entire rights of way network legally defined by the year 2000.

Mr. Virginia Bottomley: A number of representations have been received supporting the Countryside Commission's objective that the rights of way network should be legally defined, properly maintained and well publicised by the end of the century.

Council Housing (Rents)

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what effect ring fencing of the housing revenue account will have on the ability of councils *(a)* to set rents in their areas and *(b)* to control future rent rises; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he proposes to reduce housing subsidy to an authority which does not increase rents in line with Government policy; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he expects local authorities in deficit on the housing revenue account to increase rents twice in the year of account; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: In the new regime, my right hon. Friend will set an annual guideline rent increase for each local authority. Housing revenue account subsidy will be paid on the assumption, among other things, that the authority increases rent in accordance with the guideline. Subsidy for the year will not be reduced if the authority raises rents by a different amount. Local authorities will be free to set their own rents so long as they do not budget to make a deficit on their housing revenue account for any year. If, despite this, it appears during the year that a deficit is likely to arise on the account, the authority will be required to take all such steps as are reasonably practicable to avoid that outcome. In such a case it will be for the authority to decide whether a rent increase is necessary.

Housing Action Trusts

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has for the expenditure by his Department on the further consultation period for the proposed HAT in Sunderland, from the publication of the consultant's report to the ballot of tenants.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend has appointed a consortium led by Peat Marwick McLintock to discuss with local people the proposal for a trust in Sunderland. The cost of the contract will remain commercially confidential until it has been completed. No estimates have yet been made of the costs of a ballot which would be arranged by the Electoral Reform Society.

Assisted Private Purchase Schemes

Mr. Malins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to grant the London borough of Croydon's application to administer an assisted private purchase scheme.

Mr. Trippier: The Department wrote to approve one scheme on 8 May, and will shortly be writing about two more.

Community Charge

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many Ministers have delivered the leaflet "The Community Charge: The So-Called Poll Tax: How It Will Work For You" to private homes; and in what places.

Mr. Gummer: Two Ministers delivered the leaflet to homes. I delivered it in Westminster and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) in Kirkstall, Leeds.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the leaflets on the community charge/poll tax delivered on the morning of Wednesday 10 May to homes in Fife terrace, London N1, by the Post Office were delivered on the instructions of his Department.

Mr. John Gummer: The Post Office was contracted by the Central Office of Information, on the instructions of the Department of the Environment, to deliver a copy of the leaflet to every household in England. However, at approximately 6.30 pm on Tuesday 9 May the Post Office was instructed to discontinue delivery.

Water Pollution

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the effects on pollution levels of the granting to water authorities of lower discharge consents under the Water Bill.

Mr. Howard: On 7 December I announced a capital programme costing around £1 billion to bring substandard sewage treatment works into compliance with their discharge consents by March 1992. In line with established practice, water authorities may apply for time-limited discharge consents for these works to regularise current performance while improvements take place. The remedial programme is expected to lead to significant improvements in river quality and consent conditions no less stringent than those that currently apply will be reintroduced once improvements are completed.

In the interim, and as an additional environmental safeguard, the time-limited consents will incorporate new upper-tier conditions defining absolute maximum limits for specified pollutants.

The Water Bill will strengthen the framework for water pollution control. It will be for the new National Rivers Authority (NRA) to determine discharge consents and, in doing so, it will have a duty to achieve the statutory quality objectives to be set for all rivers.

Shopping Developments (Greater Manchester)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environent when he intends to announce his decision about planning applications for out-of-town shopping developments in Greater Manchester; and to which organisation and individuals this information has already been given by Ministers.

Mr. Chope: The decisions on these applications will be announced as soon as possible. A number of organisations and individuals, particularly applicants and their agents, have inquired about the expected decision date, but no details of inquirers have been recorded.

Lawyers

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many lawyers are retained by his Department.

Mr. Ridley: The Department currently has 44 lawyers in post, including three part-timers.

Property Valuation

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when his Department or its agencies last carried out a valuation of its property assets; what the total property portfolio is worth in each standard region; and what charges for asset replacement are made.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 11 May 1989]:* The PSA is responsible for the management of the civil estate vested in me and it is currently undertaking a valuation of the estate which will include an asset valuation.

This major exercise, which is being carried out by independent valuers, will not be completed until the end of the year.

Neither the depreciation of assets, nor the cost of replacing assets, are directly provided for in the existing annual vote structure.

Anti-competitive Practices

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, further to his answer of 27 April, *Official Report*, column *660*, to the hon. Member for Copeland, he will list for each authority the nature of the complaints of alleged anti-competitive practices and the individual or organisation responsible for making the complaint.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 11 May 1989]:* No. I do not propose to give such information about individual authorities while allegations are being investigated. Nor do I consider it relevant or necessary to name those making complaints. I do, however, intend to inform the House when I have used my powers of sanction under paragraph I of the Local Government Act 1988.

Dredged Aggregates

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the principal areas of dredging for aggregates.

Mr. Major: I have been asked to reply. The principal areas licensed by the Crown Estate Office for the purpose of dredging aggregates are as follows:

The Bristol Channel
Off Great Yarmouth
The mouth of the Humber
The mouth of the Thames
Around the Isle of Wight.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Short Brothers

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any plans to improve *(a)* the security fence and *(b)* general security at the missile production facility belonging to Short's in Belfast.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 2 May 1989]:* Since the theft in October last year from a Short's factory, there has been a review of security arrangements at all Short's establishments. A number of additional security measures, both physical and procedural, either have already been, or are being, implemented following that review. Security arrangements at all establishments belonging to Short's are the primary responsibility of the company, though my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State maintains, given his overall responsibility for security in Northern Ireland, a close interest in such matters.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects to be in a position to announce the new owner of Short Brothers plc; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 11 May 1989]:* I have now received detailed proposals from Fokker/GEC and Bombardier. The two proposals are different in nature but both offer considerable opportunities for Short's. It will take some time to evaluate them fully, but I am conscious of the need to end any uncertainty about the future of the company as soon as possible.

EMPLOYMENT

Community Energy Action

64. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he expects the number of trainees undertaking community energy action work in draught-proofing and loft insulation to equal the number so engaged under the community programme in 1988.

Mr. Nicholls: No direct comparison can be made between the number of trainees in a particular occupational area under employment training and the number of participants that were engaged in such work under the community programme. The number of trainees in draughtproofing and loft insulation is determined by the demand for training in these and related occupational skills.

High Moor Pit (Inquiry)

65. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his response to the recommendations of the report of the inquiry into the fall of roof which occurred at High Moor pit on 13 January.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend welcomes the comprehensive report by British Coal and its recommendations, which were agreed by all sides of industry, the trade unions and by the Health and Safety Executive's mines and quarries inspectorate. I also understand that the recommendations are in the process of being implemented.

Industrial Democracy

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if, prior to the operation of the European single market, Her Majesty's Government will ensure that closer co-operation through industrial democracy exists between the organised work force and management in British industry.

Mr. Cope: The Government will continue to encourage voluntary systems for the involvement of all employees in the work of their companies.

YTS

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the ethnic background data for YTS trainees as at *(a)* March and *(b)* October 1988 and *(c)* March 1989, separately, for each youth training scheme operating in each of the Training Agency areas of Greater London.

Mr. Cope: The information requested has been sent to the hon. Member and a copy placed in the Library.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the ethnic data for YTS trainees as at March and October 1988 and March 1989, separately for each YTS, both local and large company unit, operating in the Doncaster and Mexborough areas of South Yorkshire.

Mr. Cope: The information requested has been sent to the hon. Member and a copy placed in the Library.

Industrial Earnings

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of industrial workers in the north-west earn less than average industrial earnings.

Mr. Lee: The latest available information, for April 1988, relates to full-time manual employees in the north-west, on adult rates of pay. The estimated percentage is about 58 per cent., broadly similar to the figure for Great Britain as a whole.

Advertising

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how much has been spent by his Department on advertisements on commercial television in each of the last five years, listed by each television company;

(2) how much advertising air time his Department purchased with each commercial television company in each of the last five years.

Mr. Cope: Information on TV expenditure in the form requested is not held by my Department; nor is it available centrally through the Central Office of Information and can be supplied only at a disproportionate cost. It is also commercially confidential.

Low Pay

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what effect the removal of wages council legal protection for young people has had on low pay.

Mr. Nicholls: The removal of wages council minima has enabled employers to offer, and young people to accept, jobs at rates which would previously have been unlawful, and there is evidence that this has resulted in increased job opportunities for those under 21. It is not possible to measure the effect of this greater flexibility on pay levels, but there has been no general reduction in the earnings of young people in wages council trades. These have continued to increase in real terms.

Benefit Claims

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many unemployed people who receive a reduced unemployment benefit after finishing the enterprise allowance scheme drop their claims on its reference to a tribunal; and what proportion of those who do appear win their cases.

Mr. Lee: From October 1987 reduced rate unemployment benefit was abolished. Claimants whose unemployment benefit is disallowed by the adjudicating authorities following a period on the enterprise allowance scheme are not separately identified from other claimants whose benefit is disallowed. It is not possible, therefore, to provide the information requested.

European Tourism Year

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment who are the representatives of the United Kingdom on the steering committee of the European Tourism Year 1990.

Mr. Lee: Each member state is entitled to two representatives on the steering committee. The United

Kingdom representatives are Mr. Michael Medlicott, chief executive of the British Tourist Authority and Mrs. Julie Thakker, an official in the tourism branch of my Department.

Labour Statistics

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the current estimates of employees in employment at September 1987, December 1987, September 1988 and December 1988 by the following industry grouping *(a)* agriculture, forestry, fishing, *(b)* energy and water, *(c)* manufacturing, *(d)* construction, and *(e)* services by standard Great Britain region including Greater London; and in the same region how many employees in employment were women working part time.

Mr. Lee: The information appears in table 1.5 of the May 1989 edition of *Employment Gazette*, a copy of which is in the Library.

Restart

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many restart interviews were conducted between December 1988 and March 1989 inclusive for each employment service region.

Mr. Lee: The number of restart interviews conducted in each employment service region between December 1988 and March 1989 is shown in the table:

Region	*Number of interviews*
Northern Region	55,000
Yorkshire and Humberside	76,000
East Midlands and Eastern	64,000
London and South East	169,000
South West	37,000
Wales	47,000
West Midlands	95,000
North West	118,000
Scotland	108,000
Great Britain	769,000

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether, if a restart counseller refers a claimant to an adjudication officer because of what the claimant has written in their RR6 or said during the interview, the counsellor has to tell the claimant; whether the claimant can ask to see what the restart counsellor has said in the RR3; and whether the claimant is entitled to a copy of the RR3 to help them understand their position and, if necessary, correct any false information contained therein.

Mr. Lee: Restart counsellors do not refer claimants direct to the adjudication authorities. If a doubt arises about a claimant's availability for work the case is passed to the benefit office for referral to the adjudication officer if that is appropriate. Counsellors are instructed to tell claimants about the action that has been taken. Claimants can ask to see what is written on form RR3 and can be given a copy on request.

Work Trials

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether those long-term unemployed claimants who participate in work trials on employers' premises under the pilot job interview guarantee scheme will be designated on the same ways as ET and YTS trainees for the purposes of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Sex Discrimination Act 1975; and what rights they will have if they are discriminated against by an employer or they experience an accident at work.

Mr. Lee: Employers providing work trials will be required by contract with my Department to treat participants in the same way as their employees for the purpose of health and safety. It is also our intention that participants will be entitled to receive payments under the analogous industrial injuries scheme.

In providing the trial period, employers will be required by contract to ensure that no discrimination takes place which is rendered unlawful by either the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 or the Race Relations Act 1976.

The procedure covering ET and YTS trainees, to which the hon. Member refers, is not applicable to work trial participants.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether those long-term unemployed claimants who participate in work trials on employers' premises under the pilot job interview guarantee scheme will be able to receive the same discretionary increases to their income without it being deducted from their benefit, as do those claimants who participate in employment training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Participants in work trials will be reimbursed by the Department of Employment for travel and midday meal expenses incurred in undertaking the trial, up to maximum limits. These payments will not affect their benefit, although any other payments made in respect of the work trial could do so.

British Aerospace (Bracknell)

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has as to how many jobs will be lost in Bracknell as a result of the closure of the British Aerospace site, and as to the percentage of the economically active population of Bracknell this represents.

Mr. Lee: I have seen press reports that about 2,000 jobs will be lost at the Bracknell site as a result of this closure. There is no up-to-date estimate of the economically active population of Bracknell.

Picketing

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to review the law on picketing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The Green Paper "Removing Barriers to Employment", published on 20 March, states that the Government propose no change to the law on picketing.

Social Fund

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many projects in Scotland were either wholly or partly funded by the European Community social fund since 1979; what was the nature of these projects; and what was the total value of the grants.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 9 May 1989]:* Information on which category or recommendation for projects funded in Scotland under the European social fund (ESF) is readily available only for the period since 1987. The information is as follows:

	Full priority	*Part priority*
1987	173	59
1988	215	15
1989	182	119

All applications to the European social fund are for projects of vocational training or job creation measures. Data on the regional allocation of ESF have been collected only since 1985. The total value of grants to Scotland, excluding central Government schemes, for the period 1985-1988 is as follows:

	£
1985	17,215,503
1986	14,072,865
1987	16,774,846
1988	18,886,175

The amount allocated in 1989 has yet to be confirmed by the European Commission.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Rain Forests

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the Pacific, African and south American rain forest holocaust is taken account of in the Community forestry programme.

Mr. Ryder: One of the main aims of the proposed forestry action programme is to reduce the Community's dependence on timber imports, thus making some contribution to the range of measures that will be needed to protect the tropical rain forests.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on which sources he relies for evidence on the absence of a link between the north American drought and the longer-term effects of botanical holocaust in the rain forests in central and south America.

Mr. Ryder: In conversation with scientists, I have gained the impression that there is no proof of a link between the north American drought this year and removal of the rain forests in central and south America. I cannot disprove the hypothesis of a link but nor am I aware that supporters of the hypothesis can prove that there is such a link.

Departmental Property

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the property costs, including rent, asset replacement and rates, of his Department in total, in each standard both in total and per square foot for each year since 1983.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Information in the form requested is not available except at disproportionate cost. However, the accommodation charge (which includes an opportunity cost rent, contribution in lieu of rates, plus an element to cover maintenance and minor works) paid to PSA in respect of properties on the civil estate occupied by my Department, and the area of occupation, in each of the past five financial years are as follows:

	Accommodation charge (£'000s)	*Area of occupation ('000 square feet)*
1984-85	31,036	8,308
1985-86	32,596	8,161
1986-87	30,128	7,764
1987-88	30,650	7,760
1988-89	31,664	6,509

Departmental Plant and Equipment

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the last revaluation of plant and equipment employed by his Department was carried out; and what plant and equipment asset replacement charges are incurred by his Department.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The purchasing system for plant and equipment operated by my Department is aimed at securing value for money and ensuring that the money is spent in accordance with Parliament's wishes. Periodic revaluations of plant and equipment are not required and do not feature in my Department's accounts. An estimate of replacement costs could be made only at disproportionate cost.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he intends to introduce routine testing of the brains of all cows for bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of State for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will consider banning the sale for human consumption of brains, thymus and spleen from all cull cows;

(2) what advice he has been given concerning health hazards arising from meat products from bovine spongifrom encephalopathy infected cattle being sold for human consumption.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Sir H. Miller) on 27 February at columns *89-91*.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food at what level in his Department's regional structure the number of cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy is identified at monitored markets and slaughter houses.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Cases are identified at divisional level.

Slaughterhouses

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cull cattle were slaughtered in the United Kingdom in 1988; and of those how many were slaughtered at EEC export approved slaughterhouses.

Mr. Donald Thompson: We estimate that in 1988 of 670,000 cows and adult bulls were slaughtered in the United Kingdom. 470,000 of them at EC-approved abbatoirs.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what arrangements exist for the veterinary inspection ante-mortem of animals at *(a)* EEC export approved slaughterhouses and *(b)* non EEC export approved slaughterhouses.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 13 April 1989, which appeared in column *695* of *Hansard* dated 14 April 1989.

Fish Landings

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what percentage of fish landed and sold at Lowestoft, Hull, Grimsby, Peterhead and Aberdeen in the last three months for which figures are available has come from Icelandic-registered boats; and what has been the average daily price of plaice in these ports over this time.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The percentage of all fish landed at Hull and Grimsby which was landed by Icelandic-registered fishing vessels, based on provisional landing statistics, was as follows:

	1989		
	February	*March*	*April*
Hull	30	64	39
Grimsby	21	49	26

There were no recorded landings by Icelandic-registered fishing vessels at Aberdeen, Peterhead or Lowestoft during this period.

The average daily price of plaice in £ per tonne, based on provisional landings statistics, was as follows:

	1989		
	February	*March*	*April*
Hull	944	733	1,134
Grimsby	790	822	636
Lowestoft	837	864	864
Aberdeen	1,210	842	704
Peterhead	844	615	521

Source:
MAFF: Fisheries Statistical Retrieval System.
DAFS: Fish Landings Data Base.

Icelandic Fish

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will raise at the next Council of Ministers meetings the matter of Icelandic fish sold below market price in European ports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: We monitor offer prices of third country fish imported into the United Kingdom against the relevant Community reference prices. I can assure my hon. Friend that where we find low-priced imports justifying action within the terms of the Community's fish marketing regime, I shall raise the matter swiftly with the Commission and if necessary with my fellow Fisheries Ministers in the Community.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy on the import of Icelandic fish into the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement on the future of North sea ports which handle Icelandic fish currently and after 1992.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Protocol 6 of the general trade agreement between the European Community and Iceland provides for certain fish products access to the Community at preferential rates of duty, subject in the case of frozen fish fillets to observance by Iceland of the Community's reference price. Further, the Community's reference price system provides for the Commission to take action to prevent disruption of the Community market if significant quantities of third country imports enter the Community below the appropriate reference price on three consecutive days.

The Icelandic fish trade into North sea ports is long established. I have no knowledge that this will change either before or after 1992.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next expects to meet with his counterpart in Iceland to discuss the sale of Icelandic fish in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have no plans for a meeting.

ADAS

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is proposing to take following the Bailey review of Agricultural Development Advisory Service laboratories in England and Wales.

Mr. Ryder: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) on 21 March 1989 at column *515*.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will make a statement on the financial basis for his decision to reduce the number of Agricultural Development Advisory Service laboratories;

(2) which Agricultural Development Advisory Service laboratories and experimental farms in England and Wales he proposes to close in the current year and in each of the next three years.

Mr. Ryder: I cannot add anything to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) on 21 March 1989 at column *515*.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the impact of cuts in agricultural research and development in the work of the Agricultural Development Advisory Service farms at Trawsgoed and Pwllpeirian.

Mr. Ryder: In answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) on 21 March 1989 at column *515* my right hon. Friend the Minister indicated that decisions on the future of ADAS research and development facilities depend on the industry's decisions on the work it is prepared to fund.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the future of the regional analytical chemistry laboratories at Trawsgoed.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend the Minister announced on 21 March 1989 at column *515* that the analytical chemistry laboratory at Trawsgoed would be closed in 1990-91 and that the Welsh Office is considering the possibility of alternative uses of the facility.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the employment consequences of closing the laboratories at Trawsgoed.

Mr. Ryder: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) on 11 May 1989 at columns *482-83*.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the revenue targets set for the Agricultural Development Advisory Service in Wales for the last two years and the extent to which those targets have been met.

Mr. Ryder: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) on 9 May 1989 at column *372*.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all the research projects currently undertaken at Pwllpeirian experimental farm.

Mr. Ryder: Work on the following five projects is currently being undertaken at Pwllpeirian experimental husbandry farm as a contribution to a national programme of research and development:

Reproduction and rearing of beef cattle
Reproduction, rearing and the nutrition of the ewe and suckling lamb.
Sheep genetics.
Grass and forage conservation.
Grass and legumes on hills and uplands.

Beef Imports

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will state the total imports by volume and by country of beef and beef products into the United Kingdom during 1988 from *(a)* other EEC countries and *(b)* non-EEC countries.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The tables give details of United Kingdom imports during 1988 of fresh, chilled and frozen beef and veal, fresh, chilled and frozen beef offals and processed beef products in tonnes by exporting country as requested; the source is Eurostat.

Fresh, chilled and frozen beef and veal

	Tonnes
(a) Other member states	
France	14,853
Belgium/Luxembourg	805
Netherlands	22,700
Federal Republic of Germany	19,958
Italy	2,422
Republic of Ireland	107,228
Denmark	8,128
Spain	1,574
(b) Non member states	
Yugoslavia	3
Poland	152
Czechoslovakia	767
Romania	30
Libya	5
British Indian overseas territory	5
Zimbabwe	5,511
Botswana	2,536
United States of America	4,749
Canada	24
Bahamas	6
Brazil	12,354
Paraguay	313
Uruguay	5,060
Argentina	3,225
Malaysia	3
Australia	5,014
New Zealand	466
Norway	2
Sweden	1
Austria	6
WORLD TOTAL	217,906

Fresh, chilled and frozen beef offals

	Tonnes
(a) Other member states	
France	1,925
Belgium/Luxembourg	1,154
Netherlands	4,000
Federal Republic of Germany	1,831
Italy	1,580
Republic of Ireland	6,961
Denmark	318
Spain	158
(b) Non member states	
Czechoslovakia	17
Hungary	4
British Indian overseas territory	11
United States of America	23,704
Canada	1,570
Paraguay	19
China	19
Australia	4,676
New Zealand	288
Sweden	2,003
Switzerland	20
WORLD TOTAL	50,259

Processed beef products

	Tonnes
(a) Other member states	
France	1,492
Belgium/Luxembourg	75
Netherlands	469
Federal Republic of Germany	121
Italy	231
Republic of Ireland	5,821
Denmark	377
Spain	7
(b) Non member states	
Yugoslavia	522
Poland	821
Romania	1,327
Ethiopia	153
Mauritius	210
Zimbabwe	2,475
Botswana	219
United States of America	2
Canada	65
Antigua, Barbados	159
Brazil	58,051
Paraguay	108
Uruguay	2,204
Argentina	17,241
Cyprus	1,041
Singapore	5
Hong Kong	9
Australia	986
New Zealand	89
Switzerland	3
WORLD TOTAL	94,299

Food Irradiation

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what work he is doing to establish the efficacy of food irradiation in dealing with salmonella and listeria contamination in children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: The efficacy of food irradiation in severely reducing the numbers of pathogenic micro-organisms such as salmonella and listeria in poultrymeat has been well

established in past years through numerous studies. There is no need for my Department to be involved in further work on this subject.

Dioxins

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has received from the New Zealand Government on their inquiry into dioxins and food packaging; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have seen the announcement by the New Zealand Government stating that the levels of dioxin found in samples of cartoned milk there are not considered a risk for milk drinkers.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is now in a position to publish his report on the investigations into dioxins and food; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: The results of the work on dioxins in food carried out at my Ministry's food science laboratory will be made available shortly.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what meetings he has had with the manufacturers of paper milk cartons on the subject of dioxins in milk; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: None. My officials are in close contact with manufacturers on this issue and they are being kept in touch with developments.

Pesticides

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the advisory committee on pesticides has completed its review of danminozide; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) on 3 May at column *124*.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the amounts of pesticides used each year since 1959.

Mr. Ryder: My Department has conducted sample surveys since 1965 on the use of pesticides for agricultural and horticultural crop protection. Similar arrangements have applied in Scotland since 1975. These published surveys have considered only a few crops each year, so a complete annual picture is not available. However, overviews have also been published from time to time and the following are the calculated annual averages for the periods in question. The quantities given are the amounts of active ingredients in the substance applied.

Estimates of annual use of pesticides for crop protection in agriculture and horticulture

(Tonnes of active ingredients)

England and Wales	*1971-74*	*1975-79*	*1980-83*
Insecticides	1,847	1,607	1,393
Fungicides	2,400	2,336	4,341
Herbicides	15,250	19,925	26,360
Others	2,565	1,629	3,439

Scotland		*1975-79*	*1980-85*
Insecticides	—	152	97
Fungicides	—	303	473
Herbicides	—	4,415	4,852
Others	—	21	72

For 1965-70 there are no overall data available. The cycle of surveys after 1983 (1985 for Scotland) is not yet complete.

Fertilisers

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the amount of fertilisers used each year since 1959.

Mr. Ryder: It is not possible to provide such information as the term "fertiliser" covers a wide range of substances, while fertilisers are available in many different forms and in different concentrations and have many uses not restricted to agriculture.

Advertising

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will provide as much information as possible about his Department's expenditure on commercial television advertising which does not breach commercial confidentiality for each of the past five years;

(2) how much advertising air time his Ministry purchased with each commercial television company in each of the last five years.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Nothing has been spent by my Department on commercial television advertisement in the last five years.

DEFENCE

Services (Age Entry Limit)

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if consideration has been given to raising the upper age entry limit for the armed services as a measure to deal with the falling numbers of school leavers in the 1990s; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: The Royal Navy is considering raising the upper age limit for officer entry but has no plans to change the age limit for Royal Navy ratings (currently 33) or Royal Marines other ranks (28).

The Army also keeps it upper age limits under review and has made adjustments upwards recently for some officer entrants. There is provision to accept officers with special skills (for example, doctors and dentists) on qualifications and experience with formal age limit and for other ranks to join up to age 33.

The current upper age limit for entry into the Royal Air Force is 39, except for some branches and trades where the physical demands of the work necessitate a lower age limit, for example the general duties (air) branch and the physical training instructor trade. There are no plans to change this, though there is provision to vary these limits in exceptional circumstances.

Greenham Common

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many people have been arrested under the RAF Greenham common byelaws since 23 February; and how many have been charged with offences under those byelaws since that date.

Mr. Neubert: Between 23 February and 10 May 34 individuals were arrested and reported with a view to prosecution by summons. The numbers of arrests involved has totalled 331.

Low Flying

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list by year since 1983 and for current year to date, the number of flights that have been authorised to fly over the Yorkshire mainland at a height less than that set out in joint service publication 318 and the United Kingdom military low-flying handbook, as provided in section 51(b) of the Air Force Act 1955; what were the comparable national figures for those years; what air forces were involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what restrictions were imposed on military low flying in the Lockerbie area in the period following the Pan Am crash on 21 December 1988; what was the radius of the restricted area; and on what date the restrictions were lifted.

Mr. Neubert: In the wake of the Lockerbie crash the Ministry of Defence took a number of steps in order to ensure that the citizens of Lockerbie and its environs were not disturbed by the activities of military aircraft carrying out routine training, including low flying, during follow-up work to the Pan Am crash. The position is being kept under careful and sensitive review in the light of circumstances in the area but it is not our practice to release detailed information on flying restrictions in individual areas.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish in the *Official Report* figures showing *(a)* the total number of movements by low-flying military aircraft over southern Scotland in 1988, *(b)* the number of complaints about low-flying received from southern Scotland in 1988, *(c)* the number of complaints about low-flying received from the Borders area in 1988 and *(d)* the proportion of low-flying activity over the United Kingdom which took place over southern Scotland in 1988.

Mr. Neubert: I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to undertake measurements of the noise generated by military aircraft flying at 100 ft above ground level.

Mr. Neubert: Apart from measurements during the course of noise surveys in the immediate vicinity of various military airfields, there are at present no such plans.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) over what proportion of low flying area 13, military jet aircraft are permitted to fly at less than 250 ft minimum separation distance;

(2) over what proportion of low flying area 13, Royal Air Force Harrier aircraft are permitted to fly at 85 ft minimum separation distance.

Mr. Neubert: Flying below 250 ft minimum separation distance (msd) is only permitted in that part of low flying area 13 which is included within the Borders tactical training area and only when operational low-flying training is taking place. As with all operational low-flying training the lowest minimum separation distance permitted is 100 ft.

721 Signals Unit, RAF

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the functions of Number 721 signals unit, Royal Air Force.

Mr. Neubert: Number 721 signals unit controls the electronic warfare training range located at RAF Spadeadam, Cumbria, which provides a realistic electronic warfare training environment for the training of RAF and other NATO aircrew.

Military Aircraft (Supersonic Flight)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those areas of the United Kingdom where supersonic flight by military aircraft is permitted over land, giving the minimum permitted altitude for such flights in each case.

Mr. Neubert: Military aircraft are not permitted to exercise at supersonic speed over land in the United Kingdom.

Noise Levels

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the definitions of the noise level measurement systems *(a)* LA, *(b)* LOASP, *(c)* LPN, *(d)* LTPN, *(e)* LEPN, and *(f)* LAX; and which of these systems of measurement was used in (i) the figures provided in his reply to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire on 22 March, *Official Report*, columns *617-18* and (ii) the figure of 125 dB (A) used in his Department's policy on noise compensation arrangements.

Mr. Neubert: The systems listed are defined as follows:

(a) LA—maximum 'A' weighted sound pressure level;
(b) LOASP—overall 'A' weighted sound pressure level;
(c) LPN—perceived noise level;
(d) LTPN—Tone-corrected perceived noise level;
(e) LEPN—effective perceived noise level;
(f) LAX—single event sound exposure level;

The 'LA' system of measurement was used in the figures provided in the reply to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire on 22 March, *Official Report*, columns *617-18* and in the figure of 125 dB(A) used in the Ministry of Defence noise compensation policy.

RAF Jaguar (Incident)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the nature and circumstances of the accident to an RAF Jaguar near St. Abbs on 13 April.

Mr. Neubert: During a routine training exercise on 13 April, a Royal Air Force Jaguar GR1A aircraft stationed

at RAF Coltishall crashed into Lumsdaine cliff near St. Abb's head, killing the pilot. A board of inquiry has been established to investigate the cause of the accident, with a view to preventing a recurrence. A summary of its findings will be published in the usual way and a copy will be sent to the hon. Member, as I undertook when I wrote to him on 13 April.

Iraqi Pilots

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Iraqi pilots have been trained by the Royal Air Force over each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Neubert: This information is confidential between Her Majesty's Government and the Government of Iraq.

Nuclear Tests (Compensation)

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the cost so far to his Department of contesting the claims for compensation of the nuclear test injuries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: This information is not readily obtainable and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Radiation

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the research commissioned by his Department into the relationship between cancer and radiation in the last 30 years.

Mr. Sainsbury: My Department keeps under review studies that might be appropriate to workers involved with radiation undertaken by the various organisations specialising in cancer research and epidemiology. It has also commissioned studies in four areas, which are:

1. Mortality and Cancer Incidence in United Kingdom Participants in the United Kingdom Atmospheric Nuclear Weapon Tests and Experimental Programmes. (NRPB—R214 dated January 1988).
2. MRC study of Mortality of AWE workers.
3. The current MRC study of Occupational Health in the Royal Naval Submarine Service.
4. Part sponsorship of a new epidemiological analysis covering the combined nuclear industries.

Nuclear Test Veterans

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many cases of multiple myeloma amongst the people on the ship HMS Scarborough, which was present at the nuclear tests, were found by the National Radiological Protection Board in its study of the mortality of nuclear test veterans.

Mr. Sainsbury: HMS Scarborough was a meteorological data gathering ship and was on station in August and September 1958 to the north of Christmas Island at distances never less than 38km from the points of detonation.

At no time was she, members of her crew or others on board her exposed to ionising radiation from the bursts, or from fall out, nor did she sail in waters contaminated with fall out at any levels above the normal background of the South Pacific area.

The NRPB identified one case of multiple myeloma amongst those serving on HMS Scarborough during this period.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department has refused to disclose any documents requested by the lawyers of the nuclear test veteran, Mr. Pearce, and other veterans seeking compensation.

Mr. Sainsbury: My Department has not to date refused to disclose any documents requested by the lawyers of the nuclear test veterans seeking compensation. In the case of Mr. Pearce, however, his lawyers have been advised that there might be documents which, for security reasons, cannot be released, although every effort will be made to release relevant parts of those documents.

Nuclear Tests (Compensation)

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department provided information about radioactive levels at the British atomic test in 1950, to the Australian Supreme Court which awarded £300,000 compensation to an Australian present at the atomic tests.

Mr. Sainsbury: Copies of United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority and Ministry of Defence reports which had previously been made freely available to Her Majesty's Government of the Commonwealth of Australia on many past occasions, were available to the Supreme Court of New South Wales which dealt with the civil claim in question.

Some United Kingdom citizens, including one who is currently a senior Ministry of Defence officer, who had been present in the tests in 1953 and 1956, gave evidence before the court on a personal basis, on factual matters on which they had a direct personal knowledge. This included information on the radioactive levels at Emu field in the evidence given by the current Ministry of Defence officer.

Nigeria (Arms Sales)

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the value of arms sales to Nigeria for each of the last two years for which figures are available.

Mr. Sainsbury: It has been the practice of successive Administrations not to give details about arms sales to particular countries.

Submariners

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his Ministry has sought or has been sent any evidence indicating that the health of sailors in nuclear submarines is significantly different from that of sailors in non-nuclear submarines.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No. There is no evidence to suggest any difference in the health of sailors in nuclear submarines compared with those in non-nuclear submarines.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information has been given to submarine sailors regarding the objectives of the study of their health and the findings so far; and if he is proposing to make available to sailors all the information obtained by the study.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No advance information to sailors about the Medical Research Council study, was either given or considered necessary. The study was commissioned by the MOD purely as a scientific study to

examine all the possible medical effects of the machine-manufactured submarine environment, and was not specifically aimed at any particular aspect. The study is still in progress and it is too early to comment on any possible findings. On completion of the study report, non-classified information will be available in medical libraries.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information regarding their health has been provided to individual sailors for them to discuss with their general practitioners.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: While individual sailors are in the service, advice from the Medical Officer/General Practitioner is always available. When they leave the service, there is a standard procedure for the release of copies of the medical documents to the nominated civilian GP for the puposes of treatment. The radiation dose records of those serving submariners designated as radiation workers can be released to the individuals on request, and are forwarded as a matter of course when they leave the service, in accordance with the "Ionising Radiation Regulations 1985".

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the study of the health of submariner sailors began; when it is expected to end; what interim reports have there been; and what are the objectives of the study.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The study into mortality and morbidity amongst submariners began in 1987, and will be completed in 1990. No interim reports have been issued because the first year was taken up with identifying the survey population. We are now looking at the service health records of those who have retired from the Royal Navy. The Institute of Naval Medicine is monitoring the progress of the study, but the design and conduct of the study remain independent, and in the hands of the Medical Research Council. The purpose of the study is to seek further confirmation, by an independent body, that service in submarines is not detrimental to the health of naval personnel. The study was not initiated in response to any perceived or anticipated medical problem.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the design of the study of the health of submarine sailors is such that it would show whether or not the health of sailors in nuclear submarines is significantly different from that of sailors in non-nuclear submarines.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The aim of the study, which will include personnel from both types of submarine, is to study the effect on people of working for long periods in an artificially-controlled environment. Comparison will be made with other sailors and other similar age groups in the civilian population.

Advertising

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much advertising air time his Ministry purchased with each commercial television company in each of the last five years.

Mr. Neubert: Information on television advertisements in the form requested is commercially confidential.

Ship-Town Links

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what links each of the following Royal Navy ships have with towns or cities in the United Kingdom; what is the nature of each ship to town link; and what are the annual costs involved to the Royal Navy of such links: (i) HMS Resolution, (ii) HMS Repulse, (iii) HMS Renown, (iv) HMS Revenge, (v) HMS Invincible, (vi) HMS Illustrous, (vii) HMS Ark Royal, (viii) HMS Birmingham, (ix) HMS Newcastle, (x) HMS Glasgow, (xi) HMS Cardiff, (xii) HMS Exeter, (xiii) HMS Southampton, (xiv) HMS Nottingham, (xv) HMS Liverpool, (xvi) HMS Manchester, (xvii) HMS Gloucester, (xviii) HMS Edinburgh, (xix) HMS York, (xx) HMS Broadsword, (xxi) HMS Battleaxe, (xxii) HMS Brilliant, (xxiii) HMS Brazen, (xxiv) HMS Boxer, (xxv) HMS Beaver, (xxvi) HMS Brave, (xxvii) HMS London, (xxviii) HMS Coventry, and (xxix) HMS Sheffield.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The ship to town/city links are as follows:

	Town/City
HMS Resolution	Burton-on-Trent
HMS Repulse	Rotherham
HMS Invincible	City of Durham
HMS Illustrious	The Cinque Ports
HMS Ark Royal	Leeds
HMS Birmingham	Birmingham
HMS Newcastle	Newcastle
HMS Glasgow	Glasgow
HMS Cardiff	Cardiff
HMS Exeter	Exeter
HMS Southampton	Southampton
HMS Nottingham	Nottingham
HMS Liverpool	Liverpool
HMS Manchester	Manchester
HMS Gloucester	Gloucester
HMS Edinburgh	Edinburgh
HMS York	York
HMS Broadsword	Chester
HMS Battleaxe	Newport, Gwent
HMS Brilliant	Tunbridge Wells
HMS Brazen	County Durham
HMS Boxer	Trafford, Manchester
HMS Beaver	Bolton
HMS Brave	Waveney District Council
HMS London	City of London
HMS Coventry	Coventry
HMS Sheffield	Sheffield

HMS Renown and HMS Revenge are not currently affiliated to a town or city.

Much of the activity associated with these affiliations is concerned with charitable work. Each ship is connected with at least one local charity and makes considerable contributions to it by means of voluntary fund-raising activities contained within its already busy programme. Many of the ships have been granted honorary freedom of their affiliated towns and their companies are honorary freemen. These affiliations are greatly valued by both sides.

The precise cost to the Royal Navy of these affiliations is not recorded separately from that of other activities and would involve disproportionate effort to calculate. The costs are, however, likely to be small, consisting largely of the cost of public transport to visit towns and cities not accessible by sea approximately once every two years.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Invalidity Pensions

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the number of people in receipt of invalidity pension who have an income from an occupational pension scheme.

Mr. Scott: It is estimated that in 1986, the latest period for which information is available, about 300,000 invalidity pensioners also had some income from an occupational pension.

Family Credit

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how the introduction of family credit has affected the incomes of those families at the bottom end of the income scale; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Family credit is a much more generous benefit than family income supplement which it replaced. For example, a family with three children aged nine, 11 and 13, claiming since 10 April, would normally be entitled to family credit of £66·70 a week if their net income was below the threshold of £54·80; about £42 a week if their net income was £90; about £24 a week if their net income was £115; and about £7 a week if their net income was £140. Family credit is now in payment to over ¼ million working families at an average award of over £25 a week. We are currently carrying out a major campaign to increase awareness of this very worthwhile benefit.

Terminally Ill People (Allowances)

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to be able to announce a decision about the recommendation of the social security advisory committee on the allowances paid to the terminally ill.

Mr. Scott: I refer my hon. Friend to my replies to the hon. Members for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) and for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) on 6 March at columns 585-86.

Advertising

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much has been spent by his Department on advertisements on commercial television in each of the last five years, listed by each television company.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on television advertisements in the form requested is commercially confidential.

Benefit Payments

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on his future plans for the method of payment of benefits.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The main focus of the Department's efforts to improve service to the public in the area of paying benefits is currently through the massive extension of computers to local offices. The Department is also striving to encourage people to have their benefits paid direct to bank accounts. This is cheaper, more convenient for many, and reduces the risk of fraud. We have no intention to adopt any method of payment which requires the use of plastic cards but we will continue to examine whether such methods offer further advantages.

Sick Pay

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on progress on the revision of the employers' guide to statutory sick pay and associated forms.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A new package of leaflets about statutory sick pay was issued to all employers in February 1989 for use from April 1989. This included "A Quick Guide to SSP" and a revised "Employers Manual". New statutory sick pay forms were introduced from the same date.

Departmental Property

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the property costs, including rent, asset replacement and rates of his Department in total, in each standard both in total and per square foot for each year since 1983.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Since 1 April 1984 the Department has paid most of its property costs to the Property Services Agency of the Department of the Environment. This payment, known as the accommodation charge, consists of rent, rates, retained maintenance and administration. The rent figures quoted include opportunity cost rents determined by the Property Services Agency. The Department has direct responsibility for certain minor works, maintenance, and internal redecoration. Expenditure for these items has been included in the total accommodation costs figure shown in the table.

Up to March 1988 expenditure for new construction and other major capital works was the responsibility of the Property Services Agency. From April 1988 responsibility has been divided between the Department and the Property Services Agency but expenditure figures for 1988-89 are not yet available. These costs are therefore not included in the table. Information prior to 1 April 1984 is not available except at disproportionate cost.

	1988-89		*1987-88*		*1986-87*		*1985-86*		*1984-85*	
	£'000s	*£/sq ft*	*£'000s*	*£/sq ft*	*£'000s*	*£/sq ft*	*£'000s*	*£/sq ft*	*£'000s*	*£/sq ft*
Rent	77,772	4·45	68,624	4·06	63,193	3·87	62,596	3·91	60,624	3·79
Rates	40,589	2·32	35,852	2·12	32,662	2·00	32,693	2·04	33,912	2·12
Total Accommodation costs	170,118	9·73	140,583	8·31	123,323	7·56	121,386	7·58	120,850	7·55

Departmental Plant and Equipment

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the last revaluation of plant and equipment employed by his Department was carried out; and what plant and equipment asset replacement charges are incurred by his Department.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Under the rules of Government accounting the Department operates cash-based systems which enable Parliament to be satisfied that amounts of cash voted to be spent on certain activities have been so spent. There has therefore been no need to maintain comprehensive up-to-date valuations of plant and equipment, the purchase cost of which is tightly controlled through the cash accounting system and plant and equipment asset charges are not entered in the accounts.

Benefits (Assessments)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many benefit cases, over the past five years, have required further review, due to errors in the initial assessment.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that this information is not available.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are currently employed by his Department for the purposes of assessing benefit claims; and if he will express this as a percentage of the total employed by his Department.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We do not hold information in the precise form requested. A wide variety of benefit claims are assessed in the Department's local offices, our central offices at Newcastle and Blackpool and the transitional payment unit in Glasgow. On 1 May 1989, 71,454 staff (90 per cent. of the total departmental staff) were employed in these offices. As well as dealing with benefit claims these staff also handle general inquiries and other aspects of departmental business.

Nuclear Test Veterans

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many nuclear test veterans or their widows have received payments because of suffering or death from *(a)* leukaemia and *(b)* multiple myeloma; how many have applied and been rejected; and what are the criteria for acceptance.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: One war disablement pension and six war widow's pensions have been awarded because service men who took part in nuclear tests contracted or died of leukaemia (excluding chronic lymphatic leukaemia) or multiple myeloma. The criteria for the award of a pension are that the service man contracted, or died of, either of these two conditions and was present at a nuclear test and therefore no claims which satisfy these criteria are rejected.

Housing Benefits

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to transfer the cost of housing benefits for council house tenants to local authority housing revenue accounts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Government's proposals in the Local Government and Housing Bill for a new financial regime for local authority housing in England and Wales provide for a new housing revenue account subsidy to replace a number of existing central Government subsidies, including rent rebate subsidy. Where the subsidy assessment shows that an authority would, in other respects, be capable of making a surplus on the account, this surplus would be offset against the housing revenue account subsidy. With this exception, rent rebate expenditure would continue to be funded by the Exchequer. Subject to parliamentary approval of the Bill, the new arrangements would take effect from 1 April 1990.

Elderly People

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the amount of supplementary benefit/income support payments for residential care for elderly people, nationally and for each social security region, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The table shows the estimated expenditure nationally on payments of supplementary benefit/income support to elderly people in private and voluntary residential care homes. I regret that information on a regional basis is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Before December 1985 data were not collected in the form requested.

	Annual equivalent expenditure (nearest £ million)
December 1985	200
May 1986	234
May 1987	329
May 1988	400

Source: December 1985, May 1986, May 1987 and May 1988 Quarterly Statistical Inquiries.

Note: The amounts for 1985-87 relate to supplementary pensions, and the one for 1988 to payments of income support to people aged 60 or more.

Appeals Statistics

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will publish a table showing the number of appeals heard by social security appeal tribunals and the number decided in the claimant's favour, the number decided in favour of the adjudication officer and the number adjourned in each quarter of 1988, broken down by subject of appeal.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The latest national administrative statistics available on social security appeal tribunals relate to appeals heard in the third quarter of 1988. Information is provided in the tables for the quarters ending March, June and September 1988.

Social security appeal statistics
Great Britain—Quarter ending March 1988

Benefit type	*Total number of appeals heard and decided*	*Total number in favour of claimant*	*Total number of adjudication officers' decisions upheld*	*Total number of adjournments*
Attendance allowance	52	11	41	21
Child benefit	543	105	438	110
Disablement benefit	623	266	357	214

Benefit type	Total number of appeals heard and decided	Total number in favour of claimant	Total number of adjudication officers' decisions upheld	Total number of adjournments
Family income supplement	298	57	241	58
Guardians allowance	9	0	9	2
Industrial death benefit	16	3	13	5
Invalid care allowance	275	22	253	42
Invalidity benefit	1,241	529	712	328
Maternity benefit (pre April 1987)	47	7	40	4
Maternity allowance (from April 1987)	5	0	5	0
Mobility allowance	376	14	362	34
One parent benefit	0	0	0	0
Retirement pension	213	62	151	41
Severe disablement allowance	50	11	39	12
Sickness benefit	359	101	258	58
Social Fund:				
Funeral payments	86	16	70	14
Maternity payments	208	42	166	27
Statutory maternity pay	1	1	0	0
Statutory sick pay	11	3	8	0
Supplementary benefit:				
Single payments	32,198	8,982	23,216	5,917
Others	11,028	2,911	8,117	2,447
Unemployment benefit	6,662	2,235	4,427	928
Widows benefit	56	23	33	8
Workmen's compensation pneumoconiosis and byssinosis	4	1	3	4

Social Security Appeal Statistics
Great Britain—quarter ending June 1988

Benefit type	Total number of appeals heard and decided	Total number in favour of claimant	Total number of adjudication officers' decisions upheld	Total number of adjournments
Attendance allowance	73	21	52	20
Child benefit	518	107	411	84
Disablement benefit	512	197	315	215
Family credit	4	0	4	0
Family income supplement	272	42	230	50
Guardians allowance	13	3	10	3
Income support	127	9	118	19
Industrial death benefit	12	6	6	4
Invalid care allowance	135	12	123	26
Invalidity benefit	1,088	491	597	376
Maternity benefit (pre April 1987)	28	9	19	3
Maternity allowance (from April 1987)	4	1	3	2
Mobility allowance	347	9	338	18
One parent benefit	13	2	11	0
Retirement pension	161	32	129	46
Severe disablement allowance	63	34	29	14
Sickness benefit	273	86	187	65
Social fund:				
Funeral payments	103	23	80	12
Maternity payments	149	24	125	14
Statutory maternity pay	2	0	2	1
Statutory sick pay	8	1	7	1
Supplementary benefit:				
Single payments	31,700	9,596	22,104	5,317
Others	9,505	2,672	6,833	2,284
Unemployment benefit	5,574	2,010	3,744	871
Widows benefit	68	24	44	11
Workmen's compensation pneumoconiosis and byssinosis	7	1	6	2

Social Security Appeal Statistics
Great Britain—quarter ending September 1988

Benefit type	*Total number of appeals heard and decided*	*Total number in favour of claimant*	*Total number of adjudication officers' decisions upheld*	*Total number of adjournments*
Attendance allowance	45	12	33	18
Child benefit	472	92	380	131
Disablement benefit	473	190	283	236
Family credit	162	22	140	43
Family income supplement	228	38	190	53
Guardians allowance	2	1	1	2
Income support	1,812	242	1,570	397
Industrial death benefit	15	4	11	15
Invalid care allowance	142	26	116	34
Invalidity benefit	1,183	542	641	444
Maternity benefit (pre April 1987)	22	9	13	3
Maternity allowance (from April 1987)	7	1	6	1
Mobility allowance	359	7	352	47
One parent benefit	14	2	12	1
Retirement pension	191	58	133	40
Severe disablement allowance	45	16	29	21
Sickness benefit	289	108	181	60
Social fund:				
Funeral payments	144	25	119	31
Maternity payments	157	23	134	33
Statutory maternity pay	3	1	2	2
Statutory sick pay	4	3	1	4
Supplementary benefit:				
Single payments	27,512	8,502	19,010	5,503
Others	8,526	2,661	5,865	2,426
Unemployment benefit	5,254	1,805	3,449	854
Widows benefit	93	34	59	23
Workmen's compensation pneumoconiosis and byssinosis	4	1	3	1

Pensioners' Income

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the income of pensioners with no other source of income than state benefits and excluding housing benefit payments as a proportion of the average earnings of all male workers in each year since 1974.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested cannot be produced on a consistent basis for each year since 1974. The table shows the requested information on a consistent basis for the available years.

Pensioners' Average Gross Income Less Housing Benefit as a Percentage of Average Male Earnings

	Percentage
1984	25
1985	24
1986	24

Note:
1. Pensioners are defined as tax units with no private income.
2. Prior to 1983 Housing Benefit was contained within Supplementary Benefit.

Social Fund

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if, further to his reply on 4 May, *Official Report*, column *220*, he will categorise the reasons for the remaining social fund loan refusals and community care grant refusals for the year 11 April 1988 to 31 March 1989.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The latest provisional estimates of all reasons for refusal for the period 11 April 1988 to 31 March are set out as follows:

Reasons for refusal of Social Fund loans and grants 1988-89

	Loans		*Grants*	
	Number of times reason given	*As a percentage of all refusals*	*Number of times reason given*	*As a percentage of all refusals*
Savings over £500 sufficient to meet cost	938	0·3	2,498	1·7
Not in receipt of IS	33,613	9·7	n.a.	n.a.
Not in receipt of IS for 26 weeks	99,907	27·2	n.a.	n.a.
Not in receipt of IS and unlikely to become entitled	n.a.	n.a.	15,842	10·9
Excluded items	30,759	8·4	9,563	6·6
Excluded persons	1,094	0·3	13,734	9·4

	Loans		Grants	
	Number of times reason given	As a percentage of all refusals	Number of times reason given	As a percentage of all refusals
Amount < £30 (not travelling expenses)	11,952	3·3	3,707	2·5
Total debt of £1,000	198	0·1	n.a.	n.a.
Previous application and SFO decision for this item	14,639	4·0	5,071	3·5
No serious damage or risk to health or safety	24,266	6·6	0	0·0
Inability to repay	14,971	4·1	0	0·0
Help available from another source	8,281	2·3	2,136	1·5
Insufficient SF funds, priority too low	84,027	22·9	13,419	9·2
Other agencies not providing back-up	n.a.	n.a.	85	0·1
Suitable alternative available	3,978	1·1	1,177	0·8
Loan refused—CCG awarded	14,725	4·0	n.a.	n.a.
Other	25,113	6·8	82,400	56·5
Total		100·7		102·5

Note: Percentages add to more than 100 because an individual application may be refused for more than one reason.

Benefit Claims (Women)

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of and how many *(a)* supplementary benefit in 1987-88 and *(b)* income support in 1988-89 claims from couples were made by women.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the information is not available in the form requested. However, the most recent information available indicates that, in May 1987, of all supplementary benefit claimants with partners, 18,994* or 1·8 per cent. were women. We estimate that, of all income support claimants with partners in May 1988, about 25,000 or 3 per cent. were women.

*Source: May 1987 Annual Statistical Enquiry.

Benefits (Young People)

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list all the changes in social security provision since May 1979 which have affected the entitlement of *(a)* 16 to 17-year-olds, *(b)* 18 to 20-year-olds and *(c)* 21 to 25-year-olds to supplementary benefit or any other benefit or which have affected the entitlement to any benefit of their parents.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that this information cannot be provided without incurring disproportionate cost.

Child Benefit

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the cost of doubling the value of child benefit; and what would be the cost if the benefit at this new level were made part of taxable income and the saving on other social security payments.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 17 April 1989]:* Precise costs and savings would depend on the assumptions made for the calculation of social security benefits other than child benefit. In broad terms, the orders of magnitude might be as follows:

	£ billion
Child Benefit Cost	4·5
Saving in income related benefits and child dependency increases	1·1
Increase in income tax revenue	1·9
Net Cost	[1]1·6

[1]The figures do not sum due to rounding.

Household Income

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Norfolk, North, 20 February, *Official Report*, column *481*, what is the net income after the Budget proposals have come into effect (i) after housing costs of a married man with children aged 13 and 16 years earning *(a)* £104 and *(b)* £105 per week, (ii) of a married man with children aged three, eight and 11 years paying average rent and rates as used in the tax benefit model tables earning *(a)* £65 per week and *(b)* £80 per week, (iii) after benefits of a married man with children aged four and six years earning *(a)* £60 per week gross and *(b)* £140 per week gross, (iv) under current tax and benefit structure of a married man with children aged three, eight and 11 years with gross earnings of *(a)* £65 per week and *(b)* £105 per week and (v) under the current tax and benefit structure of a married man with children aged four and six years earning *(a)* £80 per week and *(b)* £90 per week.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 24 April 1989]:* The information requested is as follows:

	Gross earnings £	£
Net income after housing costs[1] assessed on 1989-90 benefits national insurance contributions (post October) and tax rates and thresholds		
(i) married man with children 13 and 16 years		
(a)	104	113·01
(b)	105	113·21
(ii) married man with children aged 3, 8 and 11		
(a)	65	114·51
(b)	80	115·12

	Gross earnings £	£
Total net income[2] assessed on 1989-90 benefits national insurance contributions (post October) and tax rates and thresholds		
(iii) married man with children aged 4 and 6		
(a)	60	127·03
(b)	140	135·99
Total net income[2] assessed on 1989-90 benefits national insurance contributions 1988-89 tax rates and thresholds		
(iv) married man with children aged 3, 8 and 11		
(a)	65	144·99
(b)	105	148·54
(v) married man with children aged 4 and 6		
(a)	80	127·77
(b)	90	128·08

Note: The assumptions used are those in the 1988 tax benefit models which have been adjusted in line with prices to reflect the position in 1989.

[1] "Net income after housing costs" is calculated by adding together the various elements in a family's weekly income (earnings, social security benefits and housing benefit) and deducting certain outgoings (income tax, national insurance contributions and rent and rates'.

[2] "Total net income" is calculated by adding to take home pay (gross earnings minus tax and national insurance) social security benefits and housing benefit.

Community Charge

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, in respect of the community charge, how many decision notices (NHB2(CC)) have been sent to district councils by the local offices of the Department of Social Security in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Figures for the number of decision notices issued are not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

HEALTH

General Practitioners (Limited Practice Allowance)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he sought or has available as to the effects, particularly in areas of rapid population growth, of his proposals to discontinue the limited practice allowance for general practitioners; and what savings he expects from implementation of such a policy.

Mr. Mellor: Our new contract proposal for raising the qualifying threshold for basic practice allowance from a minimum of 100 to 400 patients has now been agreed with the general medical services committee's negotiators. The proposal will strengthen general practitioners' commitment to the provision of general medical services, and provide an incentive to general practitioners to build up their lists. For general practitioners providing essential services who are unable to attract at least 400 patients the present inducement allowance arrangements will apply. In areas of development, where, for example, a new housing estate is being built, a general practitioner may be able to claim an initial practice allowance which will provide sufficient remuneration until he or she has built up his or her list.

Because fees and allowances are set to deliver to the profession as a whole the level of remuneration recommended by the review body on doctors' and dentists' remuneration, no savings to the Government arise from this proposal.

National Health Service (Expenditure)

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give for each year since 1979 the total health and personal social services *(a)* current expenditure (gross) and *(b)* capital expenditure (net); and if he will give those totals adjusted by the HCHS pay and price deflator.

Mr. Mellor: The table sets out gross current and net capital expenditure on health and personal social services in cash terms for the period from 1978-79 to 1988-89. The HCHS pay and price deflator is an index of inflationary pressures on current expenditure in the hospital and community health services alone. It would be inappropriate therefore to apply the index to total health and personal social services expenditure.

Total health and personal social services expenditure

	(i) Gross current £ million cash	(ii) Net capital £ million cash
1978-79	7,423	412
1979-80	8,885	465
1980-81	11,439	626
1981-82	12,747	744
1982-83	13,950	763
1983-84	14,863	805
1984-85	15,884	871
1985-86	16,770	921
1986-87	18,123	943
1987-88	20,053	922
[1]1988-89	22,296	974

[1] Estimated outturn.

IVF Treatment

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to ensure that the treatment for in vitro fertilisation in the South West regional health authority area is available free of charge for patients living in north Devon as it is for patients living in Bristol.

Mr. Freeman: Decisions about the priority and resources to be given to infertility services as a whole, and the place of in vitro fertilisation (IVF) programmes within them, are matters for district health authorities. They are in the best position to make such decisions in the light of local needs and circumstances.

An IVF service with provision for free treatment has recently been introduced in north Devon, as a joint scheme between the health authority and the voluntary sector.

Head Lice

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence he has received about the incidence of head lice infestation among primary school children; and what advice his Department is offering to local education authorities.

Mr. Freeman: Information about the incidence of head lice infestation is not available in the precise form requested. However, we do have the following details:

Health surveillance by nurses: maintained nursery, primary, secondary and special schools
Number of infestations[1]

	1987-88 England
Number of pupils examined (thousands)	4,546·3
Number of pupils found to be infested (thousands)	91·4
Infested pupils as a percentage of the maintained school population	1·27

[1] Infestations include head lice, vermin, scabies, ringworm, impetigo and verrucae.

Responsibility for the control of head lice infection among pupils lies with individual health authorities through the school health services. It is for them to determine the policy for dealing with this problem in the light of local circumstances. Many have stopped routine head inspections and are now adopting more positive practices through health education programmes and advice to parents and children on head lice infestation and how to deal with the problem.

Pain

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what information he has as to what proportion of pain sufferers recorded as suffering from pain of over three months duration are over the age of 60 years; and what provision is being made for them;

(2) what provision is being made under the National Health Service to help pain sufferers;

(3) what information he has as to how many patients at any given time are recorded as suffering from pain lasting for three or more months which is unrelieved or only marginally alleviated by treatment.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is not held centrally. Relief of pain is a matter for the clinical judgment of the doctors responsible for the care of the patient. Some health authorities do provide pain clinics. This is a matter for local decision in the light of the health authority's assessment of local needs and priorities.

Departmental Property

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the property costs, including rent, asset replacement and rates, of his Department in total, in each standard both in total and per square foot for each year since 1983.

Mr. Freeman: Property costs for premises occupied by the Department are incurred by the Property Services Agency.

For the NHS, expenditure in England on rent and contributions in lieu of rates is as follows:

	Rents £ 000 (cash)	*Contributions in lieu of rates* £ 000 (cash)
1983-84	20,752	127,190
1984-85	21,951	136,952
1985-86	21,375	148,833
1986-87	22,365	168,055
1987-88	24,697	169,965

These figures, which cannot be related to the floor areas, are taken from the annual accounts submitted to the Department. They include expenditure recorded by regional and district health authorities, the special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals and sums within the administration expenses of family practitioner committees. The costs of certain other special health authorities and bodies comprising the NHS, and payments made to medical practitioners and others contracted to provide family practitioner services, are excluded. Figures are not available for the replacement of assets.

Departmental Plant and Equipment

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the last revaluation of plant and equipment employed by his Department was carried out; and what plant and equipment asset replacement charges are incurred by his Department.

Mr. Freeman: The Department of Health, like most other Government Departments, operates cash-based systems which enable Parliament to be satisfied that amounts of cash voted to be spent on certain activities have been so spent. There has therefore been no overall need, apart from those limited areas where repayment transactions are conducted, to maintain comprehensive up-to-date valuations of plant and equipment, the purchase cost of which is tightly controlled through the cash accounting system and plant and equipment asset replacement charges are often not entered in the accounts.

For the NHS a valuation of all assets owned by the NHS, including plant and equipment, will be unertaken later this year as part of the preparation for the proposed introduction of a capital charging system.

Radiation

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many cancers are recognised as being attributable wholly or partly to radiation; and if he will list them;

(2) what methods are used to identify whether or not a cancer can be caused or aggravated by radiation.

Mr. Freeman: I am advised that most of the information available on the risk of cancer from exposure to radiation has been drawn from epidemiological studies. Groups such as the survivors from Hiroshima and Nagasaki have been shown to have an increased risk of developing some forms of cancer some years after being exposed to large doses of radiation. Corroborative evidence has been drawn from studies of other groups such as those given radiation therapy for a variety of diseases, and from animal studies. This information is contained in the recent report from the United Nations scientific commission on the effects of atomic radiation (UNSCEAR) (Official Records: forty-third session—supplement No. 45 (A/43/45) a copy of which I will place in the Library shortly. At present, there are no chemical, biological or physiological methods which can determine whether a given cancer is primarily caused by radiation, by another factor, or by a combination of factors.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what collaboration there has been with experts in other countries regarding the identification of cancers caused or aggravated by radiation; and if he will detail the consultation there has been with United States experts.

Mr. Freeman: Advice to the Government on the effects of radiation is provided by the National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB). The board's advice on the effects of exposure to radiation on the incidence of cancer is based on a review of all the information available from national and international sources. Some of these sources include the International Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP), the United Nations scientific commission on the effects of atomic radiation (UNSCEAR), and the United States' commission on the biological effects of ionising radiation (BEIR).

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the research commissioned into the relationship between cancer and radiation in the last 30 years.

Mr. Freeman: The following list shows the current research directly funded by the Department.

(a) Analysis of cancer incidence in young people in small areas.
(b) Incidence of Leukaemia in west Berkshire.
(c) Geographical studies of Childhood Cancer incidence.
(d) Investigation of the effect of Radon in houses.
(e) Microscopy studies of persorption of radionuclides through the wall of the gut.
(f) Study of the amount of radioactivity which passes into foetal tissue via the placenta.
(g) Investigation of the radiosensitivity of bone marrow stem cells.

A full list of such research over the last 30 years is not readily available. However, the right hon. Member may wish to consult the handbooks of research and development published annually. Copies are available in the Library.

For information on research undertaken for the Department by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, I refer the right hon. Member to the authority's radiation protection research annual report 1988 (AERE R 13204), a copy of which is available in the Library.

Hospital Costs

Mr. Robert Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average occupancy and cost per bed-night for teaching hospitals, district general hospitals and community hospitals in *(a)* England, *(b)* the South West regional health authority and *(c)* Cornwall district health authority area.

Mr. Freeman: For information on average occupancy and costs by types of hospital in England and in the south western region I refer my hon. Friend to the Department's annual publication "Health Services Costing Returns" (the latest being for 1986-87)—copies of which are held in the Library. The publication also includes tables providing some information about teaching hospitals and for information specific to hospitals within the area of the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly health authority my hon. Friend may wish to contact the chairman of that authority.

We intend to publish information on the financial year 1987-88 in the summer.

Hospital Trusts

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the hospitals which have applied to him expressing an interest in becoming self-governing trusts.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. and learned Friend's reply of 8 May to the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) at column *321*.

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to organise a ballot of the residents of Bassetlaw to decide whether they are in favour of the Bassetlaw hospital, Worksop, being run as a self-governing trust.

Mr. Mellor: No, but if an application for self-governing status is made, I will look to Trent regional health authority to seek the views of all those with an interest, including local residents.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the proposed hospital trusts will be allowed to retain the proceeds from any asset sales.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Yes, since the assets will be vested in the trusts. The Secretary of State will have a reserve power to prevent the sale of an asset if, in his opinion, the disposal would be against the public interest.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consultations have taken place between the Walsall health authority and his Department concerning hospitals in the Walsall area opting out of the existing National Health Service management structure.

Mr. Mellor: None, but if a formal application is made for hospitals in Walsall to become self-governing I will look to West Midlands RHA to seek the views of all interested parties.

Dentists

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what conditions are recognised as occupational diseases in dentists working within the National Health Service.

Mr. Freeman: There is no list of conditions which are recognised as occupational diseases in dentists working within the National Health Service.

To qualify under the NHS compensation and injury benefit schemes a dentist must show that any condition suffered by him was contracted in the course of his NHS employment and must be attributable to that employment. Each case is considered on its merits.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if under notice FPN 472 general practitioners will be held responsible, in post-treatment disputes with the dental reference service, for any acts or omissions of a dentist working within the hospital or community services if such treatment was provided as part of a course of other treatment for which a practitioner has had to sign a certificate of dental fitness.

Mr. Freeman: The obligations on a dentist providing general dental services to make a patient dentally fit are set out in full in schedule 1 of the National Health Service (General Dental Services) Regulations 1973. The guidance given in FPN 472 does not alter these obligations.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, under the arrangements for the funding and payment for dentures and bridges provided through hospital and community dental services under notice FPN 472, who will be responsible for the collection of patient charges and collection of bad debts.

Mr. Freeman: The continuing health authority responsibility for collection of patient charges (and bad

debts) for dentures and bridges provided through the hospital and community dental service was not affected by FPN 472. Circular HC(FP)(89)5/HN 89/8 issued in March 1989 did, however, provide revised guidance on the calculation of such charges.

Contraception

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate he has of the total current annual cost to the National Health Service of special payments made to general practitioners for contraceptive advice and prescription.

Mr. Mellor: The provisional 1988-89 cost, in England, of payments to general medical practitioners for contraceptive services is £32·4 million.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate he has of the total current annual cost to the National Health Service on contraceptive drugs and devices issued to patients.

Mr. Mellor: We cannot identify the cost of contraceptive drugs and devices issued at health authorities' family planning clinics or those provided by hospitals or by dispensing doctors.

The net ingredient cost of contraceptive drugs and appliances prescribed by GPs and dispensed by retail pharmacists and appliance contractors was estimated at £21 million in England in 1987, the latest full year for which figures are available. This figure is based on a sample of approximately one in 200 prescriptions.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will make a statement outlining the reasons for special payments to general practitioners for contraceptive advice and prescription;

(2) if he will make it his policy to cease to make special payments to general practitioners for contraceptive advice and prescription.

Mr. Mellor: Fees are paid to general practitioners who provide contraceptive services, in recognition of the time and effort of those doctors who choose to provide these services to patients. This is consistent with our policy that GPs' remuneration should be sensitive to the numbers of patients in their care and the range of services provided. The participation of GPs in the provision of contraceptive services gives patients a choice between practice-based services and health authority clinics. We have no plans to change the current arrangements.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether he has any plans to issue new guidance to general practitioners concerning the prescription of contraceptive drugs;

(2) what response his Department has made to the recent reports of increased levels of cancer in long-term users of contraceptive drugs.

Mr. Mellor: The Committee on Safety of Medicines (CSM) was provided with advance details of the recent study by Chilvers et al on oral contraceptive use and breast cancer risk in young women and was able to formulate and issue advice to doctors and pharmacists in its bulletin "Current Problems No. 26." A copy is in the Library. CSM advice was also sent to a range of other interested bodies including family planning organisations. In addition, officials of the Department have met representatives of pharmaceutical companies marketing oral contraceptives and have been in touch regarding this and other studies with their counterparts in the World Health Organisation and regulatory bodies in other countries. The CSM is continuing to monitor ongoing studies and cancer registration rates and will maintain close communication with all those involved. More generally the handbook of contraceptive practice issued by the Department to all general practitioners and family planning doctors includes advice on oral contraception. Work on a new edition by representatives of the Royal College of General Practitioners, Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and Standing Medical Advisory Committee is well in hand for distribution later this year.

Drug Safety

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the patient information leaflets proposed under EEC directives would include contra-indications, precautions and warnings for all medicines at present prescribed in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Mellor: Present European Community (EC) law (article 6 of directive 75/319) with which United Kingdom regulations conform already requires contra-indications, warnings and precautions if a leaflet is supplied. The current proposed amendment would not affect that requirement. The change would be to make a leaflet mandatory unless the information was supplied on the label. Further developments may follow from the EC Commission study on patient information.

Benzodiazepines

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress is being made on promoting alternatives to benzodiazepine prescription; and what funds are available for this purpose.

Mr. Mellor: The Department is financing a conference on developing counselling in primary care. This was attended by over 150 general practitioners and counsellors and focused on the better identification of people needing counselling and the better organisation of services.

The Department is funding the National Association for Mental Health (MIND) to develop a directory of services for people with benzodiazepine-related problems. This will include a wide variety of agencies in both the statutory and non-statutory fields, offering alternative therapies including counselling, behavioural and psychological techniques, as well as self-help groups. In addition, central funding has been made available to provide a revised version of a leaflet for the public and professionals giving information on benzodiazepine use and alternative strategies to it.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of patients wait for *(a)* plastic surgery and *(b)* other surgical treatment for more than one year.

Mr. David Mellor: The information requested is published in the booklet "Hospital In-Patient Waiting Lists at 30 September 1988", a copy of which is in the Library.

Advertising

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much advertising air time his Department purchased with each commercial television company in each of the last five years.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is commercial in confidence.

Child Abuse

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will update his answer of 27 January, *Official Report*, columns *795-98*, showing the total amount spent by his Department on research into the sexual abuse of children in each of the years since 1979, listing the name of each project, its cost and completion date.

Mr. Mellor: The information has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North of 9 March, *Official Report*, column *607*, how many times the inter-departmental working group on child sexual abuse has met since 9 March; and what has been discussed.

Mr. Mellor: The group has not met since 9 March.

GPs (Trainees)

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information is available on the sums from the statement of fees and allowance or other votes which were budgeted and the sums which were paid to general practitioner trainees and general practitioner trainers in each of the past three years, indicating the respective numbers of trainers and trainees.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 3 May 1989]:* Payments to trainers and trainees, are drawn from the voted provision for the general medical services and are not subject to separate budgets.

Expenditure in England on grants to trainers and the reimbursement of salary and other costs for trainees in the last three years for which full data are available was as follows:

	1985-86 £ million	*1986-87 £ million*	*1987-88 £ million*
Grants (trainers)	6·31	6·345	6·522
Other expenditure (trainees)	28·777	30·489	33·4555

The number of trainers and trainees in the same years (1 October) in England and Wales are as follows:—

	1985	*1986*	*1987*
GP trainers	2,704	2,769	2,792
GP trainees	1,924	1,814	1,876

Professional Misconduct

63. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of whether the provisions of statutory instrument 2255/88 paragraph 6.(i) concerning the reference to complaints alleging serious professional misconduct are being implemented by the administrative arrangements adopted by the General Medical Council.

Mr. Mellor: The General Medical Council is an independent statutory body whose constitution and functions are regulated by the Medical Act 1983. Rule 6.(i) of SI 2255/88 provides that where a complaint in writing or information in writing is received by the registrar of the council and it appears to him that a question arises whether conduct of a practitioner constitutes serious professional misconduct the registrar shall submit the matter to the president.

The administrative arrangements within the GMC are for the council to determine and the hon. Member should approach the registrar directly if he requires specific information.

Beef Imports

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will detail the arrangements currently in force for the public health examination of beef imports at the port of entry to the United Kingdom of products *(a)* from within the EEC and *(b)* from outside the EEC.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have been asked to reply.

Port health authorities have responsibility for public health examinations of beef imports to ensure their compliance with the imported food regulations 1984.

All meat entering the United Kingdom must come from export-approved plants, other member states, or from plants in third countries which have been approved by the EC Commission. Consignments must be accompanied by a health certificate signed by a veterinarian authorised by the Government of the exporting country confirming that the strict hygiene standards of the appropriate EC directive have been fully satisfied.

Port health authorities inspect all consignments from third countries in accordance with Community provisions and make sample examination of those from other member states.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Departmental Property

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the property costs, including rent, asset replacement and rates of his Department in total, in each standard both in total and per square foot for each year since 1983.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Information in the precise form requested is not available. Home Office properties are divided into three separate estates for property management purposes, each of which is treated differently: the property repayment services (PRS) estate, comprising properties for which the Property Services Agency is responsible; the prisons estate, which is directly managed by the prison department; and the non-PRS estate, comprising mainly the directorate of telecommunications and centrally provided police research and training establishments. Accommodation and property costs information available for each of the three estates since 1983 is as follows:

Home Office PRS estate 1983-88
£K/(£ per square foot)

	Rent	Rates	Maintenance	PSA Administration	Fuel and Utilities
1983-84	18,128 (11·48)	10,870 (6·88)	4,659 (2·95)	1,019 (0·63)	2,408 (1·53)
1984-85	19,309 (10·83)	11,614 (6·51)	5,262 (2·95)	1,159 (0·65)	2,657 (1·49)
1985-86	20,538 (11·98)	11,527 (6·72)	5,719 (3·34)	1,264 (0·74)	3,054 (1·78)
1986-87	21,692 (12·63)	9,329 (5·43)	5,844 (3·40)	1,214 (0·71)	2,854 (1·66)
1987-88	22,401 (13·33)	9,059 (5·39)	5,336 (3·18)	1,159 (0·69)	2,806 (1·67)
1988-89	22,811 (15·26)	9,293 (6·22)	7,159 (4·79)	1,587 (1·06)	2,569 (1·72)

Home Office—Prisons estate 1983-88

£k

Year	Rent	Rates	Maintenance	Heating fuels	Utilities
1983-84	524	4,179	22,290	13,272	11,300
1984-85	375	4,461	25,183	15,724	11,673
1985-86	246	5,177	22,535	13,375	13,205
1986-87	547	6,758	20,474	8,294	15,982
1987-88	520	7,724	24,129	8,042	15,878
1988-89	577	8,750	27,344	9,643	16,528

Home Office—Non PRS Miscellaneous estate 1983-88

£k

	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
Total property costs	3,196	3,214	3,312	4,942	5,376	5,594

Departmental Plant and Equipment

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the last revaluation of plant and equipment employed by his Department was carried out; and what plant and equipment asset replacement charges are incurred by his Department.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is not the general Home Office practice to revalue its plant and equipment, or to calculate asset replacement charges, although a depreciation charge is calculated in certain parts of the Department where trading accounts are produced.

Gaelic Broadcasting

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is his response to Communn na Gaidhlig's report on Gaelic broadcasting, in particular, its call for a Gaelic broadcasting council;

(2) what conclusions he has reached on the report by Dr. Cento Veljanovski entitled "The Case for a Gaelic Broadcasting Service".

Mr. Renton: We are considering carefully all the representations made in response to the White Paper on broadcasting.

Bail

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many bail hostel places are available in England and Wales.

Mr. John Patten: There are 18 specialist bail hostels providing 243 places. In addition, there are 81 hostels providing 1,647 places either for persons subject to a probation order for bailees. Over the next two years, 440 bail hostel places will be created.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what percentage of all defendants who appeared before the courts in England and Wales in 1987 and 1988 were bailed *(a)* with and *(b)* without conditions;

(2) how many persons during 1987 and 1988 who were remanded into custody in England and Wales at a first hearing were subsequently bailed;

(3) how many persons who had been charged with a summary offence were remanded in custody in England and Wales during the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. John Patten: The available information, which may be incomplete, relates to those remanded on bail or in custody during magistrates courts hearings or at committal to the Crown court and is shown in tables 8.5 and 8.7 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, 1987", respectively. Reliable information is not available centrally on whether conditions were attached to bail or on how many of those initially remanded in custody were subsequently bailed.

Remand

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of persons who

were remanded in custody during 1987 and 1988 in gaol in England and Wales emanated from an ethnic minority; and what percentage was eventually acquitted, not proceeded against or given a non-custodial sentence.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Information for 1988 is not a reliable guide because for a large proportion of the prisoners the outcome of court proceedings is not yet recorded.

The latest available information for 1987 is given in the table.

Persons received into prison service establishments in England and Wales as unsentenced prisoners, by outcome of court proceedings and ethnic origin 1987.

Percentage[1]

Outcome	*White*	*West Indian Guyanese African*	*Indian Pakistani Bangladeshi*	*Chinese Arab Mixed Origin*	*Other, not recorded, refused*	*All persons*
Found not guilty or not proceeded against	4	9	6	6	6	5
Non-custodial or freed on rising[2]	30	25	26	31	28	29
Received under sentence	52	45	47	47	24	51
Ultimate disposal not recorded	13	21	21	16	42	15
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
(Number of receptions)	(56,154)	(6,506)	(1,317)	(1,423)	(1,198)	(66,598)
(Percentage of receptions)	(84·3)	(9·8)	(2·0)	(2·1)	(1·8)	(100·0)

[1] Provisional figures; as later information is now available the figures for all persons have been revised from those published in table 2·6 of Prison statistics, England and Wales (Cm. 547).

[2] Persons freed on rising are those who were sentenced to immediate custody of such a length, that it had already been served on remand.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary for State of the Home Department what percentage of males and females who were remanded in custody in England and Wales in 1987 and 1988 were eventually either acquitted, not proceeded against or given a non-custodial sentence.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The latest available information for 1987 is given in the table. Information for 1988 is not a reliable guide because for a large proportion of the prisoners the outcome of court proceedings is not yet recorded.

Persons received into prison service establishments in England and Wales as unsentenced prisoners by outcome of court proceedings and sex 1987.

[1] *Percentage*

Outcome	*Males*	*Females*
Not guilty or not proceeded against	5	5
Given a non-custodial sentence or freed on rising[2]	29	39
Received under sentence	52	36
Ultimate disposal not recorded	15	20
TOTAL	100	100
(Number of receptions)	(63,349)	(3,249)

[1] Provisional figures, as later information is now available the figures have been revised from those published in table 2.6 of Prison statistics, England and Wales (Cm. 547).

[2] Persons freed on rising are those who were sentenced to immediate custody of such length that it had already been served on remand.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what changes have been made to remand prisoners' rights and privileges since 1979.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: From 1983 all unconvicted prisoners have been allowed to send two letters a week at public expense (previously they had to pay for them if they had private cash). In 1986 regional directors were given discretion to approve variations at particular establishments in arrangements for daily visits by relatives and friends, provided that an aggregate entitlement of at least one and half hours' visiting time per week was maintained for each unconvicted prisoner and that weekend visits were available at least fortnightly. In 1988 the unconvicted prisoners' privilege of having food and drink brought in by relatives or friends was withdrawn.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons committed suicide in gaol in England and Wales during a period of remand during 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A total of 27 in 1987 and 18 in 1988. In addition, the inquest on the apparent suicide of one remand prisoner in 1988 remains to be held.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons died in gaol in England and Wales during a period of remand during 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A total of 33 in 1987 and 25 in 1988. In addition, in 1987 six and in 1988 seven remand prisoners died in outside hospitals to which they had been transferred because of serious illness.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many psychiatric reports were prepared on remand prisoners in England and Wales in 1988 or for the latest year in which figures are available.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The available information relates only to reports made under sections 47 and 48 of the Mental Health Act 1983 recommending transfer to psychiatric or special hospitals, and does not distinguish between sentenced and unsentenced prisoners. In the year ending 31 March 1988, 206 such reports were prepared.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons deemed psychiatrically ill were remanded in custody in England and Wales for the latest date available.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The available information relates only to populations and not to numbers received. On 30

September 1988 a total of 158 unsentenced prisoners in England and Wales were considered by medical officers to meet the criteria for detention in hospital under the Mental Health Act 1983. Of these, 150 were considered to be mentally ill, five were considered to be mentally impaired and three were considered to be suffering from psychopathic disorder, as defined in the Act.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons were remanded in gaols in England and Wales for the latest year in which figures are available.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In 1988, the provisional number of receptions into prison service establishments was 58,300 for untried prisoners and 17,300 for convicted unsentenced prisoners. These figures exclude those received into police cells and not subsequently received into a prison service establishment.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the average time spent waiting for trial for male and female remand prisoners in gaols in England and Wales for 1986, 1987 and 1988;

(2) what was the average time spent waiting for trial for male and female remand prisoners in gaols in England and Wales for the latest date available.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The latest readily available information was published in table 2.1 of Prison Statistics England and Wales 1987 (Cm. 547), a copy of which is in the Library. Provisional data for 1988 indicate very little change for males but a further increase for females.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average remand population of gaols in England and Wales during 1988.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On average there were 8,797 untried and 1,664 convicted and unsentenced prisoners in prison service establishments in England and Wales in 1988. In addition 982, most of whom were untried, were held in police cells. Further information was published in tables 3 and 4 of "The Prison Population in 1988" (*Home Office Statistical Bulletin* issue 12/89), a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the remand population in gaols in England and Wales for the latest date available and for a similar date in 1986, 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested is given in the following table:

Remand population in custody in England and Wales on 31 March 1986 to 1989

	1986	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*
Prison service establishments:				
Untried	8,115	8,770	8,387	8,939
Convicted unsentenced	1,339	1,611	1,602	1,760
Prison cells[1]	62	380	1,078	71
Total	9,516	10,761	11,067	10,770

[1] On 31 March 1986, 1987 and 1989 all those held in police cells are assumed to be remand prisoners; it is estimated that on 31 March 1988 a further 230 were held in police cells.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures he is taking to reduce the remand population in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 23 January 1989 at column *393*.

Hillsborough Disaster

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has yet completed his further consideration as to who will bear the cost of the West Midlands police inquiry into the Hillsborough disaster.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) on 12 May at column *569*.

Prisoners

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what factors he takes into account when allocating a prisoner to a particular prison.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Allocation decisions are taken in the light of information relating to the nature of the prisoner's offence, sentence length, previous prison record if relevant, suitability for particular types of accommodation and regime, home area or that of likely visitors, educational and training needs or potential and any special needs which are identified. The aim is to make the best use of the prison accommodation available at the time while meeting the requirements of security and control and the needs of the individual prisoner.

Public Order (Football Grounds)

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many males over the age of 65 years and females over the age of 60 years have been *(a)* arrested, *(b)* charged and *(c)* convicted of offences relating to public order at football grounds in each of the last five years.

Mr. John Patten: Information in the form requested is not available as the location of alleged offences is not recorded centrally. However, records available to me show no convictions for indictable public order offences in 1987 for males over 65 or females over 60. To provide such figures for earlier years would involve disproportionate costs. Information is not available centrally on the age of adult offenders convicted of summary public order offences. Nor is corresponding information available on those arrested or charged with public order offences.

Race Equality Programme (Brent)

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when approval will be given to the payment of the section 11 grant for the funding of the Brent development programme for race equality.

Mr. John Patten: Following Sir David Lane's inquiry into Brent's development programme for racial equality, the Home Office wrote to the London borough of Brent on 26 May 1988 requiring a number of undertakings to be given before a decision on whether grant under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 could be reached. The local authority replied to that letter on 30 September 1988, indicating that the council required clarification of some of the undertakings. These were discussed at a meeting between Home Office officials and Brent officers on 30

November. As a result the director of education wrote to the Home Office on 9 January 1989 with the authority's first detailed response to the undertakings. On 6 April the Home Office wrote again seeking explanation of a number of points in that response. The authority's reply was received in the Home Office on 10 May. It is at present being considered and the authority will be informed when a decision has been reached.

Overseas Residents (Voting)

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to announce proposals to alter the franchise qualifications for Britons resident abroad; and whether these changes will be introduced in time for those affected to register to vote in the next general election.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to his question of 2 February 1989 at column *383*.

Political Asylum (Kurds)

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Kurds from Turkey have entered Britain in the past 14 days seeking political asylum or refugee status; what steps he is taking to deal with the cases; and if he intends to give financial or other help to the London borough of Hackney and other boroughs to provide temporary or permanent accommodation and maintenance.

Mr. Renton: We received 456 applications for asylum for Turkish nationals arriving at ports in the 14 days to 11 May. It is not yet clear how many of the applicants are Kurds. Arrangements are in hand for them to be interviewed individually so that the merits of their asylum claims can be assessed and decisions reached as soon as possible.

The Home Office has no plans to reimburse local authorities for provision that they have decided to incur.

Electronic Surveillance

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what he treats as legitimate uses to which electronic surveillance devices may be put.

Mr. Hurd: The Younger report on privacy reported on the widely accepted view that there was a vast range of unobjectionable uses for technical surveillance devices. Examples include their use by shops and other enterprises in order to prevent crime.

Mr. A (Passport)

Mr Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the Minister of State the hon. Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) will reply to the letters from the hon. Member for Stretford concerning M. A. Home Office reference A 429590; and if he will make a statement on the delay in replying and the delays in returning Mr. A's passport.

Mr. Renton: The delay in this case has been caused by the need to make a detailed investigation. I shall be writing to the hon. Member shortly. The two passports in the case to which he has referred have been returned to the holder and his settled immigration status confirmed.

Mr. Colin Wallace

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will review the conviction of Mr. Colin Wallace for manslaughter in the light of the evidence of a conspiracy to pervert the course of justice set out in the book entitled "Who Framed Colin Wallace" by Mr. Paul Foot; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We will consider, in accordance with normal policy, whether Mr. Foot's book contains any evidence or other consideration of substance which might call into question the safety of Mr. Wallace's conviction and which has not been considered by the courts.

Electoral Registers

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what provision exists for public access to the marked electoral registers used by presiding officers in parliamentary and local elections; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Under the appropriate elections rules, the marked copies of the registers used by presiding officers at a parliamentary or local government election are open to public inspection, on payment of a fee, after the close of the poll at such time and subject to such conditions as may be prescribed, though not on the day of the poll itself. Also a candidate, his appointed election agent or polling agent may, within the polling station, mark on his own copy of the register the name of each elector who receives a ballot paper.

Advertising

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how much advertising air time his Department purchased with each commercial television company in each of the last five years;

(2) how much has been spent by his Department on advertisements on commercial television in each of the last five years, listed by each television company.

Mr Hurd: Information on TV expenditure in the form requested is not held by my Department, and I understand that it is not available centrally through the Central Office of Information.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North of 9 March, *Official Report*, column *607*, whether he has received Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary's report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend receives a report on the implementation of Home Office circular 52/1988 in each force area as part of Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary's annual inspection report of the area.

Child Sexual Abuse

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will update his answer of 26 January, *Official Report*, columns *670-71*, showing the total amount spent by his Department on research into the sexual abuse of children in each of the years since 1979, listing the name of each project, its cost and completion date.

Mr. John Patten: The only information additional to my answer of 26 January is that the research project on children as victims of crime will be completed in September 1989 at a total cost of £98,000 for which the sums of £7,265 and £50,743 were spent respectively in the financial years ending March 1988 and 1989. The research project to examine the effectiveness of live TV links for child witnesses began on 1 February 1989 and will be completed in January 1990 at a cost of £45,000.

Pet Animals (Protection)

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make it his policy to ban tail docking, ear cropping, debarking and declawing of dogs in accordance with article 8 of the European convention on the protection of pet animals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The representations that we have received about article 10 of the European convention for the protection of pet animals have all been opposed to the ear cropping, devocalisation, declawing and defanging of dogs. The Government's decision about this and the tail docking of dogs will be announced when the current consultations have been completed.

London Transport (Violence)

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps have been taken by the Metropolitan police to arrest and prosecute the persons referred to in the House of Lords *Hansard*, 4 April, column 1003, who threatened violence against London Transport unless posters advertising holidays in northern Cyprus were withdrawn.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Metropolitan police have not been asked to undertake any investigations into this matter. The policing of London Transport is a matter for the British Transport police, who are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Prison Medical Service

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the complement of medical officers at the Risley remand centre; what is the actual number of staff in post; and if he will give comparable figures for *(a)* five years ago and *(b)* 10 years ago.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information is as follows:

Authorised strength	*Staff in post*
1 January 1979	
One Senior Medical Officer	1
Four Medical Officers (full-time)	3
Two Medical Officers (part-time)	2
1 January 1984	
One Senior Medical Officer	1
Three Medical Officers (full-time)	2
Two Medical Officers (part-time)	2
1 January 1989 (to date)	
One Senior Medical Officer	1
Three Medical Officers (full-time)	2
Two Medical Officers (part-time)	2

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make further funds available for the prison department to train medical officers.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The funds available in the present financial year for in-service training of prison medical officers will enable the Department to maintain a programme broadly commensurate with that undertaken in 1988-89. Many of the training needs of this specialist group are best met by facilitating attendance at externally organised courses. The financial allocation to the director of prison medical services to meet the cost of course fees of health care staff, including medical officers, will allow for expansion of this important area of training. Governors, who are responsible for meeting some of the travel and subsistence costs of training for field staff, have been reminded that specialist training is a high priority.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the numbers of inmates in the Risley remand centre known to have received in-patient treatment for psychiatric illness *(a)* 10 years ago, *(b)* five years ago and *(c)* in 1988.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I regret such statistics are not routinely collated and are not available in respect of past years.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by prison and remand centre in England and Wales *(a)* the number of permanent nursing staff in post and *(b)* where these are below establishment post and by how many; what recruitment programmes are in progress or being planned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The latest available staffing information is given in the following table. A national campaign to recruit men and women with a nursing qualification to train as hospital officers is planned for the near future. Further campaigns will be mounted as necessary. Twenty-three nurses already so recruited are in training. In addition, 75 prison officers have been accepted for hospital officer training. Further volunteers will be sought as required. Locally targeted campaigns to recruit nurses for Holloway prison and Risley remand centre are being progressed separately.

Establishment	*Approved strength*	*Staff in post*	*Vacancies*
Acklington	5	6	—
Albany	5	4	1
Aldington	2	2	—
Ashford[1]	15	13	2
Ashwell	2	2	—
Askham Grange	8·5	8	0·5
Aylesbury	4	3	1
Bedford[1]	10	9	1
Birmingham[1]	31	27	4
Blantyre House	2	2	—
Blundeston	5	4	1
Bristol[1]	18	16	2
Brixton[1]	93	64	29
Brockhill/Hewell Grange[1]	7	6	1
Buckley Hall	2	2	—
Bullwood Hall	11	8	3
Camp Hill	6	6	—
Canterbury[1]	10	7	3
Cardiff[1]	16	17	—
Channings Wood	4	4	—
Chelmsford[1]	15	14	1
Coldingley	4	4	—
Cookham Wood	5	4	1
Dartmoor	11	10	1
Deerbolt	4	4	—
Dorchester[1]	3	3	—

Establishment	Approved strength	Staff in post	Vacancies
Dover	3	3	—
Drake Hall	9	7	2
Durham[1]	27	27	—
Down View[1]	6	2	4
East Sutton Park	2·5	2·5	—
Eastwood Park	2	2	—
Erlestoke	2	2	—
Everthorpe	4	4	—
Exeter[1]	13	13	—
Featherstone	3	3	—
Feltham	30	25	5
Ford	4	4	—
Frankland	14	12	2
Full Sutton	10	10	—
Gartree	12	11	1
Garth	7	7	—
Glen Parva[1]	29	27	2
Gloucester[1]	5	5	—
Grendon/Spring Hill	55	37·5	17·5
Guys Marsh	2	2	—
Haslar	2	2	—
Hatfield	2	2	—
Haverigg	3	3	—
Highpoint	8	8	—
Hindley[1]	8	7	1
Hollesley Bay	6	5	1
Holloway[1]	84	48·5	35·5
Hull[1]	18	17	1
Huntercombe/Finnamore Wood	4	3	1
Kingston-Portsmouth	2	2	—
Kirkham	2	2	—
Kirklevington	2	2	—
Lancaster	2	2	—
Latchmere House[1]	2	2	—
Leeds[1]	25	25	—
Leicester[1]	12	12	—
Lewes[1]	13	13	—
Leyhill	3	2	1
Lincoln[1]	21	19	2
Littlehey	10	9	1
Liverpool[1]	49	44	5
Long Lartin	7	7	—
Lowdham Grange	2	2	—
Low Newton[1]	10	10	—
Lindholme	10	9	1
Maidstone	8	6	2
Manchester[1]	35	32	3
The Mount	6	5	1
New Hall[1]	10	6	4
Northallerton	2	2	—
Northeye	4	4	—
North Sea Camp	1	1	—
Norwich[1]	26	25	1
Nottingham	3	3	—
Onley	3	3	—
Oxford/Campsfield House[1]	8	5	3
Parkhurst	50	50	—
Pentonville[1]	20	20	—
Preston[1]	6	6	—
Pucklechurch[1]	16	11	5
Ranby	3	3	—
Reading[1]	7	7	—
Risley[1]	50	43	7
Rochester[1]	12	11	1
Rudgate	2	2	—
Send	2	2	—
Shepton Mallet	2	2	—
Shrewsbury[1]	3	3	—
Stafford	15	15	—
Standford Hill/Swaleside	11	9	2
Stoke Heath	4	2	2
Styal	16	13	3
Sudbury/Foston Hall	4	4	—
Swansea[1]	9	9	—
Swinfen Hall	3	3	—
Thorn Cross	3	3	—
Thorp Arch	2	2	—
Usk	2	2	—
The Verne/Portland	4	4	—
Wakefield	24	24	—
Wandsworth[1]	48	40	8
Wellingborough	5	5	—
Werrington	2	2	—
Wetherby	2	2	—
Whatton	3	3	—
Winchester[1]	21	21	—
Wormwood Scrubs[1]	27	23	4
Wymott	6	5	1
Wayland	4	3	1

[1] Establishments taking unconvicted/unsentenced prisoners or Immigration Act detainees.

Prisons and Remand Centres (Food Poisoning)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by prison and remand centre in England and Wales for the last 12 months, the number of occasions that food poisoning has been reported; what action was taken; when was the last occasion that they had been inspected by an outside health inspector; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Since 1 May 1988 there have been four reported outbreaks of suspected food poisoning at prison service establishments. These were as follows:

	Date
HMP Cardiff	June 1988
HMP Lincoln	August 1988
HMYOI Hollesley Bay Colony	January 1989
HMP Ashwell	April 1989

The local authority environmental health officers (EHOs) attended each establishment to help in tracing the source of the outbreak and to suggest measures to prevent further spread of infection.

Informal visits to establishments by local authority EHOs are encouraged, but no central record of these visits is maintained. None of the four establishments had been visited by local authority EHOs prior to the reported outbreaks of food poisoning. Each establishment had, however, been visited by Home Office health and safety officers or officers from the Home Office supply and transport catering group. All officers carrying out these inspections are professionally qualified. Their visits took place on the following dates:

	Date
HMP Cardiff	March 1988
HMP Lincoln	July 1987
HMYOI Hollesley Bay Colony	December 1988
HMP Ashwell	November 1988

ENERGY

Insulation

7. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has completed his plans to revive the neighbourhood energy action programme for community insulation schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Information is still being collected, but we believe that the special measures introduced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment are having a positive impact. We will continue to monitor the position closely.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has made of the contribution to Britain's energy requirements resulting from draught proofing and loft insulation in each of the past 10 years; and what targets he has set for such work in each of the next five years.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The extent to which improved loft insulation and draught proofing lead to lower demand for energy depends upon a number of factors including the extent to which consumers opt at least in part for greater warmth rather than simply saving energy. An assessment of the sort requested is not available.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, what steps he has taken to ensure that adequate numbers of operatives and trainees are available to undertake community energy action work in draughtproofing and loft insulation.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, who has responsibility for employment training, announced on 10 February a special package of measures to help community insulation projects. Those measures now appear to be having a positive impact.

53. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his Department's estimate of the energy savings that would accrue if all existing buildings were retro-fitted to bring them up to the standard of the proposed new building regulations.

Mr. Peter Morrison: In theory bringing all existing domestic buildings up to the standards of thermal insulation set out in the proposed new building regulations would lead to a reduction in demand of approximately 9 million tonnes of oil equivalent. However, achievement of such standards would not be cost effective or possible in many cases, particularly with older buildings. Equivalent estimates for reductions in demand in respect of non-domestic buildings are not available.

44. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his Department's estimate of the potential savings in energy demand, if all United Kingdom residential properties had 6 in of roof insulation.

Mr. Peter Morrison: In theory the installation of 6 in of insulation in all domestic buildings with accessible lofts could lead to a potential annual saving of some 1·3 million tonnes of oil equivalent. However, as householders would be likely to take part of the potential saving in greater warmth the actual saving would be lower.

Grimethorpe Reactor

11. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to announce his decision on funding the next stage of research and development into the Grimethorpe pressurised fluidised-bed reactor.

Mr. Michael Spicer: British Coal is presently seeking further private sector support for this project. In the light of the outcome of this, the Government will make a final decision on funding.

Subsidence (Compensation)

18. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what resources he has agreed with the National Coal Board to allocate for compensation for subsidence.

Mr. Michael Spicer: It is a matter for British Coal to determine the allocation of resources within the external finance limit agreed with Government. At the end of 1987-88 the provision in its accounts for subsidence compensation stood at £260 million. In 1987-88 repair of and compensation for subsidence damage cost the corporation almost £50 million.

Hinkley C Inquiry

19. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to receive the report of the Hinkley C inquiry.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The timing of his report is a matter for the inquiry inspector.

Nuclear Power

20. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received about the environmental benefits of nuclear power.

16. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what recent representations he has had in favour of expanding nuclear power on environmental grounds.

32. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what recent representations he has had from people opposed to expanding nuclear power on environmental grounds.

Mr. Parkinson: I have received a number of representations on all aspects of nuclear power.

50. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will estimate the percentage of electricity to be generated by nuclear power by 1995; and what is the current figure.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The percentage of electricity generated by nuclear power in England and Wales in 1987-88 was 14·4 per cent. The percentage for 1995 will depend on a number of factors, including the load factor of individual nuclear power stations and operational decisions taken by the CEGB's successors.

Energy Use

21. **Mr. Ward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on trends in the ratio of energy usage to gross domestic product since 1973.

Mr. Parkinson: In terms of primary energy, in 1973 the United Kingdom consumed 1·36 tonnes of coal equivalent per £1,000 of GDP (at 1985 factor cost). In 1988 the ratio had fallen to 1 tonne of coal equivalent per £1,000 of GDP in the same price terms. This represents a reduction of 26·5 per cent. or 2 per cent. per annum.

Electricity Generation

22. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his Department's latest estimate of the fuel cycle costs of *(a)* nuclear and *(b)* coal-fired electricity generation in the present financial year.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have been advised by the Central Electricity Generating Board that, for 1987-88, their estimate of fuel cycle costs for nuclear generation was 1·77 p/Kwh and coal-fired generation 1·97 p/Kwh.

55. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy on what date Her Majesty's Government first made public that the cost of electricity from the Central Electricity Generating Board nuclear stations exceeded that of coal-fired generation.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This was first made public in the answer that I gave to my right hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) on 15 December 1988 at column *680*.

42. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proposals he expects to bring forward to change the mix of fuels used in electricity generation *(a)* before that industry is sold, *(b)* while it is in the course of being sold and *(c)* after it has been sold.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Changes to the mix of fossil fuels used in electricity generation will remain a matter for the industry, as will the choice of non-fossil fuels used to meet the major part of the non-fossil fuel obligation provided for the Electricity Bill now before Parliament. I announced on 5 April the Government's intention that up to 600 MW of the non-fossil fuel obligation should be set aside specifically for renewables.

Energy Technology Support Unit

23. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the conclusions of the report of Dr. Barry Dale of the Energy Department's energy technology support unit.

Mr. Parkinson: I believe that the report to which the hon. Member is referring is a paper presented by Dr. Dale to an International Energy Agency experts seminar in Paris on 12 to14 April.

He concluded that it appeared to be technically feasible to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide by a significant amount but that this would not be an easy task and a combination of measures and technologies would be required.

Sizewell B Power Station

24. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the cost per megawatt saved of energy efficiency measures; and what is the cost per megawatt of the Sizewell B nuclear power station.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The cost of saving a megawatt by investment in energy efficiency schemes varies widely. Investment in energy efficiency is not a direct substitute for investment in energy supply; improvements in energy efficiency may be taken by domestic consumers in increased levels of comfort. The CEGB have advised us that the expected cost in real terms of Sizewell B remains at the level shown in the 1986-87 accounts which is £1·45 million/megawatt.

Neighbourhood Energy Action

25. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to announce firm proposals for the neighbourhood energy action programme.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The measures announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment on 10 February were designed to help overcome the difficulties which some community insulation projects faced in making the transition to employment training. We are now in the process of monitoring the impact of those measures on the project network.

Gas Supply

26. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the Director General of Gas Supply; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My right hon. Friend and I met the Director General of Gas Supply last month and we discussed a range of issues of mutual interest.

52. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of British Gas to discuss the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on gas supply.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My right hon. Friend last met the chairman of British Gas in November when a range of issues were discussed.

Global Warming

17. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will review his Department's spending on energy conservation in the light of the continuing fears of global warming.

Mr. Parkinson: The budget of the energy efficiency office, like all Government expenditure, is reviewed annually in the public expenditure survey.

27. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his Department's latest estimate of potential for reducing carbon dioxide emissions by the year 2000, 2010 and 2020 in the energy sector.

48. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his Department's latest estimate of the potential reduction in the output of greenhouse gases by the United Kingdom energy sector by the years 2000, 2010 and 2020.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Future emissions will depend on many factors, which are hard to predict, such as economic growth, developments in technology, investment patterns and consumer choice. A broad analysis by the energy technology support unit, presented at the Prime Minister's recent seminar on climate change, indicated both the possibilities and difficulties of reducing carbon dioxide emissions.

8. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment his Department has made of the different contributions to reducing global warming of energy conservation and nuclear power.

Mr. Parkinson: I believe that both nuclear power and improved energy efficiency have an important role to play in reducing emissions of carbon dioxide. No single solution is sufficient.

Energy Efficiency

28. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what measures he is taking, and what further measures he proposes, to reduce energy consumption and to promote energy efficiency.

30. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to publish proposals to encourage energy efficiency and conservation.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The energy efficiency office will be targeting its activities on key areas of energy use and offering advice backed by technical support. In particular it will be emphasising the work of regional energy efficiency officers at the local level. The EEO will also be offering a new best practice programme which will give industrial and commercial consumers authoritative and independent advice on how efficiently they use energy and how they can improve to match the best in their sector. In addition the Secretary of State for Energy is leading a campaign to increase the efficiency of energy use in the public sector.

In the domestic sector the Government continue to help pensioners and low-income households through the community insulation programme and the homes insulation scheme.

Further measures to encourage energy efficiency are included in the Electricity Bill. The Secretary of State and the Director General of Electricity Supply will have a duty to promote energy efficiency and economy on the part of licensed electricity suppliers who will be required to provide guidance on the efficient use of electricity.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proposals he has for energy conservation arising from the Downing street seminar on 26 April.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I have described the new approach of the energy efficiency office in my replies to the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) on 30 January at column *13*, and my hon. Friend the Member for Poole (Mr. Ward) on 7 March at column *480*.

Electricity Privatisation

29. **Mr. Hannam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proportion of the United Kingdom's total national energy needs he expects to be met by the private sector following privatisation of the electricity industry.

Mr. Michael Spicer: If the market shares held by the various fuel producers remain unchanged, then some 88 per cent. of final energy consumption will be met by the private sector after privatisation, compared with 74 per cent. in 1988.

3. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will estimate the latest cost of advertising, publicity and public relations for the electricity industry generally and for its privatisation up to the date of the proposed share issue.

Mr. Parkinson: Expenditure by the industry on advertising, publicity and public relations is a matter for the industry itself. Total costs up to the date of the proposed share issue will depend on many factors yet to be decided, and cannot therefore reasonably be forecast at this stage.

British Coal

31. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of British Coal; and what matters were discussed.

34. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to meet the chairman of British Coal; and what matters he expects to discuss.

51. **Mr. Jack Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to meet the chairman of British Coal; and what matters he expects to discuss.

54. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to meet the chairman of British Coal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend and I meet the chairman of British Coal regularly to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

9. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to meet the manager of British Coal, Scotland; and what matters he expects to discuss.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend and I regularly meet the chairman of British Coal. We have no plans to meet British Coal's Scottish manager at present.

46. **Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to meet the manager of British Coal's north-eastern region; and what matters he expects to discuss.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have no such plans at present. However, my right hon. Friend and I do, of course, meet the chairman of British Coal regularly to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

47. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the manager of British Coal in Scotland; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I last met the manager of British Coal in Scotland on 6 October 1988 during my underground visit to Castlebridge mine, when I was informed about the corporation's plans for the colliery.

Carbon Dioxide Emissions

33. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what would be the reduction in CO_2 emissions if existing boilers were replaced by gas-condensing boilers in *(a)* the domestic sector and *(b)* public buildings.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I estimate that, on average, the replacement of an existing domestic gas fired boiler with a condensing model would reduce the boiler consumption by 15 to 20 per cent. The carbon dioxide emitted by the boiler would be reduced by a similar amount. For public buildings the equivalent figure would be around 10 per cent. An additional emission reduction would accrue if the original boiler were fired by coal or oil due to the different carbon content of the fuels.

35. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proposals he expects to bring forward, following the 26 April 10 Downing street seminar, to control carbon dioxide emissions by the year 2000, 2010 or 2020.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Electricity privatisation will encourage greater efficiency in the supply and use of electricity; will guarantee a level of non-fossil generation, will encourage the introduction of new more efficient and less polluting technology, and will encourage electricity generation from gas. A series of tranches of generation capacity reserved exclusively for renewable sources will be set throughout the 1990s. This will guarantee renewables an additional special status within the non-fossil fuel obligation.

Electricity (Bulk Supplies)

36. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his Department's most up-to-date estimate of the comparative cost of bulk supplies of electricity to the steel industry and other heavy industrial consumers in Britain and those for major competitors in the European Community.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 10 April at column *335*.

British Nuclear Fuels

37. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the future of British Nuclear Fuels plc.

Mr. Michael Spicer: BNFL has contracts valued at some £4 billion, £2 billion of which are with Japan. These will pay for its investment in THORP and will be in a good position to compete for business in the future.

Central Electricity Generating Board

38. **Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board; and what matters were discussed.

45. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next plans to meet the chairman-designate of National Power; and what issues will be discussed.

49. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend and I regularly meet Lord Marshall to discuss matters of common interest.

Methane Gas

39. **Mr. Bright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has made of the prospects for the burning of methane gas in power generation.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Decisions on fossil fuel choice are matters for the industry. Virtually all the major independent generation projects known to my Department, totalling over 6 GW of capacity, are proposing to use natural gas. Moreover, the CEGB has recently applied for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's consent to construct four gas-fired power stations. I am also encouraged by the prospects for smaller landfill gas generation projects. These have the potential to make a significant contribution by the end of the century.

Monktonhall and Bilston Glen Collieries

40. **Mr. Eadie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received regarding the future of Monktonhall and Bilston Glen collieries.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My Department has received one written representation from the Coalfield Communities Campaign.

Combined Heat and Power

41. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proposals he has for policies to promote the use of combined heat and power.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The creation of a competitive power market following the privatisation of the public electricity supply industry should ensure that combined heat and power is well placed to take advantage of the new structure. There will be new powers to allow CHP operators to lay heat mains in streets. We are also seeking to ensure that independent generators, including CHP operators, will be rated on a comparable basis with the rest of the electricity supply industry. My Department has provided substantial support for CHP schemes in the past and will continue to promote investment in CHP within the energy efficiency office's new "Best Practice" programme.

United Kingdom Offshore Operators Association

43. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of UKOOA, and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I meet the United Kingdom Offshore Operators Association (UKOOA) from time to time. These meetings cover a range of North sea-related issues.

Plutonium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how much plutonium from the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority stock pile since November 1964, has *(a)* been leased and retained, *(b)* been leased and returned and *(c)* sold to France for use in its Rapsodie test fast reactor.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No plutonium from the stockpile of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority has been sold or leased for the Rapsodie test fast reactor since May 1979.

Independent Electricity Producers

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the Association of Independent Electricity Producers; what was discussed; and what was the outcome of the meeting.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend and I last met the AEIP on 5 May, when we had a useful discussion on independent electricity generation.

Advertising

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how much advertising air time his Department purchased with each commercial television company in each of the last five years.

Mr. Parkinson: Arrangements for purchasing advertising air time for this Department are handled by the Central Office of Information. The information requested is not held by my Department and I understand that it has not been compiled centrally.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Zambia

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a table indicating the extent of United Kingdom assistance to Zambia by way of *(a)* grants and *(b)* loans in each of the past 10 years; and what is the sum total of outstanding loans made to Zambia which are repayable, the date by which repayment has to be made, and the level of interest payments on these loans.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information is as follows:

	Gross public expenditure	*Grants*	*Overseas Development Administration loans*	*Commonwealth Development Corporation expenditure*[1]
	£ thousand	*£ thousand*	*£ thousand*	*£ thousand*
1979	29,159	10,784	17,875	500
1980	20,696	12,604	5,850	2,242
1981	24,119	12,713	4,751	6,654
1982	14,237	10,646	912	2,679
1983	15,485	11,121	2,154	2,210
1984	32,901	11,170	4,756	16,975
1985	25,552	11,901	6,495	7,157
1986	35,351	28,062	4,213	3,076
1987	24,825	23,720	663	442
1988[2]				

Source: British aid statistics.
[1] Commonwealth Development Corporation expenditure on loans and equity investments.
[2] 1988 figures will be available in due course.

Outstanding Commonwealth Development Corporation loans at 31 March 1989 totalled £38·1 million. A breakdown is not readily available. Details of outstanding debt on Overseas Development Administration loans are as follows:

Loan title	*Total amount outstanding £ thousand*	*Final repayment due date*	*Interest rate per cent.*
Zambia Exchequer Loan (£1 million issued 17 April 1962)	78	11 April 1987	6·625
Zambia Exchequer Loan (£750,000 issued 27 June 1963)	103	27 June 1988	5·5
Zambia Exchequer Loan (£1·25 million issued 31 March 1964)	92	31 March 1989	6
Zambia Development Loan 1973	648	30 June 1998	Free
Zambia Loan 1978	8,231	31 March 2003	2
Zambia Loan No. 2 1978	19,366	8 August 2003	2
Zambia Loan 1980	5,094	24 January 2005	2
Zambia Programme Aid Loan 1983	4,490	1 June 2008	2
Zambia Programme Loan 1984	5,161	1 June 2008	2
Zambia Debt Rescheduling 1983	625	30 June 1993	2
Zambia Debt Rescheduling 1983 (Arrears)	97	30 June 1988	2
Zambia Debt Rescheduling 1984 (1)	97	30 June 1994	2
Zambia Debt Rescheduling 1984 (2)	706	30 June 1994	2
Zambia Debt Rescheduling 1986	2,527	30 June 1996	2
TOTAL	47,315		

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 16 May 1989

TRANSPORT

European Market (Freight Links)

103. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he has taken to ensure that Britain will be able to compete fully in the European market when the freight links between the Channel tunnel and the manufacturing and exporting base in the north pass through already overcrowded rail routes in London.

Mr. Portillo: British Rail's routes in the London area have considerable spare capacity outside the commuter peaks. The board considers it will have ample capacity to handle Channel tunnel freight traffic in the short and medium term and in the longer term if its proposed new passenger rail link is built.

Orange Badge Scheme

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration he has given to the implications for elderly people with *(a)* arthritis, *(b)* Parkinson's disease and *(c)* heart complaints of his Department's proposals to reform the orange badge scheme.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We propose to tighten the eligibility criteria so that, in accordance with the original aims of the scheme, orange badges are issued to people with severe mobility problems, irrespective of the medical cause.

We shall be consulting interested parties, including organisations representing disabled and elderly people, on detailed proposals for bringing the criteria into line with this objective.

River Thames (Traffic)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to increase the use of the River Thames to reduce vehicular traffic in and around London.

Mr. Portillo: The Government recognise that transport of passengers and freight by river can contribute to the relief of road congestion in London. This was reflected in an agreement concluded on 22 March under which the Government are making a grant of up to £500,000 to promote and improve the regular passenger services provided by the Riverbus partnership. The Port of London authority is particularly promoting the river carriage of bulk materials including materials for major construction projects in docklands, and refuse.

A1 Northumberland

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects improvements to be carried out to the A1 between Bellshill and Mousen, Northumberland.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: At present it seems unlikely that work on any improvement of this section of the A1 will start before 1992-93. The flow is low and the cost is high.

Ticket Barriers (London Underground)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, further to his answer of 28 February, *Official Report*, column *115*, what was the basis of his calculation that the total cost of installing automatic ticket barriers at London Underground stations will be £22·2 million; whether it included electronics, computers and other associated costs of their installation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The estimated final cost at current prices was provided by LRT. I understand it covered the cost of gate equipment, cabling, data circuits and installation. The cost of computers was not included as they serve all the new ticketing system, not just the gates.

Shipping

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the credit, debit and balance of payments on shipping services in each year since 1974-75.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to table 3·3 in "United Kingdom Balance of Payments, 1988 Edition—CSO Pink Book" published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office for the Government statistical service, a copy of which is in the Library.

Figures for the years 1974 to 1976, which are not included in the 1988 edition, are as follows:

£ million

	Credits	*Debits*	*Balance*
1974	2,665	2,776	−111
1975	2,651	2,562	89
1976	3,233	3,155	78

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from Sellindge parish council, Kent, to move the proposed high speed Channel rail route south of their village.

Mr. Portillo: The Department can trace no record of having received any representations from Sellindge parish council since British Rail announced its preferred route for the proposed rail link to the Channel tunnel.

Trunk Roads (Emergency Telephones)

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for further provision of emergency telephones on all-purpose trunk roads.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Over 5,000 calls have been made from emergency telephones on the A180 trunk road between Brigg and Grimsby since they were installed in March 1988. The heavy use demonstrates their value.

The Department is now to embark on an initial programme of further provision of over 140 emergency telephones at priority sites on selected lengths of the A1, A2, A45, A46, A303 and A604 trunk roads.

This programme will help all motorists, particularly vulnerable drivers, including those travelling alone or at

night. The Department also works closely with disability and motoring organisations to promote better emergency and breakdown provision for those unable to leave their cars to use the telephone.

Further schemes will be added to the programme as the opportunity arises.

East London River Crossing

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration he has given and what policy decisions he has made concerning charging tolls for road vehicles crossing the proposed east London river crossing bridge between Newham and Thamesmead.

Mr. Channon: I have no proposals to levy tolls on the east London river crossing scheme.

British Rail (Costs)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what costs were identified by British Rail in the last financial year in respect of *(a)* funding local planning inquiries, *(b)* meeting specific planning requirements made by local authorities, *(c)* maintenance of listed buildings and other structures, *(d)* measures to lessen the impact of noise, *(e)* measures to lessen the impact of visual intrusion and *(f)* total expenditure on infrastructure (i) investment and (ii) maintenance.

Mr. Portillo: The Department does not collect detailed management information on items *(a)* to *(e)*, from British Rail. British Rail will provide information on infrastructure expenditure in its annual report and accounts for 1988-89, due to be published in July.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Co-responsibility Levies

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food by how much co-responsibility levies will increase when the Green pound is devalued as a result of the 1989 price negotiation.

Mr. MacGregor: At the 1989 price fixing, agreement was reached on significant reductions in the levels of milk co-responsibility levy, including its removal in less-favoured areas. It was agreed that this was the first step towards total elimination of the levy, for which the United Kingdom has consistently argued. These changes, together with the 3·2 point green pound devaluation, mean that the rates of levy paid by producers in 1988-89 and that to be paid in 1989-90 compare as follows:

	1988-89 £ *per tonne*	*1989-90* £ *per tonne*
(i) Producers in LFAs:		
First 60,000 kg	2·861	Nil
Remainder	3·814	Nil
(ii) Producers elsewhere:		
Producers of up to 60,000 kg	3·814	1·968
Producers of more than 60,000 kg	3·814	2·951

The cereals co-responsibility levy has two elements. First, there is a fixed basic levy of 3 per cent. of the intervention price. Secondly, there is an additional levy which, at the beginning of the marketing year, is set at 3 per cent. of the intervention price and is subsequently adjusted under the stabiliser arrangements if the EC cereals harvest exceeds the maximum guaranteed quantity of 160 million tonnes by less than 3 per cent. The total levy —basic plus additonal—deducted from first sales of cereals at the beginning of the 1988 marketing year was £7·06 per tonne. This was subsequently adjusted to £5·57, which was the rate applicable at the time of this year's price fixing. Following the 3·9 point green pound devaluation agreed at this year's price fixing, and taking account of the operation of the cereals stabiliser mechanism on the intervention price, the rate of levy to be deducted from the start of the 1989-90 marketing year, 1 July 1989, will be £7·32 per tonne. Any adjustment which may need to be made will depend upon the size of the 1989 EC cereals harvest.

British Summer Time

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has received any representations from the National Farmers Union concerning British summer time.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The National Farmers Union responded to my Department's request for comments on a consultation document on the arrangements for summer time to apply from 1990 which was issued on 29 April 1988. Details of the outcome of the consultations will be issued shortly.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

EC (Manufacturing Trade)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* setting out the surplus or deficit in the manufacturing trade between the United Kingdom and the EEC in each of the past 20 years; and if he will publish a separate table showing the balances with the rest of the world, all on an OTC basis.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is in the following table. Figures prior to 1970 on an OTS basis are not readily available.

United Kingdom Trade Balance in Manufactures (SITC 5-8)

£ *million*

Year	*EC*	*Rest of the world*
1970	567	1,687
1971	416	2,383
1972	118	2,016
1973	−329	1,704
1974	−596	2,216
1975	−542	4,009
1976	−509	4,637
1977	−685	5,802
1978	−1,988	5,639
1979	−3,154	4,327
1980	−1,751	5,385
1981	−3,183	5,820
1982	−5,029	5,226
1983	−8,076	3,222
1984	−8,847	2,533
1985	−9,522	3,710
1986	−10,848	2,602
1987	−11,085	1,139
1988	−13,417	−3,912

Source: United Kingdom Overseas Trade Statistics.

Airbus Industrie

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if the four member states of Airbus Industrie have yet completed their studies on a new organisational structure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: A new management structure for Airbus Industrie, broadly based on the recommendations contained in the 1988 report of the Airbus "Wise Men", was introduced with effect from 1 April 1989. The new structure is intended to strengthen the strategic control of Airbus projects by the four partners in the consortium while, at the same time, placing the senior managers of Airbus Industrie at the centre of all day-to-day operations of particular Airbus programmes. The supervisory board has been streamlined and now consists of five members, the four chairmen of the partner companies and Dr. Friderichs, the chairman of Airbus Industrie. A new seven-man executive board has been constituted for the day-to-day management of Airbus operations. It includes among its members the newly-appointed finance director of AI, Mr. Robert Smith, formerly of British Aerospace's Royal Ordnance operation.

Overseas Companies

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many overseas companies have set up operations in the United Kingdom since 1979, giving a breakdown by standard region.

Mr. Atkins: The following are the Invest in Britain Bureau figures for inward investments announced in each year since 1979 for the United Kingdom broken down by DTI regions. (These figures are not readily available on a United Kingdom standard region basis). The figures are based on information provided by the companies themselves at the time of the investment and include the establishment of a new business, expansion or acquisition of an existing business and involvement in joint venture.

Inward Investment into Great Britain 1979-88

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*Total*
Scotland	28	31	28	28	49	74	57	36	31	58	420
Wales	18	16	20	17	31	42	45	49	58	55	351
Northern Ireland	18	20	15	6	11	27	22	18	17	22	176
North East	21	19	14	15	20	29	26	30	31	22	227
North West	9	15	12	14	22	40	28	34	27	24	225
Yorkshire and Humberside	27	17	6	7	10	7	16	11	23	14	138
West Midlands	11	3	7	1	13	14	63	74	59	66	311
East Midlands	15	5	8	13	12	11	19	15	11	16	125
South East	23	23	15	25	59	70	84	60	55	45	459
South West	13	6	8	7	9	14	15	12	11	5	100
United Kingdom[1]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	3	4
Total	183	155	133	133	236	328	375	339	324	330	—

[1] Investment into more than one region.

Weights and Measures Legislation

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether, in view of recent survey evidence of overcharging of customers using stamped brim glasses, he will bring into force section 43 of the Weights and Measures Act 1985.

Mr. Forth: Last year the Department introduced revised regulations for the construction of beer measures; and coincidently the Brewers Society published guidelines on the proper use of these measures by bar staff when dispensing beer.

These initiatives, which seek to accommodate local preferences for the way in which beer is served, are designed to encourage licensees to use the glass most appropriate for the type of beer they are serving.

I therefore have no plans at present to implement section 43 of the Weights and Measures Act 1985.

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if, in the light of recent evidence of disregard by many establishments of the agreed code of practice on selling wine by the glass, he will now introduce legislation to enforce the code.

Mr. Forth: Surveys carried out by individual local authorities generally continue to indicate an increasing level of compliance with the voluntary code of practice for sales of still table wines by the glass, particularly in the quantities in which wine is sold.

I have no present plans to introduce legislation.

Bradbury-Wilkinson Premises, Saltash

Mr. Robert Hicks: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many inquiries have been received by his Department from companies interested in taking over the former Bradbury-Wilkinson premises at Saltash; and if he will make a statement about the present position and his Department's intentions.

Mr. Atkins: My Department has received no inquiries regarding this site, the future of which is a matter for its private sector owners.

Financial Services Act

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the application of section 47(2) of the Financial Services Act to transactions during the course of takeovers and other dealings and practices on the financial markets.

Mr. Maude: Section 47(2) of the Financial Services Act is directed against deliberate manipulation of the market. Some concerns have been expressed that the provision may go wider than was intended. In the light of these concerns it may be helpful to set out my Department's views on some of the points which have been raised.

It has been suggested, for example, that section 47(2) would prevent or inhibit certain actions which are at

present common and which are consistent with the takeover code. My Department's view is that the balance of dealings between offeror and offeree company is unaffected by the new provision, and it is difficult to see how actions taken in compliance with the code and not otherwise unlawful could constitute the offence of market manipulation.

In relation to takeover offers, it has been suggested that the act of buying shares of an offeree company might influence the price and lead in some way to a breach of section 47(2). If shares are bought by associates of the offeror or the offeree company, or by persons already holding 1 per cent. or more of the shares, these purchases must under the code be disclosed. My Department believes that in such circumstances it would not be possible to maintain that the purchase had created a false and misleading impression as to the value of or the market in the shares, since the market would be aware not only of the price and quantity of the purchase but also of the connection (if any) between the purchaser and the relevant parties to the take-over. Although the code does not provide for instantaneous disclosure, the requirements are well-established and recognised by the market as the means by which a false market is avoided.

Of course, not all purchasers are required under the code to disclose their purchases. Some people in this class may wish the offer to fail because they believe it is in the long-term interests of the offeree company that it should fail. They may, in genuine support of this belief, buy shares at above the offer price. Such a purchase would be based on a commercial assessment of the prospects of the company concerned, and even if others in the market had different views as to the value of the shares in question the Department does not believe that such purchases would amount to market manipulation. Thus we do not take the view that the section outlaws activity of this kind by those who hope that an offer will not succeed.

In such cases, there is of course a risk that anything said by or on behalf of the offeree company, for example about future prospects, may be inside information, or that any arrangements, however informal, would constitute a Companies Act concert party. Similarly, any financial arrangements raise questions as to whether unlawful assistance is being given. While actions in contravention of section 47(2) may themselves also contravene these provisions my Department does not believe that section 47(2) affects the application of such provisions. The scope for supportive action may therefore be extremely limited.

In a different context, it has been suggested that a person—say, a fund manager—who needs to buy or sell a large number of shares, and who does so in small quantities so as not to move the price against himself, might be guilty of market manipulation. This view appears to depend on it being accepted that a misleading impression as to the value of the shares is being created. The Department does not consider that in such a case the impression created is misleading. The fund manager has done nothing to indicate that he is not going to be a seller of further shares in the future. It would be a different matter if in some way he misrepresented a particular small purchase as his only purchase or dishonestly concealed his intentions in such a way as to induce a sale. Such actions, however, would be more likely to fall under section 47(1), which is a continuation (for these purposes) of what has been statute law for some time.

It has been suggested that there is some overlap between sections 47(1) and 47(2), in that a statement is capable of constituting conduct of the kind prohibited by section 47(2) even though it may not itself be prohibited by section 47(1). These two subsections define distinct offences and in committing an offence under section 47(2) a person may make statements which are not in themselves an offence under section 47(1). But in such a case it is not the statement itself which is an offence but the conduct which involves making that statement. As a prosecuting authority, the Department cannot envisage a case in which the making of a statement which was not a contravention of section 47(1) would, by and of itself, be held to be an act or course of conduct contrary to section 47(2), given the defence which section 47(3) provides.

Company Statistics

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many companies were registerd at the latest available date; and how many qualified as *(a)* small and *(b)* medium-sized for the purposes of section 248 of the Companies Act 1985.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 15 May 1989]:* There were 1,141,000 companies registered in Great Britain at 8 May 1989. Not all of these are active, but at least 90 per cent. are estimated to be eligible to deliver modified accounts according to the criteria set out in section 248 of the Companies Act 1985. Of these 2 to 3 per cent. are estimated to qualify as medium-sized companies.

Social Fund

Mr. Alton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what funds have been received from the EEC through social fund and European development fund by *(a)* the west midlands, *(b)* Strathclyde, *(c)* Greater Manchester and *(d)* Merseyside county.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 15 May 1989]:* European regional development fund and European social fund commitments in recent years are shown in the table. Allocations to individual regions fluctuate considerably from year to year, according to decisions by the European Commission.

£ million

	1985 Population Thousands	*ERDF*			*European social fund*[2]	
		1986	*1987*	*1988*	*1987*	*1988*
West Midlands Region	5,183	40	67	25	9	17
Strathclyde Region	2,359	50	51	48	9	10
Greater Manchester	2,583	14	22	24	7	7
Merseyside County	1,481	33	6	8	8	7

Notes:

[1] Parts of west midlands region and of Greater Manchester have not been eligible for the ERDF.

[2] Figures for the European social fund exclude funding provided by the ESF for central Government programmes, for which a regional breakdown is not available.

Advertising

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much advertising air time the Department of Trade and Industry purchased with each commercial television company in each of the last five years.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 15 May 1989]:* I am advised by the Central Office of Information, through which the Department buys such advertising, that the information is commercially confidential.

PRIME MINISTER

Maidstone

Q20. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to visit Maidstone.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Disciplinary Powers

Q172. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) of 24 April, *Official Report*, column *392*, what steps are taken to monitor centrally the exercise of disciplinary powers by individual Government Departments; and where ministerial responsibility lies for ensuring consistency in the application of such powers.

The Prime Minister: The principles which govern the conduct of the Home Civil Service are my responsibility as Minister for the Civil Service, which includes laying down the general procedures to be followed to ensure fairness and consistency of practice. The Cabinet Office (Office of the Minister for the Civil Service) is available to provide advice and guidance on their application to particular cases. Disciplinary action against an individual is the responsibility of the Department concerned and is not monitored centrally.

Wild Birds

Q12. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Prime Minister what proposals Her Majesty's Government have to protect the feeding grounds of breeding seabirds in the United Kingdom's waters under EEC directive 79/409 on the conservation of wild birds; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government's scientific adviser, the Nature Conservancy Council, is in the process of identifying the most important seabird feeding and gathering grounds in United Kingdom waters. It will advise the Department of the Environment when the results have been obtained. The Department will then consider the most appropriate measures to safeguard these areas.

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Prime Minister if she will co-ordinate the activities of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretary of State for the Home Department and the Attorney-General to ensure that the pay scales of both the Crown Prosecution Service and the magistrates' clerks are such that there is no shortage of staffs in either.

The Prime Minister: As my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General explained to the House on 8 May, there is an overall shortage of lawyers nationwide. This is of course taken into account in determining the pay of qualified lawyers employed by the Crown Prosecution Service and the magistrates courts.

EC Legislation

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the volume of legislation stemming from the European Economic Community and the democratic procedures for considering it; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No. I recognise the concern at the number of proposals for EC legislation now coming forward and the need for effective scrutiny of them. My right hon. Friend the Lord President keeps our arrangements under close review and currently is holding discussions with the Procedure and European Legislation Committees to establish what improvements may be made.

Voluntary Bodies (Government Grants)

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list the total amounts paid in grants by Government Departments to voluntary bodies during the financial year 1987-88; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The figures are shown in the table. The total amount provided in 1987 represents a cash increase of 4·6 per cent. on the level of provision in 1986-87. In the period between 1979-80 and 1987-88 the level of Government support to voluntary bodies has risen by 237 per cent. (or in real terms 91·6 per cent.).

Grants by Government Departments in 1987-88

	£
Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	187,765
Defence	5,297,319
Education and Science[1]	7,207,000
Employment	40,289,647
Energy	1,067,187
Environment:	
direct grants	6,160,502
urban programme	66,644,000
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	1,202,750
Overseas Development Administration	42,475,571
Health and Social Security	36,571,661
Home Office	21,945,889
Lord Chancellor's Department	712,000
Northern Ireland Department	14,263,793
Scottish Office:	
direct grants	9,790,137
urban programme	20,400,000
Trade and Industry	9,069,000
Transport	671,000
Welsh Office:	
direct grants	5,530,466
urban programme	3,430,000
Total	292,915,687

[1] The 1979-80 figure for DES included £3,736,000 paid to certain adult education bodies. These have been excluded in later years as not being strictly speaking, grants to voluntary organisations. In addition the sum listed for DES grants is lower than in previous years because (i) responsibility for grants to village halls and community centres has now been transferred to local government; and (ii) a number of other bodies included hitherto are no longer classified as voluntary bodies.

Employment

In addition, payments were made directly to voluntary bodies under various employment programmes

	£
Training Agency (formerly Manpower Services Commission):	
Community Programme	564,400,000
Voluntary Projects Programme	8,700,000
Youth Training Scheme	118,305,000
Total	691,405,000

The MSC and the Department of Employment made payments to voluntary bodies under other programmes but these cannot be given in detail except at disproportionate cost.

Northern Ireland, Department of Economic Development

	£
Action for Community Employment	27,674,880
Community Workshops	16,180,266
Community Volunteering Scheme	645,000
Youth Community Project	757,000
Youth Help	750,295
Total	46,007,441

Departments also made grants and payments to housing associations and societies, these are as follows

	£
Department of Environment	923,040,000
Northern Ireland Office (Department of the Environment)	43,000,000
Scottish Office	115,319,000
Welsh Office	56,600,000
Total	1,137,959,000

Grants made to voluntary bodies in 1987-88 by non-departmental public bodies include the following

	£
Equal Opportunities Commission	69,044
Commission for Racial Equality	1,884,358
Countryside Commission	2,900,000
Countryside Commission for Scotland	502,310
Health Education Council	729,000
Highlands and Islands Development Board	797,920
Nature Conservancy Council	2,140,501
Sports Council	16,203,000
Sports Council for Northern Ireland	431,232
Sports Council for Scotland	2,319,285
Sports Council for Wales	1,486,347
Total	29,462,997
Grand Total	2,197,750,125

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 16 May.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 16 May.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 16 May.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty The Queen.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Staff Statistics

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each local education authority *(a)* the number of teachers in post, *(b)* the number of administrative and support staff and *(c)* the proportion that *(b)* is of *(a)* and *(b)*.

Mr. Butcher: The total full-time equivalent teaching staff in maintained schools and colleges in each local education authority area in January 1988 is shown in the table.

The Department does not hold centrally information on administrative and support staff employed by local education authorities. However, figures from the Joint Manpower Watch indicate that for England as a whole non-teaching staff amount to 76 per cent. of teaching staff.

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy publication "Education Statistics 1988-89 Estimates", a copy of which is in the Library, shows breakdowns of teaching and non-teaching staff for each authority responding to its survey.

Full-time equivalent teaching staff in maintained schools and colleges. January 1988

LEA	*Number*
Barking	2,264·1
Barnet	3,046·9
Bexley	2,103·1
Brent	3,394·0
Bromley	2,418·7
Croydon	3,207·1
Ealing	3,187·8
Enfield	3,330·9
Haringey	2,423·1
Harrow	2,094·5
Havering	2,508·7
Hillingdon	2,083·3
Hounslow	2,556·3
Kingston	1,923·4
Merton	1,601·2
Newham	2,784·9
Redbridge	1,979·8
Richmond	1,393·0
Sutton	1,534·6
Waltham Forest	2,772·7
ILEA	32,000·8
Birmingham	12,282·9
Coventry	4,344·2
Dudley	3,420·5
Sandwell	3,630·7
Solihull	2,285·1
Walsall	3,611·4
Wolverhampton	3,879·9
Knowsley	1,972·6
Liverpool	6,784·7
St. Helens	2,285·2
Sefton	2,901·2
Wirral	3,681·2
Bolton	3,293·3
Bury	1,920·0

LEA	Number
Manchester	7,183·9
Oldham	2,676·5
Rochdale	2,580·3
Salford	2,861·7
Stockport	3,129·9
Tameside	2,187·2
Trafford	2,143·4
Wigan	4,063·5
Barnsley	2,356·4
Doncaster	3,375·7
Rotherham	3,039·2
Sheffield	6,704·0
Bradford	6,343·4
Calderdale	2,186·4
Kirklees	5,196·2
Leeds	8,819·4
Wakefield	3,627·4
Gateshead	2,132·5
Newcastle upon Tyne	3,956·3
North Tyneside	2,398·5
South Tyneside	1,917·5
Sunderland	3,752·0
Avon	9,808·2
Bedfordshire	6,020·3
Berkshire	7,690·7
Buckinghamshire	6,213·1
Cambridgeshire	6,556·5
Cheshire	10,352·5
Cleveland	7,340·3
Cornwall	4,428·4
Cumbria	5·393·1
Derbyshire	10,467·1
Devon	9·530·3
Dorset	5,804·5
Durham	6,253·3
East Sussex	6,073·3
Essex	14,590·1
Gloucestershire	5,140·8
Hampshire	15,789·0
Hereford and Worcester	6,689·0
Hertfordshire	11,284·5
Humberside	9,915·0
Isle of Wight	1,197·7
Kent	14,390.5
Lancashire	15,780·2
Leicestershire	10,088.1
Lincolnshire	5,597·6
Norfolk	6,882·8
North Yorkshire	6,801·6
Northamptonshire	6,475·5
Northumberland	3,088·5
Nottinghamshire	11,565·2
Oxfordshire	5,628·9
Shropshire	4,245·3
Somerset	4,379·9
Staffordshire	11,292·7
Suffolk	5,960·1
Surrey	8,702·4
Warwickshire	5,283·9
West Sussex	5,858·7
Wiltshire	5,488·2
England	523,580·9

Irradiated Rodent Carcases

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out all the methods that have been adopted by the Medical Research Council for the disposal of irradiated rodent carcases following experiments.

Mr. Jackson: The disposal of irradiated rodent carcases used in radiation experimental work is subject to authorisation under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960. The disposal routes for such carcases used by the Medical Research Council are:

1. Maceration followed by disposal to the sewer; or
2. Incineration and landfill.

Academics (Earnings)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will undertake a sample survey of universities to ascertain information about the levels of non-pay earnings among academics;

(2) if he will commission research into the levels of outside earnings of academics.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend has no intention at present to undertake a survey himself, or commission research about, the non-pay earnings of academic staff.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his reply of 2 May, *Official Report*, Column 2, if he will list those recent departmental decisions which are based on anecdotal evidence.

Mr. Jackson: Decisions reached by the Department are based on full consideration of those facts which are available and relevant.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has on the practice of universities in the treatment of academic staff's outside earnings.

Mr. Jackson: This is not a matter on which the Department collects information.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the average working week of university academic staff on research and teaching duties.

Mr. Jackson: This information is not collected.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has to encourage universities to make contractual provision for time to make outside earnings for university academic staff.

Mr. Jackson: That is a matter for university managements.

Open University

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the contribution made to environmental education and research by the Open university.

Mr. Jackson: Courses about or related to the environment are available in the university's undergraduate and continuing education programmes. The university also supports research undertaken by the energy and environment research group.

Cancer Research

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what financial support Her Majesty's Government have given to research trials of cytokines, particularly interferon, in treatment of common cancers.

Mr. Jackson: The Medical Research Council, which receives its grant-in-aid from this Department, is the main

agency through which the Government support medical research. The council has mounted three trials involving the use of cytokines in the treatment of cancer, all of which are currently recruiting patients. Details of the trials are as follows:

1. *A phase II evaluation of human lymphoblastoid interferon (Wellferon) in malignant glioma.*
   This trial was launched in October 1988; the approximate annual support provided by the council is £7,000.
2. *A trial of alpha-interferon in chronic myeloid leukaemia*
   This trial was launched in September 1986 and is one arm of a larger trial of chronic myeloid leukaemia, for which the approximate annual support provided by the council is £23,000.
3. *A trial of the use of alpha-2b INF in the plateau phase of myelomatosis.*
   This trial was launched in December 1988 and is one arm of a larger trial of myelomatosis, for which the trial co-ordinator receives grant support of approximately £32,000 per annum. In addition, the council provides approximately £13,000 per annum for this trial.

Teachers (Pay)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will estimate the 1989-90 cost of the recommended changes to school teachers pay, above the original £385 million limit proposed; what amount and proportion of this excess above the original limit will be offset by the net 0·4 per cent. reduction in employers contributions for superannuation identified in his reply to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, of 4 May, *Official Report*, column *177*, as being free from other assumed offset purposes; what amount and proportion will not be so offset; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The salary bill for school teachers in England will rise by some £440 million in the financial year 1989-90. This is £80 million above the England element of the original limit proposed. The effect of the extra 0·4 per cent. reduction in the cost of employers' contributions to teachers superannuation will be to reduce the school teachers salary bill by about £25 million. The remaining £55 million to be borne by local education authorities represents less than 0·4 per cent. of local authority education provision.

LINK

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about progress on LINK.

Mr. Jackson: The Government attach great importance to LINK, which aims to increase the benefits to the United Kingdom economy from Government-funded research by encouraging collaboration between industry and the science base.

I am pleased to announce today a major new LINK programme in structural composites. Collaborative research in this area is vital to ensure that United Kingdom industry is well placed to adopt these new materials in a cost effective way.

This programme will develop both new and existing expertise, and will widen the use of such materials within United Kingdom industry. The use of advanced composites as structural components is likely to have a major impact in the future.

A key aim of the programme is to co-ordinate, and stimulate existing and new United Kingdom R & D in composite materials with particular emphasis on structural applications. It will support research which will meet industry's future demands for composites with improved properties, more efficient processability and lower cost.

More than 40 companies and over 20 science base organisations have already indicated that they wish to be involved in individual collaborative research projects. Special efforts will be made to encourage the involvement of small and medium sized firms.

The structural composites programme will raise the level of United Kingdom activity at a time when national programmes are being undertaken within Europe, Japan and the USA and will complement R & D work being undertaken through the European Community's BRITE/EURAM initiative.

This programme, the 14th to be announced under LINK, will be jointly funded by the Department of Trade and Industry (£14 million) and the Science and Engineering Research Council (£6 million); matching support from industry will be needed for this £40 million, five-year programme.

Training Grants

Mr. Arbuthnot: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will announce his proposals for the local education authorities training grants scheme in 1990-91.

Mrs. Rumbold: Subject to consultation with local education authorities the main thrust of the scheme will continue to be the successful implementation of the Education Reform Act, in particular the national curriculum and associated assessment arrangements. My right hon. Friend also intends to include support for the introduction of teacher appraisal, eligible training for licensed teachers and pilot schemes for articled teachers, training in managing pupils' behaviour in response to the committee of inquiry into discipline in schools and training to develop teaching and assessment of competence-based qualifications in further education.

£120·5 million is planned to be allocated for training on national priority areas—an increase of £36·3 million on 1989-90—which will qualify for 65 per cent. grant and £94·7 million on local priorities which will qualify for 50 per cent. grant.

Copies of the consultation letter have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

WALES

Hospital Closures

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list, for each year since 1979 *(a)* each hospital closed completely and *(b)* each hospital closed partially; and if he will break that list down by each health authority, and regional health authority.

Mr. Grist: A list of hospitals which closed, and remain closed, between 1 January 1979 and 31 December 1988 is given in the following table. These closures are the result of reorganisations and improvements of health care services in Wales since 1979, notably the provision of seven

new hospitals, including five district general hospitals, at a cost of some £162·4 million at 1989-90 prices. Information on changes in bed complements for individual hospitals is published annually in "Bed Use Statistics", copies of which are in the Library of the House.

District health authority hospital	*Year of closure*
Clwyd	
Prince Edward's War Memorial	1980
Llangwyfan	1981
Chatsworth House	1985
Colwyn Bay Maternity	1985
Wrexham War Memorial	1986
Chirk	1987
East Dyfed	
Cilymaenllwyd	1984
Allt-y-Mynydd	1986
Gwent	
Snatchwood	1980
Cefn Mably	1983
Gwynedd	
Gors Maternity	1980
Caernarvonshire and Anglesey General	1984
Gailtysil	1985
Mid Glamorgan	
Glyncornel	1979
Blackmill	1985
Bridgend and District	1985
Cefn Hirgoed	1985
Powys	
Adelina Patti	1986
West Glamorgan	
Llwynderw	1979
Drymma Hall	1986
Cwmdonkin	1987
Neath Annexe	1988

Road Accidents

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many deaths occurred on Welsh roads in each of the last three years;

(2) how many people were injured on the roads of Wales in each of the last three years.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information requested is shown in the following table.

Casualties	*1986*	*1987*	*[1]1988*
Fatal[2]	235	220	226
Serious[3]	3,243	3,173	2,900
Slight[4]	10,967	10,890	12,024

[1] Provisional.
[2] When death occurs in less than 30 days as a result of the accident.
[3] When a person sustains an injury for which he/she is detained in hospital as an "in-patient" or any of the following injuries whether or not he/she is detained in hospital; fractures, concussion, internal injuries, crushings, severe cuts and lacerations, severe general shock requiring medical treatment, injuries causing death 30 or more days after the accident.
[4] When a person sustains an injury of a minor character such as a sprain, bruise or cut not judged to be severe, or slight shock requiring roadside attention.

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people were taken to hospital with serious injuries after road accidents in Wales in each of the last three years.

Mr. Grist: Information is not available in the precise form requested. However, the number of patients and day cases who died in hospitals in Wales or were discharged from them after road traffic accidents in the last three years for which data are available is as follows:

	Number
1985	3,332
1986	3,263
1987	2,978

This may understate the true position as not all hospitals provide full clinical details relating to discharges and deaths. The numbers with "serious" injuries cannot be separately identified.

Council House Sales

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he intends to introduce a scheme to convert council house rents into mortgages, along the lines of that announced by the Scottish Office.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am examining a scheme similar to that recently announced in Scotland.

Nursery Education

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to examine the provision of education for the under-fives along the same lines as those recently announced by the Department of Education and Science in England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science has established and will be chairing a committee of inquiry to consider the quality and content of the educational experience offered to under-five-year-olds, as one of the responses to the Education, Science and Arts Committee's report on educational provision for the under-fives in England. I shall be keeping in close touch with the work of this group, on which the Welsh Office has observer status.

I shall be keeping under review the need for any action in Wales in the light of the deliberations and findings of the new committee.

SCOTLAND

Pay

101. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's action to improve pay levels in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The Government have sought to create the conditions in which sustained growth in output and real incomes can take place. Pay levels, in Scotland as elsewhere, are essentially for employers and employees to determine, but the Government have removed a number of statutory obstacles to sensible pay determination and have encouraged employers to link pay to the performance of their firm. In their dealings with its own employees the Government have introduced more flexibility by means of performance-related pay, and new, flexible, long-term pay agreements.

Roads

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the total budget for 1988-89 which was allocated to the Scottish Development Department for road building and maintenance: and if he will show the projects completed and projects commenced during that financial year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Gross provision for trunk road building and maintenance in Scotland in 1988-89 was £130 million. Schemes costing over £1 million completed and commenced during that financial year are shown in the following table:

1988-89

Schemes Costing Over £1 million

Completed

A75	Castle Douglas Bypass
A75	Ringford Bypass
M8	Starlaw Junction
A82	Auchendennan-Arden
A830	Mallaig-Kinsadel I
A830	Polnish-Lochailort
A9	Dornoch Bridge Northern Approach Roads
A9	Dornoch Bridge Southern Approach Roads
A9	Mound Bridges
A92	Murcar-Balmedie
A929	Kinsway-Powrie
A96	Bucksburn-Tyrebagger I
A96	Forres Bypass

Commenced

A7	North Middleton Bypass
A75	Dumfries Bypass
A77	Balsalloch-Balcreuchan
A835	Garve Railway Bridge
A9	Dunblane Bypass
A9	Dornoch Firth Bridge
A94	Parkford-Balnabreich[1]
A94	Upper Northwaterbridge-Oatyhill
A96	Inverurie Bypass[1]

[1] Schemes commenced in that a contract was let during the year but actual construction did not start until a few weeks later.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the proposed roads budget allocated to the Scottish Development Department for the financial year 1989-90.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: £162 million, net of receipts, has been allocated for motorway and trunk road expenditure in Scotland in 1989-90.

Health Education

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to improve the effectiveness of health education in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have announced today the setting up of a major and wide-ranging review of health education in Scotland. This is one of the four central priority areas recommended in the SHARPEN report and which were accepted by the Government. It is a key aspect of health policy.

The review will consider the purpose of health education programmes, identify the principal objectives of such programmes and the means by which the effectiveness of those objectives can be assessed.

It will also consider and examine the way in which health education is undertaken at both national and local levels and the role of those involved, including the Scottish Health Education Group, health boards and voluntary bodies as well as the Scottish Home and Health Department and the Scottish Education Department.

We hope to appoint management consultants to conduct the review. I expect them to talk to a large number of organisations and individuals in the course of the review and to complete their work towards the end of 1989.

Community Charge

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing for each local authority in Scotland *(a)* the community charge level for 1989-90, *(b)* the Government's previous estimate of the level of community charge and *(c)* the percentage difference between *(a)* and *(b)*.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is set out in the table. The Government's estimates were of what each authority's community charge would be if the authority maintained the level of services provided in 1988-89 and therefore did not increase the volume of its spending. The figures for regional and islands councils include water charges.

	Actual Community Charge £	*Government Estimate* £	*Percentage Difference* per cent.
Borders	205	151	35·8
Central	213	167	27·8
Dumfries and Galloway	206·5	157	31·4
Fife	238	206	15·8
Grampian	219	150	46·2
Highland	200	165	21·2
Lothian	305	247	23·6
Strathclyde	219	221	−0·8
Tayside	241	193	24·7
Islands Councils			
Orkney	148	84	77·1
Shetland	114·16	202	−43·5
Western Isles	171	126	36·2
District Council			
Berwickshire	31	26	19·2
Ettrick and Lauderdale	42	29	44·8
Roxburgh	42	39	8·8
Tweeddale	43	23	84·5
Clackmannan	87	58	49·6
Falkirk	46	44	3·9
Stirling	97	83	17·6
Annandale and Eskdale	47	39	19·2
Nithsdale	39	35	10·6
Stewartry	37	39	−4·0
Wigtown	40	21	89·0
Dunfermline	55	43	26·6
Kirkcaldy	60	51	18·0
North East Fife	82	46	79·7
Aberdeen City	85	51	65·4
Banff and Buchan	56·7	35	60·2
Gordon	44	33	31·7
Kincardine and Deeside	32	18	76·4
Moray	42	26	59·6
Badenoch and Strathspey	35	21	69·1
Caithness	25	31	−18·5
Inverness	26	24	9·8
Lochaber	37	37	0·7
Nairn	28	16	76·9
Ross and Cromarty	39	25	56·4

	Actual Community Charge £	Government Estimate £	Percentage Difference per cent.
Skye and Lochalsh	25	22	12·8
Sutherland	6	3	139·0
East Lothian	69	60	15·0
Edinburgh City	87	66	31·3
Midlothian	59	59	−0·7
West Lothian	54	49	10·1
Argyll and Bute	58	72	−19·7
Bearsden and Milngavie	79	58	35·5
Clydebank	78	72	8·0
Clydesdale	82	72	13·5
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	56	72	−22·5
Cumnock and Doon Valley	57	72	−21·1
Cunninghame	59	72	−18·3
Dumbarton	79	72	9·4
East Kilbride	99	72	37·1
Eastwood	63	43	47·6
Glasgow City	87	72	20·5
Hamilton	72	72	−0·3
Inverclyde	72	62	16·5
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	50	72	−30·8
Kyle and Carrick	89	69	28·6
Monklands	74	72	2·5
Motherwell	86	67	28·7
Renfrew	76	72	5·2
Strathkelvin	80	72	10·8
Angus	52	45	15·9
Dundee City	83	81	3·1
Perth and Kinross	58	43	34·1

Regional Selective Assistance

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was *(a)* the number of aplications for regional selective assistance received between 1 April 1988 and 31 March 1989, *(b)* the number of applications that have been processed and *(c)* the total amount of money paid out in that period.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 8 May 1989]:* In the period 1 April 1988 to 31 March 1989, 255 applications for regional selective assistance were received in Scotland. Of these, 237 have been fully processed. The remaining 18 are being processed. Total payments of regional selective assistance in Scotland in the same period have amounted to £37·6 million.

Investment Grants

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what was *(a)* the total number of applications for the investment grants from 1 April 1988 to 31 March 1989, *(b)* the total number of applications approved, *(c)* the total amount of expenditure involved and *(d)* the total estimated expenditure planned for that period and the estimated expenditure for 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92;

(2) what was *(a)* the total number of applications for the innovation grants from 1 April 1988 to 31 March 1989, *(b)* the total number of applications approved, *(c)* the total amount of expenditure involved and *(d)* the total estimated expenditure planned for that period and the estimated expenditure for 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 8 May 1989]:* The information requested is as follows for the period 1 April 1988 to 31 March 1989.

Regional enterprise grants

	Innovation grants	Investment grants
Number of applications received	100	374
Number of applications approved	37	189
Value of applications approved	£851,000	£1,097,000

Total expenditure on regional enterprise grants for the period covered is £282,000 out of a provision for 1988-89 of £1·6 million. Planned provision for 1989-90 is published in the Supply Estimates. Planned net provision for regional selective assistance and related schemes (including regional enterprise grants), consistent with the figures published in "Public Expenditure to 1991-92, A Commentary on the Scotland Programme", for each of the years 1990-91 and 1991-92 is £80 million.

Regional Development Grants

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was *(a)* the number of applications for regional development grants outstanding on 31 March 1988, *(b)* the number of those outstanding applications that have subsequently been processed, *(c)* the number of applications that are still outstanding and *(d)* the total amount of money paid out on regional development grants since 31 March.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 8 May 1989]:* The figures requested for applications in Scotland under the revised regional development grant scheme are as follows:

	Number
Number of applications outstanding at 31 March 1988	5,117
Number of these fully processed by 3 May 1989:	4,932
Number under consideration but awaiting response from applicants:	185
Number of applications awaiting attention:	nil
Total payments made between 31 March 1988 and 31 March 1989:	£50·8 million

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total amount of European regional development fund money allocated to each of the regions in 1988.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 8 May 1989]:* The information requested is as follows:

	£ million (rounded)
Project awards[1]	
Central	2
Dumfries and Galloway	1
Fife	2
Highland	9
Strathclyde	12
Shetland	2
Western Isles	11
Programme awards[2]	
Strathclyde Integrated Development Operation[3]	34
Highlands and Islands[4]	11
Tayside[5]	4

	£ million (rounded)
West Lothian	7
Total	95

[1] Grampian and Lothian each received project awards of less than £0·5 million.

[2] Programme awards show only 1988 entries. Substantial forward commitment under programmes has been secured.

[3] Covers development areas in Strathclyde, plus Sanquhar in Dumfries and Galloway and Dumgoyne ward in Central.

[4] Covers Highlands and Islands Development Board area.

[5] Tayside figure differs from that in the programme due to a rescheduling of expenditure.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Torture

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a table showing the number of representations he has made in the last five years about the denial of human rights and use of torture in each of the nations in membership of the United Nations.

Mr. Eggar: In the last five years we have made many representations to the Governments of many countries, both bilaterally and with our European Community partners.

The precise information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Immigration

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when Mr. Nasim Ahmed who was born on 2 July 1965, and whose reference is IMM/84536 and A.421238, first applied to the British post in Islamabad to enter the United Kingdom; when Mr. Ahmed successfully appealed against refusal to grant him entry, and when the British port in Islamabad was instructed to issue Mr. Ahmed with a visa to enter the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested is not immediately available. A further reply will be sent to the hon. Member in due course.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) when Mrs. Musrat Begum, whose date of birth is 1 January 1958, applied to the post in Islamabad, to join her husband in the United Kingdom; and when a decision will be taken on her application;

(2) when Mr. Mohd Arif, who was born on 1 September 1963, will be issued with a visa by the post in Islamabad following his successful appeal against refusal to grant him permission to enter the United Kingdom;

(3) when Shamin Akhter, who was born on 12 November 1964, applied to the post in Islamabad to enter the United Kingdom; when her application was refused; when the post despatched an explanatory statement setting out the reasons her application was refused; and if he will make a statement;

(4) when Mr. Sodigar Hussain applied to the post in Islamabad to join his wife, Mrs. Zaidah Begum whose date of birth is 27 January 1967; and when a decision on his application will be taken.

Mr. Eggar *[pursuant to his reply, 9 May 1989, c. 362]:* In accordance with the recent guidelines on the handling of representations by Members of Parliament in immigration cases, issued to Members on 14 December 1988, I have referred the questions to the correspondence unit of migration and visa department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The hon. Member will receive a reply from the unit in due course.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Married Prisoners (Visits)

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether he will review the current arrangements for visits between married prisoners where both spouses are in custody serving prison sentences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The current arrangements for visits between imprisoned spouses and other close relatives are set out in "Prison Standing Order 5A 20", which is available in the Library. I see no need for a review.

Postal Voting

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will examine the procedures and forms associated with postal voting in order to make them less complex.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) on 2 March 1989, at column *274*.

Driving Offences (Ministerial Immunity)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will describe the system which grants Ministers immunity from prosecution for driving offences while on official business.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In general, road traffic law applies to vehicles and persons in the public service of the Crown as it applies to other motorists. Ministers have no immunity from prosecution for driving offences.

Football (Arrests)

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many of those arrested for football-related incidents during the 1987-88 and 1988-89 seasons were season ticket holders;

(2) how many of those arrested for football-related incidents during the 1987-88 and 1988-89 seasons were of pensioner age;

(3) how many of those arrested for football-related incidents during the 1987-88 and 1988-89 seasons were women.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This information is not recorded centrally.

Tamil Asylum Seekers

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Tamil asylum seekers have been returned to Sri Lanka after being refused asylum in the United Kingdom since February 1988; and what efforts he has made to monitor the situation of those returned from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Renton: No distinction is made in statistical records between Tamils and other Sri Lankans. Removals and deportations of failed asylum seekers are not normally recorded separately. However, it is known that 47 Sri Lankans who sought asylum at ports have been removed to Sri Lanka since 1 February 1988. Additionally, in the

same period 28 Sri Lankans have been removed as illegal entrants and seven have been deported. Most of these applied for asylum and were refused after consideration of their application. Information on passengers refused entry and removed, as illegal entrants or as deportees, is published annually in "Control of Immigration: Statistics, United Kingdom". The 1988 volume will be published in the summer.

On monitoring, I refer the hon. Member to a reply I gave to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) on 15 March, at column *232*.

Trevi Group

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if a co-ordinator representing the interests of the United Kingdom has been appointed for the Trevi group.

Mr. Renton: A senior officer of the Home Office is co-ordinating issues concerning the free movement of persons, pursuant to the decision of the Rhodes council last December, and is attending regular meetings with his Community counterparts.

Police (Allowances)

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether police officers who presently receive a rent and rates allowance are to be given a poll tax allowance following the abolition of rates.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. The recent arbitration award on police rent allowance stated specifically that payments of the community charge levied on police officers should not be reimbursed by police authorities.

Parole Board

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to improve the operation of the parole board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The parole board is an independent advisory body responsible for its own organisation. We are, however, aware that, to cope with the increased caseload, the board has increased its sittings and the number of cases considered at each one. My right hon. Friend will also be appointing extra members to the board. In addition, we are taking steps to improve the service provided to the board by the parole unit.

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average time taken by the parole board to decide upon the recommendaton of the local panel.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: For parole applications referred to the parole board, the average time between receiving the local review committee recommendation and notifying the inmate of the result is about five months.

Electronic Tagging

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether electronic surveillance devices are used by his Department or by any organisation or agency acting on its behalf; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend may wish to refer to the Home Office's guidelines on the use of surveillance in police operations issued on 19 December 1984, a copy of which was placed in the Library.

Hillsborough Disaster

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy that the additional cost of the Hillsborough disaster inquiry to any individual police force be borne by central funds.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) on 12 May, at column 569.

Hull Prison

Mr. Michael Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he is taking to implement that part of Judge Stephen Tumin's report which stated that B wing of Hull prison was no place for 15 and 16-year-old boys, or for any unconvicted prisoner under 21 years of age.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There is no feasible alternative at present to the continued use of B Wing of Hull prison to accommodate unsentenced prisoners under 21 years of age. The plan is for a new remand centre to be built at Everthorpe in 1991-92 which will relieve the situation. Meanwhile strenuous efforts are being made to improve the regime and conditions in Hull's B wing.

Mr. Michael Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if any young people from Doncaster area are currently held in Hull prison while waiting for their cases to be dealt with by the courts.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 12 May there were in Hull prison 14 unsentenced prisoners aged between 17 and 20 whose home addresses were recorded as in Doncaster.

Hunt Saboteurs

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home department (1) if he will call for a report from the Chief Constable of Buckinghamshire as to why hunt saboteurs were permitted to disrupt the activities of the Northamptonshire mink hounds at Snelson, near Olney, Buckinghamshire, on 6 May; and what action has been taken in relation to the alleged recording of the car numbers of supporters by some hunt saboteurs present for intimidatory purposes;

(2) if he will call for a report from the Chief Constable of Buckinghamshire on the policing arrangements at the meet of the Northamptonshire mink hounds at Snelson, near Olney, Buckinghamshire, on 6 May; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of the Thames Valley police that, following attempts to disrupt the start of the hunt, 15 demonstrators and one huntsman were arrested in order to prevent a breach of the peace. All were subsequently released without charge. The event itself took place without serious disruption. A number of huntsmen and demonstrators recorded each other's vehicle registration numbers before dispersing without further incident. In the circumstances, further police action was not considered appropriate.

Vagrancy

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East of 11 May, what statistics his Department collects on arrests of young people for vagrancy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Information about the total number of arrests by each police force is collected centrally but it is not broken down into specific offence categories. Information on the number of persons dealt with by the courts in respect of offences under sections 3 and 4 of the Vagrancy Act 1824 is published annually in "Criminal Statistics". The available information for 1987 appears in tables 1.1c and 1.1d of the supplementary tables volume 1.

Voluntary Sector (Funding)

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has for a review of Government funding of the voluntary sector.

Mr. Hurd: Government funding of the voluntary sector has risen steadily over the last decade and now amounts to some £2 billion. It serves a wide variety of valuable purposes in areas ranging from health care to employment and training and to the environment. The Government acknowledge the voluntary sector's important position as a third force alongside the public and private sectors of the economy and the valuable contribution which it makes.

The Government have concluded that it would be timely to examine their funding of the voluntary sector with a view to ensuring that the purposes for which grants are made are properly defined and have a beneficial purpose; and that funds are being effectively and efficiently deployed in a way which is of practical help and achieves the benefits intended.

The Government have decided, therefore, to set in hand an efficiency scrutiny of Government funding of the voluntary sector. Its terms of reference will be to examine:

(i) the full range of programmes for Government funding of the voluntary sector;
(ii) the purposes for which financial provision is made under these programmes;
(iii) the different types of funding employed;
(iv) arrangements for the identification and selection of suitable voluntary organisations for particular tasks, for the setting of objectives and the monitoring and review of performance and results;
(v) arrangements for the administration of the programmes;

and to make recommendations for achieving cost effective improvements where necessary.

The matters to which the scrutiny will have regard include:

(i) the need for improvements in the procedures for agreeing payment of grants and in the conditions under which grants are awarded, to ensure that Government funds are applied properly and without waste;
(ii) the need for standard conditions in respect of political activities, campaigning, equal opportunities and so on;
(iii) whether there is scope for standard criteria to be followed in agreeing grant applications and setting priorities;
(iv) ways of improving the setting of objectives both for particular projects and for continuing funding;
(v) the scope for improving the arrangements for evaluation and monitoring of the work carried out with Government funds by *(a)* periodic review and *(b)* regular monitoring;
(vi) the levels at which financial authority is exercised under various programmes;
(vii) methods of devising measures of performance both for continuing and short-term grants;
(viii) the information about the purposes of a particular programme made available (prior to application) to those seeking funding;
(ix) the benefits or otherwise of standard grant application procedures, taking account of the different circumstances where there is open application and where a single organisation is supported.

Such a wide-ranging scrutiny is unprecedented. It has therefore been agreed that it will be carried out by a team of officials from a number of Government Departments led by Mrs. Juliet Reisz (Home Office) under the ministerial supervision of a group of Ministers chaired by my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten). I expect to receive the scrutiny report in September.

Domestic Violence

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in each of the last 10 years, what funding his Department has provided for refuges for victims of domestic violence.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 12 May 1989]:* None, but I understand that some public funds have been provided from other sources. We understand that some funds are available from local authorities and through the Department of Environment's urban aid programme. The Department of Health provides £100,000 per year to the Women's Aid Federation, which provides information and advice to local refuges.

DEFENCE

Jet Aircraft (Anniversary)

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to commemorate the 50th anniversary on 12 July 1994 of the introduction of jet aircraft into RAF service.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I am sure that the Royal Air Force will play an appropriate part in commemorating this important event. Detailed planning will be set in hand nearer the time.

Nuclear Tests (Radiation)

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any information as to whether there were any significant differences regarding exposure to radiation as between the British and United States nuclear tests.

Mr. Sainsbury: An assessment on the basis of the evidence available to us shows that there were considerable differences in the situations pertaining to British and United States nuclear tests.

Royal Navy

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many ships of the present surface fleet are having their lives extended.

Mr. Sainsbury: A number of surface ships are currently undergoing routine maintenance and refit, but none is

having work done on it designed to extend its service life. Consideration is being given to the feasibility of extending the lives of the assault ships HMS Fearless and HMS Intrepid in parallel with other options for replacing the capability they represent.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Fair Employment Agency

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many complaints of unlawful discrimination were investigated by the Fair Employment Agency; how many such complaints were found proved; and how many employers were ordered to pay compensation as a result of those findings, for each year since 1981.

Mr. Viggers: The information requested is given in the following table:

	Complaints investigated	*Findings of unlawful discrimination*	*Number of payments*[1]
1981	42	5	—
1982	41	2	7
1983	28	5	4
1984	34	10	3
1985	46	7	2
1986	60	11	5
1987	56	4	8
1988	41	6	6
[2]1989	7	1	1
TOTAL	355	51	36

[1] Based on the date of payment, which does not necessarily fall in the year in which the finding is made.
[2] To 30 April.

Harland and Wolff

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement setting out the progress made in securing the sale of Messrs Harland and Wolff since his statement to the House on 22 March, *Official Report*, columns 1089-1100; and if, in particular, he will outline the financial contributions and loans being made available to the new owners by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 2 May 1989]:* Following the signing of the heads of agreement on 22 March, preparation for the formal completion of the sale is under way. Discussions between officials and the MEBO/Olsen team are continuing, and officials are also involved in discussions with the European Commission in seeking its approval to the terms of the sale.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made clear to the House on 22 March, under the heads of agreement the privatised company will receive repayable loan stock and grant towards rationalisation of £98·75 million and intervention aid on new merchant orders.

Police Discipline

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) in how many cases to date of complaints made under the Police (N.I.) Order 1987 the Independent Commission for Police Complaints for Northern Ireland has directed that disciplinary tribunals be set up under article 14 of the order;

(2) in how many cases to date of complaints made under the Police (N.I.) Order 1987 the Independent Commission for Police Complaints for Northern Ireland directed the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary to prefer disciplinary charges against members of the police service;

(3) in how many cases of complaints brought to date under the Police (N.I.) Order 1987 the Independent Commission for Police Complaints for Northern Ireland directed the Chief Constable to send reports to the Director of Public Prosecutions as empowered under articles of the order;

(4) in how many cases to date of complaints made under the Police (N.I.) Order 1987 the Independent Commission for Police Complaints for Northern Ireland has expressed dissatisfaction with the way in which the investigation was conducted;

(5) how many cases to date have in the public interest been referred to the Independent Commission for Police Complaints for Northern Ireland by *(a)* the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and *(b)* the Northern Ireland police authority, under section 8 of the Police (N.I.) Order 1987;

(6) how many cases to date, which have not been the subject of formal complaint, have been referred to the Independent Commission for Police Complaints for Northern Ireland under section 8 of the Police (N.I.) Order 1987;

(7) in how many instances to date the Independent Commission for Police Complaints for Northern Ireland has been asked by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland for reports relating to its functions, other than the report supplied at the end of each calendar year.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 5 May 1989]:* The answer to each of these questions is none.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in how many cases to date of complaints made under the Police (N.I.) Order 1987 the Independent Commission for Police Complaints for Northern Ireland recommended to the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary that disciplinary charges should be preferred against members of the police service.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 5 May 1989]:* Twenty.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in how many cases of complaints made to date under the Police (N.I.) Order 1987 against junior officers the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary has determined that a criminal offence was committed; and in how many of these the Chief Constable determined that charges ought to be brought.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 5 May 1989]:* It is not the function of the Chief Constable either to determine that offences have been committed or that charges should be brought. He is, however, able to determine that a criminal offence may have been committed by police officers and that the officers ought to be charged. It is then his duty to send the appropriate papers to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

The available information does not indicate in how many cases he has referred papers to the director since the 1987 order came into force.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in how many cases to date of complaints made under the Police (N.I.) Order 1987 the Independent Commission for Police Complaints for Northern Ireland has disapproved of the person appointed to carry out the investigation.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 5 May 1989]:* Two.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in how many cases to date of complaints made under the Police (N.I.) Order 1987 the Independent Commission for Police Complaints for Northern Ireland has decided, in the public interest, to supervise the investigation where not required to do so under articles 9(I) and 8(I) of the order.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 5 May 1989]:* Ninety-nine.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in how many cases of complaints involving serious injury made to date, under the Police (N.I.) Order 1987, the Independent Commission for Police Complaints for Northern Ireland has supervised the investigation.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 5 May 1989]:* Seventy-four.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many complaints made to date under the Police (N.I.) Order 1987 have been investigated by the Independent Commission for Police Complaints for Northern Ireland under section 9 of the order.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 5 May 1989]:* Article 9 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Order 1987 deals with the supervisory powers of the Independent Commission for Police Complaints. To date 173 cases have been supervised under the provisions of article 9.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many complaints have been made to date under the Police (N.I.) Order 1987 against officers below the rank of superintendent; and how many of these have been investigated *(a)* informally and *(b)* formally;

(2) how many complaints have been made to date under the Police (N.I.) Order 1987 against officers of the rank of superintendent and above; and how many of these have been investigated *(a)* informally and *(b)* formally.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 5 May 1989]:* Information is not available in the form requested. However, since the commencement of the Police (NI) Order 1987 on 29 February 1988 there were 2,809 complaints against police officers below the rank of assistant chief constable. Of these, 752 have been withdrawn; 128 informally resolved and 1,929 have been or are at present being formally investigated.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many complaints made to date under the Police (N.I.) Order 1987 have been investigated formally by *(a)* members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary appointed to do so and *(b)* members of our United Kingdom police forces.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 5 May 1989]:* I understand that 1,929 complaints have been or are at present being formally investigated by members of the RUC. No complaints have been investigated by members of other United Kingdom police forces.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cases of complaints made to date under the Police (N.I.) Order 1987 have been deemed suitable for informal resolution by the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 5 May 1989]:* I understand that 128 complaints have been found suitable for informal resolution since February 1988.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many complaints made to date under the Police (N.I.) Order 1987 have been referred by the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary to the Independent Commission for Police Complaints for Northern Ireland for investigation.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 5 May 1989]:* The investigation of complaints is a police responsibility. The Independent Commission for Police Complaints has wide supervisory powers in relation to complaints. To date 2,446 complaints have been referred by the Chief Constable to the commission.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many complaints made to date under the Police (N.I.) Order 1987, have been adjudicated upon by the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 5 May 1989]:* The Chief Constable has not himself chaired any disciplinary hearings arising from complaints made under the order.

Elections

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps have been or will be taken to ascertain the number of persons refused a ballot paper at *(a)* the local government elections in Northern Ireland on 17 May and *(b)* EEC election in June, on the grounds that they were not able to produce one of the documents set out as necessary for the proof of identity.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 15 May 1989]:* None. I have no evidence to suggest that such steps are necessary. All electors should possess or can readily obtain free of charge at least one of the range of specified documents which are listed on the back of the poll card, and I am satisfied that the system is now well understood.

ENERGY

Energy Sources

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what steps he is taking to encourage the greater use of environment-friendly sources of energy.

Mr. Michael Spicer: All sources of energy have enrivonmental consequences, but the non-fossil obligation in the Electricity Bill will guarantee a level of diversity for electricity generation. In addition, my Department is giving specific encouragement through its support for research and development on renewable forms of energy and clean, more efficient, coal technologies.

In recognition of the potential of renewables, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State recently announced that the Government had decided to add a number of extra tranches to the non-fossil fuel obligation. These will be reserved exclusively for renewable projects. This will help realise the environmental benefits which renewables offer.

Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas), *Official Report*, 3 May, column *151*, what reply, and on what date, he made to the letter from the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The letter is currently receiving attention and a reply will be sent as soon as possible.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the current research projects into renewable sources of energy which are sponsored by his Department, with their estimated costs.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) on 19 December 1988, at columns *30-35*. An update of this list, together with the estimated costs of the projects, will today be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

HEALTH

Acute Beds

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list for each year since 1979 *(a)* the number of acute beds available and *(b)* the number of non-acute beds available in each district health authority, SHA and regional health authority; and if he will give the national total for each year.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested has been placed in the Library and I have written to the hon. Member with a copy of such information. These figures amend those for 1987-88 provided to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 22 December, in the light of changes since reported by health authorities.

Abortions

Mr. Ken Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many prostoglandin abortions were performed in England and Wales in 1987 *(a)* with and *(b)* without the use of other agents.

Mr. Freeman: The data are as follows.

Number of Prostoglandin Abortions performed in England and Wales in 1987.

a. Prostoglandins with other agents, 5,431.

b. Prostoglandins (only), 3,701.

John Leeman

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health why John Leeman was discharged from Broadmoor in *(a)* 1974 and *(b)* 1981; what previous offences had been committed by John Leeman prior to being imprisoned in 1975; and what recommendations were made prior to the discharge of John Leeman from Broadmoor in 1981.

Mr. Freeman: Mr. Leeman was conditionally discharged from Broadmoor hospital in 1974 on the recommendation of his responsible medical officer and a mental health review tribunal. Discharge was authorised by the Home Secretary.

Mr. Leeman was not discharged from Broadmoor in 1981. A Home Office direction terminating the restrictions on his discharge under the Mental Health Act 1959 took effect when he was in Parkhurst prison.

The record of an individual's criminal convictions is considered to be confidential, and is not disclosed except where there are overriding reasons for departure from the normal rules of confidentiality.

Health Care (Expenditure)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the review of the Health Service considered the reasons for the cost of health care in the United Kingdom compared with other industrial countries; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the percentage of gross domestic product to one place of decimals spent on *(a)* public and *(b)* private health care in other industrial countries together with an estimate of the extent to which the relative cost in the United Kingdom is due to (i) the standard of health (ii) the number of elderly persons, (iii) the level of remuneration of employees and (iv) the level of public provisions.

Mr. Mellor: The Government's review of the NHS took into account a wide range of information about the costs of health care provision in this country and overseas.

The OECD's latest estimates of public and private expenditure on health as percentages of GDP in 12 leading industrial countries are shown in the table.

Differences in health expenditures between countries both in absolute and in relative terms are influenced by a wide range of economic, social and cultural factors the individual components and impacts of which are the subject of continuing research both here and abroad.

However, the raw percentages reported by the OECD will reflect the effects of factors such as the type of health funding systems adopted by individual countries; the mix of items comprising expenditure on health care and differences in relative prices.

It is not possible without disproportionate cost to summarise here the results of relevant international research into this subject.

Public and private expenditure on health as a percentage of GDP, 1986

	Public	*Private*
Australia	5·3	2·1
Belgium	5·5	1·6
Canada	6·5	1·9
Denmark	5·2	1·0
France	6·7	1·8
Germany	6·3	1·8
Italy	5·2	1·5
Netherlands	6·6	1·8
Spain	4·3	1·7
Switzerland	5·4	2·6
United Kingdom	5·3	0·9
United States	4·5	6·6

Hospitals (Running Costs)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the Government will take into account the

higher cost of running hospitals in buildings such as hutted camps and Victorian workhouses when the new arrangements for the hospital services are introduced.

Mr. Freeman: The introduction of a system for charging for capital announced in the White Paper "Working for Patients" will enable health authorities to appraise capital investment options more effectively. Comparison of the running costs of hospitals of different ages, types and functional conditions is complicated by a number of factors including the tendency for new hospitals to be used more intensively than those they replace. The Department is sponsoring research in this area to see to what extent overall running costs are related to the physical characteristics of the hospital stock. If successful this research would add further to the quality of investment appraisal in the National Health Service.

Pensioners

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list by region the population of females over 60 years and males over 65 years.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is as follows.

Mid 1987 estimates of resident population (thousands)

	Males aged 65 and over	*Females aged 60 and over*	*Total persons over retirement age*
England	2,949·0	5,750·8	8,699·8
North	186·7	374·0	560·7
Yorkshire and Humberside	302·1	596·2	898·4
East Midlands	243·9	454·4	698·3
East Anglia	138·2	247·8	385·9
South East	1,063·1	2,075·6	3,138·7
South West	333·3	632·7	966·0
West Midlands	306·5	591·1	897·6
North West	375·2	778·9	1,154·1
Wales	183·8	365·2	548·9
Scotland	286·7	606·9	893·6
Northern Ireland	74·9	152·7	227·6

Population estimates relating to mid-1988 are currently being prepared and will become available shortly.

Electorates

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the shire counties, London boroughs and metropolitan boroughs in England in ranking order according to the degree by which their electorates vary from the nationally averaged electorate appropriate to the numbers of parliamentary constituencies within them.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is as follows:

Name	*Number of constituencies*	*Average number of electors per constituency on 1989 register*	*Amount by which average constituency size differs from 1989 electoral quota*[1]
ENGLAND	523	[1]69,533	
Shire counties			
Isle of Wight	1	101,859	46·5
Wiltshire	5	85,552	23·0
Gloucestershire	5	82,135	18·1
Cambridgeshire	6	81,326	17·0
West Sussex	7	80,014	15·1
Suffolk	6	79,811	14·8
Hampshire	15	79,399	14·2
Berkshire	7	79,170	13·9
North Yorkshire	7	79,146	13·8
Buckinghamshire	6	78,642	13·1
Bedfordshire	5	77,815	11·9
Shropshire	4	77,545	11·5
Warwickshire	5	75,741	8·9
Lincolnshire	6	75,678	8·8
Hertfordshire	10	75,368	8·4
Leicestershire	9	74,831	7·6
Hereford and Worcester	7	74,548	7·2
Humberside	9	73,905	6·3
Cheshire	10	73,848	6·2
Essex	16	73,792	6·1
Dorset	8	73,743	6·1
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	5	73,296	5·4
Staffordshire	11	73,037	5·0
Norfolk	8	73,005	5·0
Northamptonshire	6	72,639	4·5
Avon	10	72,637	4·5
Somerset	5	72,530	4·3
Derbyshire	10	72,426	4·2
Surrey	11	72,400	4·1
Kent	16	71,976	3·5
Devon	11	71,243	2·5
Nottinghamshire	11	71,115	2·3
Oxfordshire	6	70,290	1·1
Cleveland	6	69,881	0·5
East Sussex	8	69,787	0·4
Durham	6	66,858	−3·8

Name	Number of constituencies	Average number of electors per constituency on 1989 register	Amount by which average constituency size differs from 1989 electoral quota[1]
Lancashire	16	66,748	−4·0
Cumbria	6	63,944	−8·0
Northumberland	4	59,039	−15·1
London boroughs			
Haringey	2	76,780	10·4
Hounslow	2	75,631	8·8
Harrow	2	74,720	7·5
Hackney	2	69,024	−0·7
Ealing	3	68,938	−0·9
Enfield	3	67,349	−3·1
Wandsworth	3	65,101	−6·4
Camden	2	65,028	−6·5
Merton	2	63,981	−8·0
Sutton	2	63,080	−9·3
Havering	3	61,277	−11·9
Brent	3	60,648	−12·8
Croydon	4	60,205	−13·4
Lambeth	3	59,995	−13·7
Hillingdon	3	59,824	−14·0
Lewisham	3	59,716	−14·1
Redbridge	3	59,654	−14·2
Bromley	4	58,511	−15·9
Richmond upon Thames	2	57,182	−17·8
Southwark	3	57,155	−17·8
Tower Hamlets	2	56,872	−18·2
Bexley	3	56,746	−18·4
Barking and Dagenham	2	56,303	−19·0
Barnet	4	55,450	−20·3
Cities of London and Westminster	2	55,434	−20·3
Islington	2	55,430	−20·3
Waltham Forest	3	53,972	−22·4
Greenwich	3	53,290	−23·4
Newham	3	53,258	−23·4
Hammersmith and Fulham	2	49,653	−28·6
Kingston upon Thames	2	48,696	−30·0
Kensington and Chelsea	2	44,387	−36·2
Metropolitan counties			
Tyne and Wear	13	68,385	−1·7
South Yorkshire	15	67,234	−3·3
West Yorkshire	23	67,194	−3·3
Greater Manchester	30	64,425	−7·3
West Midlands	31	64,070	−7·9
Merseyside	17	59,361	−14·6

[1] A number of parliamentary constituencies straddle metropolitan borough boundaries, and information is therefore provided in respect of metropolitan counties.

Radiation

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice he has received regarding the genetic effects of radiation exposure.

Mr. Freeman: The National Radiological Protection Board is under a statutory obligation to provide advice to Government and others on the effects of radiation. The board's advice on genetic effects of radiation exposure is contained in NRPB publication R226, "Health Effects Models Developed from the 1988 UNSCEAR Report", a copy of which will be placed in the Library shortly. I am advised that there is some evidence that radiation causes genetic defects in animals; however, epidemiological studies of groups of people exposed to large doses of radiation have produced no conclusive evidence of any genetic damage that has been passed on to their children.

Gynaecologists

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance has been issued by his Department to candidates for consultancy posts in gynaecology concerning their rights under the conscience clause of the Abortion Act 1967.

Mr. Mellor: The Department has not issued any guidance to candidates for consultant posts in gynaecology, not all of which involve duties relating to the termination of pregnancy. Under a long-standing agreement with the medical profession no reference to termination duties should be included in the advertisement of hospital posts, but it should be included in the job description made available to all applicants.

Hospital Trusts

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether there are any plans for hospitals in the Yorkshire regional health authority to consult *(a)* medical staff, *(b)* non-medical staff and *(c)* members of the general public in the hospital catchment area before putting themselves forward as possible self-governing hospitals.

Mr. Mellor: Only expressions of interest in self-governing status are being requested at this stage. When applications are invited, RHAs will seek the views of those with an interest in an application, particularly the health authorities concerned, staff, general practitioners, CBCs and the local community.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will require hospitals which seek to become self-governing to undertake ballots of all medical and non-medical staff to determine the level of support for such proposals; and whether he will meet the cost of any such ballots.

Mr. Mellor: No.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what evidence of consultation with medical and non-medical staff he will require in support of applications by hospitals to become self-governing;

(2) what evidence of consultation with patients he will require in support of applications by hospitals to become self-governing.

Mr. Mellor: RHAs will give publicity to applications and will seek the views of those with an interest which will be submitted to me to consider alongside the application.

NHS Review

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what he estimates will be the annual capital charge for a body scanner with an initial purchase price of £500,000 under the proposals in his White Paper, "Working for Patients."

Mr. Mellor: We are still considering the detailed basis of valuation of assets for capital charging purposes so no estimate is yet possible. The NHS review working paper Number 5 on capital charges describes in further detail how the proposals will be implemented.

Pontefract Hospital

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will investigate the complaints made by families of patients who have attended the hospital alleging a fall in standards of the elderly care unit in the Pontefract hospital; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many written complaints have been made to authorities about changes in standards at the elderly care unit in Pontefract hospital; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he has received any representation about changes in the standards of the support services in the elderly care unit of Pontefract hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The DHA follows up all complaints (figures in the table show complaints and letters of appreciation). An unusually high figure for January to March this year led to individual discussions with complainants and the CHC secretary. As a result of this local managers have taken action to remedy immediate problems (for example over linen supply) and to improve staff training and counselling. I am sure the DHA will ensure that the appreciation of the services in this unit is matched by high quality care.

	Total elderly complaints	*Category of elderly complaints*				*Letters of Appreciation*
		Clinical	*Nursing*	*Support services*	*Other*	
1989[1]	12	—	7	2	3	[2]162
1988	6	1	4	1	—	557
1987	8	2	5	3	—	519
1986	6	4	1	4	—	159
1985	10	2	6	5	—	[3]—

[1] January to March.
[2] First quarter.
[3] Not collected.

Remanded Juveniles

Mr. Michael Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he is giving any consideration to funding secure accommodation for remanded juveniles from Doncaster and neighbouring areas awaiting a court appearance who, because of their behaviour, are unsuitable for living in normal open local authority children's homes.

Mr. Mellor: I have approved a grant in principle, to enable Humberside county council to provide a new 10 place secure unit. This will provide accommodation for remands, and other children, who need this specialised form of care from local authorities in the Yorkshire and Humberside region generally, including Doncaster. I understand tenders have already been sought for the project.

Westminster and Chelsea Teaching Hospital

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) why no provision is made in table 4 of the Supply Estimates for class XIV, vote 1, for the costs of constructing the new Westminster and Chelsea teaching hospital;

(2) what resources have been allocated in the next three financial years for construction of the new Westminster and Chelsea teaching hospital.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 25 April 1989]:* Provision for estimated expenditure on the Westminster and Chelsea hospital is contained within the total sum analysed in table 4. As a result of an administrative error the scheme is not, however, separately identified. I apologise for the omission. The information requested, set out in the form in which it would otherwise have appeared in the Supply Estimate, is given in the table.

Westminster and Chelsea hospital

Timetable	
Year of start	1989-90
Estimated year of completion:	
Original	1992-93

Timetable	
Current	1992-93
Estimated total cost:	
Original	£116,070
Current	£116,070
Probable spend to 31 March 1989	£9,832
Estimates provision 1989-90	£22,246
Estimated spend after 31 March 1989	£83,992

Spectacles and Dental Treatment

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will now make a statement on the arrangements which have been made to reimburse those people who may have been required to pay too much for spectacles or dental treatment as a result of incorrect instructions having been issued to the staff in the agency benefits unit.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 2 May 1989]:* Starting in the week beginning 15 May, the agency benefits unit of the Department of Social Security will reassess claims from those who, between 11 April and 4 November 1988, were assessed as having to make a contribution towards relevant costs and had non-dependents living with them.

Where the reassessment shows entitlement to more help, the unit will send claimants a special claim form which will ask for details of charges paid and other relevant costs incurred. Where people paid too much it will be refunded.

A special arrangement for optical vouchers is necessary to avoid disproportionate administrative costs. Those who obtained glasses will be paid the difference between the mistakenly assessed contribution and the correct one. This will mean that everyone will get at least their proper entitlement or—generally in the case of the cheaper lens prescriptions—more than that.

Child Minders

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Nurseries and Childminders Act 1948 for all child minders to be officially registered.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 12 May 1989]:* Local authority social services departments are responsible for enforcing the registration requirements in the Nurseries and Childminders Regulation Act 1948 (as amended) and they have power to prosecute offenders.

The Government have undertaken to update the 1948 Act by introducing amendments to the Children Bill at present being considered by a Standing Committee of the House.

Publicity

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will place in the Library details of each major publicity campaign mounted by his Department in 1985-86 and each successive year, including in each case the objectives of the campaign, the intended audience and the outcome of the monitoring of the achievement of the intended objectives, and national research conducted for him by the Central Office of Information together with a note of the intended objectives in the campaigns in 1989-90.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 2 May 1989]:* The following is a list of major publicity campaigns mounted by my Department where expenditure has exceeded £0·5 million in any financial year over the period 1985-86 to 1988-89:

Campaign	*Objectives*	*Audience*
Aids	To provide information on the means of transmission of and prevent the spread of HIV infection	The general public
Drug misuse	To provide information on the risks of and reduce the incidence of drug misuse	The general public
Nurse recruitment	To improve recruitment and retention of trainee and qualified nurses to meet the future needs of the NHS	Potential recruits and former NHS employees

Information on the outcome of monitoring and the achievement of objectives is not available in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Research conducted by the Central Office of Information on major campaigns over the financial years 1985-86 to 1988-89 is as follows:

Subject and Title	*Date*	*Cost*
AIDS		
Creative pre testing	August 1985	49,525
Survey RS 85/86	October 1985	543
Campaign evaluation	January 1986	126,351
Communication ball test	March 1986	26,657
Moralists/trialists	March 1986	2,990
Omnibus check	March 1986	7,059
Youth campaign development	August 1986	21,390
Leaflet research	August 1986	23,920
Youth tracking study 86	August 1986	57,328
Leaflet post evaluation	September 1986	64,055
Adults qualitative	November 1986	18,504
New campaign-dipstick	November 1986	69,089
Attitudes to condoms quality research	February 1987	31,050
Ethnic attitudes	February 1987	8,740
Antibody test leaflet	February 1987	13,513
Media coverage	March 1987	33,976
AIDS/anti drugs research	March 1987	37,088
Sexual behaviour/holiday abroad	March 1987	14,433
Attitudes of West Indians	April 1987	80,500
AIDS/Drugs D/Head creative concepts summary	May 1987	27,370
AIDS/Drugs 87/88 quality evaluation	September 1987	55,050
Drugs		
Anti-heroin finished ads.	April 1985	14,331
Qualitative heroin dipstick	November 1985	32,318
Heroin 86-87 creative development	February 1986	19,435
Heroin evaluation STG III	February 1986	30,544
Anti heroin double head communication CH	April 1986	20,183
Heroin evaluation STG IV	June 1986	37,548
87 campaign target met research	November 1986	31,223
Heroin evaluation STG V	January 1987	35,420
Campaign evaluation	August 1987	37,914
Anti injection 88	May 1988	40,940
Creative development STG 88/89	September 1988	28,520
Creative developement STG III	November 1988	17,342

Subject and Title	Date	Cost
Camp evaluation; stage VII	December 1988	44,647
Camp 88/89 qualitative	December 1988	42,182
Nursing		
Recruitment qualitative camp June 1985	25,588	
Recruitment check	June 1986	16,129
Recruitment strategic research	June 1987	26,847
Recruitment communication check 88	May 1988	24,895
Recruitment campaign evaluation 88	July 1988	28,750
Recruitment tracking 88	August 1988	36,855
Recruitment phone response	September 1988	7,388
Recruitment addline analysis	October 1988	5,353
Back to nursing research	February 1989	27,198
Youth concept research	March 1989	14,634
Male nurse recruitment	March 1989	22,954

The campaigns for 1989-90 have still to be finalised but are likely to include drug misuse and nurse recruitment.

NATIONAL FINANCE

EC (Contributions)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the net contribution made by the United Kingdom to the EEC in each year of membership, adjusted to take into account rebates and refund.

Mr. Brooke: The information requested is set out in the table:

£ millions

Year	Net contribution before refunds and VAT abatements	Negotiated refunds	VAT abatements	Net contribution after refunds and abatements
1973	102	—	—	102
1974	29	—	—	29
1975	−56	—	—	−56
1976	167	—	—	167
1977	369	—	—	369
1978	822	—	—	822
1979	947	—	—	947
1980	804	98	—	706
1981	1,090	693	—	397
1982	1,625	1,019	—	606
1983	1,454	807	—	647
1984	1,184	528	—	656
1985	2,035	61	166	1,808
1986	2,273	—	1,701	572
1987	2,866	—	1,153	1,713
1988	2,956	—	1,594	1,362

EMPLOYMENT

Wages Councils

7. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many representations he has received in favour of the retention of wages councils.

Mr. Nicholls: We have received about 360 representations in favour of retaining wages councils, including those referred to by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State in his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) on 21 March, at columns *555-56*.

68. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received on the Government's proposed abolition of the wages councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: I refer the hon. Member to the replies given by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent on 21 March, *Official Report*, columns *555-56*, and to the hon. Member for Oldham, West on 23 March, *Official Report*, columns *798-802*. Since those replies about 50 further representations have been received.

31. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received from British managers in respect of his plans to abolish wages councils.

Mr. Nicholls: It is not this Department's practice to reveal the content of representations made by either individuals or organisations. I would refer the hon. Member to the replies given by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid Kent (Mr. Rowe) on 21 March, *Official Report*, columns *555-56* and to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on 23 March, *Official Report*, columns *798-802*.

21. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what protection will be offered to the low-paid after the abolition of the wages councils.

Mr. Nicholls: The future of the wages councils has yet to be decided. However, the best protection for any worker is the removal of mechanisms and practices which may threaten his continued employment or prevent his initial recruitment.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

15. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the progress of the enterprise allowance scheme.

Mr. Cope: 430,000 people have started their own business under the enterprise allowance scheme since it began in 1982. Some 87,000 people are currently in receipt of the allowance.

Self-employment

17. **Mr. Ashby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the number of people currently self-employed in the east midlands.

Mr. Cope: In December 1988 there were 205,000 self-employed people in the east midlands, an increase of 27,000 over the previous two years.

43. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the number of people currently self-employed in the south-west.

Mr. Lee: In December 1988, the latest date for which figures are available, there were an estimated 302,000 self-employed in the south-west region. This represents an increase of 35,000 or 13 per cent. since December 1986.

39. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were self-employed in *(a)* March 1983 and *(b)* March 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Estimates for March 1989 are not yet available. In March 1983 there were 2,147,000 self-employed in Great Britain. In December 1988, the latest date for which figures are available, the number was 2,988,000. This represents an increase of 841,000 or 39 per cent. since March 1983.

Company Law

18. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his Department's policy towards implementation of the European Economic Community fifth directive on company law; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: We shall continue to oppose vigorously the proposals for compulsory worker participation in this draft directive. They are unnecessary and would seriously damage the excellent voluntary arrangements which exist in many United Kingdom companies.

Labour Statistics

16. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current rate of fall in unemployment in East Anglia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: In the standard region of East Anglia, defined as Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire, unemployment fell by 19,100, or 34·3 per cent., over the 12 months to March 1989 on the consistent seasonally adjusted basis. It is now at its lowest level for well over eight years; and the unemployment rate at 3·5 per cent. is less than half of what it was three years ago.

19. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the recent rate of fall in unemployment in the east midlands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: In the 12 months to March 1989 unemployment in the east midlands fell by 35,500 on the consistent seasonally adjusted basis. At 118,200 unemployment in the region is now at its lowest level for eight years.

20. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current rate of fall in unemployment in the west midlands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: In the 12 months to March 1989, unemployment in the west midlands fell by 67,800, or 27·2 per cent., on the consistent seasonally adjusted basis and is now at its lowest level for well over eight years. The unemployment rate in the west midlands is now down to 6·7 per cent. and has been falling faster than in any other region of the country.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current level of employment in the European Economic Community nations and in European Free Trade Association nations; and what were the comparable figures five and 10 years ago.

Mr. Cope: The latest published information available for all countries is for 1987. The figures are as follows:

Total civilian employment

(Thousands)

	1977	*1982*	*1987*
EC countries			
United Kingdom	24,538	23,584	25,060
Belgium	3,665	3,578	3,621
Denmark	2,414	2,476	2,663
Germany	25,014	25,177	25,440
Greece	3,262	3,501	3,597
Spain	12,253	11,043	11,383
France	21,188	21,240	20,976
Ireland	1,068	1,131	1,067
Italy	19,791	20,297	20,584
Luxembourg	157	158	169
Netherlands	4,701	5,009	5,251
Portugal	3,784	3,959	4,169
EFTA countries			
Norway	1,824	1,943	2,090
Sweden	4,099	4,219	4,337
Finland	2,221	2,367	2,414
Iceland	98	112	[1]117
Austria	3,222	3,229	3,297
Switzerland	3,036	3,190	3,273

[1] Figure is for 1986.

Sources:
United Kingdom—Department of Employment.
Other EC countries—EC Statistical Office.
EFTA countries—OECD.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table from the 1988 labour force survey, for each Great Britain region and Greater London, by male-female, and claimant status, showing the numbers of people without work who had looked for a job in the four week reference period, and were available to start work within two weeks.

Mr. Lee: The available information for 1988 is given in table A. A reliable analysis of the regional figures by claimant status cannot be provided for individual years, but averages for the four years 1985 to 1988 are given in table B.

Table A

People looking for a job in the four week reference period[1] who were available to start work within two weeks (ILO/OECD unemployed). Great Britain, Spring 1988 (preliminary results)

Thousand

	Male	*Female*	*Total*
South East	293	240	533
Greater London	160	112	272
Rest of South East	133	128	261
East Anglia	28	30	58
South West	74	67	141
West Midlands	133	97	230
East Midlands	89	64	153
Yorkshire and Humberside	160	99	259
North West	222	138	360
North	126	72	198
Wales	91	54	145
Scotland	183	114	297
Great Britain of which:	1,398	976	2,374
claimants	1,160	460	1,620
non-claimants	238	516	754

[1] Including some waiting to start a new job already obtained, as in the ILO/OECD measure of unemployment.

Table B. ILO/OECD unemployed by claimant status: Averages for four years: spring 1985 to spring 1988[1]

Thousand

	ILO/OECD unemployed			*of which: Claimants*			*Non-claimants*		
	Male	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*
South East	380	283	663	296	126	422	83	157	241
(Greater London)	193	123	315	153	57	210	40	66	105
Rest of South East	187	160	347	143	69	212	44	91	135
East Anglia	40	38	78	34	19	52	7	19	26
South West	95	81	176	77	38	115	18	43	61
West Midlands	188	120	309	168	59	227	20	61	81
East Midlands	109	80	188	95	38	132	14	42	56

	ILO/OECD unemployed			of which: Claimants			Non-claimants		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Yorkshire and Humberside	174	108	282	155	55	210	19	53	71
North West	246	155	401	215	82	297	31	73	105
North	133	73	206	121	39	159	13	34	47
Wales	102	63	165	91	31	122	11	31	42
Scotland	206	124	330	184	67	251	22	57	79
Great Britain	1,672	1,125	2,797	1,436	533	1,989	237	572	809

[1] Including preliminary results for 1988.

Note:

The figures from the labour force survey are subject to sampling errors. In some cases figures may not appear to add because of rounding.

100. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are now employed in service industries in South Yorkshire, expressed as a percentage of the workforce; and what is the comparable figure for the south-east.

Mr. Lee: The available information about employment in the county, taken from the census of employment, is for employees in employment and the latest available figures are for September 1984. At that time, 58 per cent. of all employees in employment in South Yorkshire were employed in service industries; the comparable September 1984 figure for the South East region was 73 per cent.

More up-to-date employee estimates for counties, from the September 1987 census of employment, will become available later this year.

90. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a further statement on the level of employment in the northern region.

Mr. Lee: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave on 18 April 1989. *Official Report*, column *153*.

84. **Mr. Dover:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a further statement on the level of employment in the north-west.

Mr. Lee: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) on 18 April 1989, *Official Report*, column *154*.

75. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a further statement on the level of employment in the west midlands.

Mr. Lee: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) on 18 April 1989. *Official Report*, column *152*.

69. **Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the number of people currently in employment.

Mr. Lee: In December 1988 the work force in employment in Great Britain stood at 25,961,000, the highest level on record. This represents an increase of 2,964,000 or 13 per cent. since March 1983. This rising trend has now continued for more than five years. The figures have been adjusted for the effects of seasonal variations. The work force in employment is the sum of employees in employment, the self-employed, Her Majesty's forces and participants in work-related Government training programmes.

55. **Mr. Aitken:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the changes in levels of unemployment on the last 12 months.

Mr. Lee: In the 12 months to March 1989 the level of unemployment, seasonally adjusted, in the United Kingdom fell by 535,800, on a consistent basis. Unemployment has now fallen over 32 consecutive months by 1,215,100 since July 1986.

51. **Mr. Irvine:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the number of people currently self-employed in East Anglia.

Mr. Lee: In December 1988, the latest date for which figures are available, there were an estimated 138,000 self-employed in East Anglia. This represents an increase of 22,000 or 19 per cent. since December 1986.

48. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the recent rate of fall in unemployment in the south-east; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: In the 12 months to March 1989, the level of unemployment, seasonally adjusted, in the south-east fell by 159,500, on a consistent basis. At 387,500, unemployment in the south-east is now at its lowest level for more than eight years.

44. **Mr. Lord:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a further statement on the level of employment in East Anglia.

Mr. Lee: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friends the Members for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) and for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) on 18 April 1989, *Official Report*, column *153*.

45. **Mr. Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a further statement on the level of employment in the east midlands.

Mr. Lee: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) on 18 April 1989, *Official Report*, column *152*.

42. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a further statement on the level of employment in Yorkshire and Humberside.

Mr. Lee: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) on 18 April 1989, *Official Report*, column *151*.

36. **Mr. Malins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on current levels of unemployment.

Mr. Lee: In March 1989 the level of unemployment, seasonally adjusted, in the United Kingdom was 1,918,100, the lowest for more than eight years on a consistent basis.

Enterprise Training

22. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are currently obtaining skills on enterprise training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: Over the last financial year about 53,000 people have taken up this type of training. This represents an increase of 9,000 on the previous year's total.

North Derbyshire (Coalfield Communities)

23. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has plans to increase the numbers in employment in the coalfield communities of north Derbyshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: My Department operates a wide range of employment, enterprise and training measures, which are all available in north Derbyshire as elsewhere, and which are helping to increase the numbers in employment.

During the 12 months to March 1989 unemployment in Derbyshire fell by 10,183, 24·2 per cent. of the March 1988 figure.

Remedial Education

24. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if the Government training initiatives aimed at the long-term unemployed includes provision for remedial education where required.

Mr. Nicholls: An important aspect of employment training is to improve trainees' awareness of the work environment and enhance their motivation and confidence. Provision for vocational literacy and numeracy training is included in employment training where unemployed people need such help to benefit fully from occupational training. Where appropriate, training is also offered in English as a second language. The aim is to integrate training in these skills with occupational training wherever possible.

Construction Industry Training Board

25. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make a statement on the future of the construction industry training board.

Mr. Nicholls: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him on 14 February 1989. Consultations with the board and organisations representing employers in the construction industry are continuing.

Low Pay

26. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy on the eradication of low pay.

Mr. Nicholls: Low pay is a relative concept. No matter how much living standards rise, some workers will always be paid less than others. The best way to help the lower paid is through the development of a prosperous and growing economy, which the Government's policies are helping to achieve.

52. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about the incidence of low pay in Yorkshire and Humberside.

Mr. Nicholls: Pay in Yorkshire and Humberside, as elsewhere, is a matter for employers and employees or their representatives to determine.

Secondary Picketing

27. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to seek to alter the present legislation on secondary picketing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: As indicated in the Green Paper, "Removing Barriers to Employment", which was published on 20 March 1989, the Government propose no change to the law on picketing.

Training and Enterprise Councils

28. **Mr. Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to meet representatives of the chambers of commerce to discuss the establishment of training and enterprise councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: Over the past few months, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I have had frequent contacts with individual chambers and with the Association of British Chambers of Commerce to discuss the establishment of TECs.

Chambers of commerce have been very active in improving employer commitment to training and are playing a key role in the establishment of TECs. We look to their continued support and involvement.

61. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last met employers to discuss training and enterprise councils in East Anglia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: We have been encouraged by the excellent response from employers throughout the country and in East Anglia to our invitation to form training and enterprise councils. A number of employers from the area attended a dinner on training and enterprise councils in late February given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

We understand that a number of groups of employers are interested in establishing training and enterprise councils in East Anglia and we look forward to receiving their proposals.

Tourism and Catering

29. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the development of tourism in Northumbria.

Mr. Lee: Northumbria already attracts more than 4 million visitors each year. With its combination of beautiful countryside, historic towns, and a wealth of natural and heritage attractions, the region offers considerable potential for further expansion of its tourism industry. The Gateshead garden festival in 1990 will help provide an additional stimulus to the development of the region.

98. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last met with local tourist authorities to discuss promoting and developing tourism in the north-west of England.

Mr. Lee: I am in virtually weekly contact with north-west tourist authorities to discuss promoting and developing tourism in that region.

37. **Mr. Bevan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are employed in the tourism and catering industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: It is estimated that, in December 1988, there were 1·4 million employees in employment in tourism-related industries in Great Britain. This figure includes only those catering activities related to tourism. There are no directly comparable estimates for the number of self-employed, but according to the preliminary results of the 1988 labour force survey, it is estimated that there were 0·2 million self-employed workers in the hotel and catering industry in the spring of 1988.

European Community Social Fund

30. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will take steps to secure European social fund grants for projects in the Borders.

Mr. Cope: Applications for finance from the European social fund for the Borders were forwarded to the European Commission in the normal way and with full support from my Department. The decision on which projects are funded rests with the Commission.

40. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what efforts are being made to secure European social fund grants for projects in Cornwall.

Mr. Cope: Applications for finance from the European social fund for Cornwall were forwarded to the European Commission in the normal way and with full support from my Department. The decision on which projects are funded rests with the Commission.

Employment Training

32. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the operations of the employment training scheme in south Yorkshire.

Mr. Nicholls: Employment training in south Yorkshire continues to make excellent progress providing unemployed people with a wide range of training opportunities to help them acquire the skills and experience needed to get jobs.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether all new recruits to employment training during 1989-90 will continue to receive training premiums of £11·95, £11·25 and £10, depending on their circumstances; whether he has any plans to increase each of these training premiums in line with inflation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: As was announced on 12 April 1989, from 22 May all new entrants to employment training will be paid a training premium of £10 per week. All trainees receiving a premium of £11·25 or £11·95 at 22 May will continue to do so until they leave the programme.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the profiles of the number of expected starts with training managers, excluding conversion from other programmes, on employment training for each month since September 1988, for each training agency area.

Mr. Nicholls: Profiles of the number of expected starts with training managers are for internal management purposes only.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what level of European social fund funding he is seeking for employment training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: The United Kingdom has submitted a number of applications for European social fund aid in respect of anticipated expenditure under the employment training programme which are being considered by the European Commission in the light of the total demands being made by the United Kingdom and other member states. The Commission has indicated that European social fund aid is to be allocated for the employment training programme but the amounts are not yet known. A decision will be given shortly.

Wages Inspectors

33. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many wages inspectors there are in the north-west region; and how many there were in 1979 and 1987.

Mr. Nicholls: There are currently 12 inspectors in post in the north west division of the wages inspectorate. There were 21 inspectors in the division in 1979 and 11 in 1987.

56. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many wages inspectors there are nationally; and how many there were in 1979.

Mr. Nicholls: Currently there are 66 wages inspectors in post nationally. Arrangements are in hand to bring the number of inspectors up to the full complement of 71. In 1979, there were 158 inspectors.

Employees (Contracts)

34. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, how many employees have contracts which exclude rights to redundancy or unfair dismissal.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not available.

Wages

35. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his best available estimate of the proportion of the work force earning less than £3·80 per hour.

Mr. Lee: It is estimated from the New Earnings Survey that about 40 per cent. of the adult work force in Great Britain, including both full-time and part-time employees, earned less than £3·80 per hour in April 1988.

Unit Labour Costs

38. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much unit labour costs in the United

Kingdom have increased over the last 12 months; and what information he has as to by how much labour costs have increased over the same period in France, West Germany, Japan and the United States of America.

Mr. Lee: International comparisons of unit labour costs for the whole economy are not available. However, the latest available information for manufacturing industries is provided in the table:

Unit labour costs in manufacturing
Percentage changes in the year to the fourth quarter of 1988

	per cent.
United Kingdom	0·4
France	−1·5
West Germany	0·7
Japan	−2·0
United States	1·1

Notes:

1. The percentages are calculated from index series produced by the International Monetary Fund; the latest available figures for the five countries on a consistent basis are for the fourth quarter of 1988.
2. The source index series are in local currency and are not adjusted for exchange rate changes.

Skill Centres

41. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether a prospectus will be sent to all those bidding for the skill centres.

Mr. Cope: The skills training agency will be offered for sale through a private tender process, and the sale will be open to all interested parties.

65. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment who owns the freehold of Deptford skill centre; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: The freehold is Crown property, at present held in the name of the Secretary of State for the Environment. Management and financial responsibility is a matter for the Training Commission.

47. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will report to the House what progress has been made on the management buy-out of the national network of skill centres.

Mr. Cope: In his statement to the House on 13 March, *Official Report*, column 35, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State referred to the existence of a management buy-out team, and said that he had agreed to give them financial assistance to make a bid when the skills training agency is offered for sale. It is for the team to decide whether to bid when the formal offer for sale occurs.

Dock Labour Scheme

46. **Mr. Janman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the past operation of the dock labour scheme in the port of London.

Mr. Nicholls: The restrictions of the dock labour scheme have contributed to the decline in business and jobs in the port of London and in other ports covered by the scheme.

Non-oil cargo passing through the port of London area declined by 9 per cent. between 1970-1987, from 30·4 million tonnes to 27·7 million tonnes. The number of registered dock workers declined from 16,573 in 1970 to 1,739 in May 1989.

85. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the past operation of the dock labour scheme in Hull, Goole and Grimsby.

Mr. Nicholls: The restrictions of the dock labour scheme have contributed to the declining share of business and jobs in the ports of Hull, Goole and Grimsby.

The growth in trade handled by ports on the south and east coasts outside the dock labour scheme has been far greater than in the scheme ports, including Hull, Goole and Grimsby.

The number of registered dock workers in Hull, Goole and Grimsby fell from 4,470 in 1970 to 1,563 on 2 May 1989.

82. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many dockers employed in dock labour scheme ports are aged 25-35 years, 35-45 years and over 45 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The 1987 National Dock Labour Board annual report, the most recent available, provides the following information on the numbers of registered dock workers in each age group.

Age group	*Number of workers*
25-35	693
35-45	3,200
Over 45	6,408

79. **Dr. Woodcock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the past operation of the dock labour scheme in Liverpool.

Mr. Nicholls: The restrictions of the dock labour scheme have contributed to the decline of business and jobs in the port of Liverpool and in other ports covered by the scheme.

Non-oil cargo passing through the port of Liverpool (including Garston) decreased from 16,464 tonnes in 1970 to 8,886 in 1987: a fall of 46 per cent. In the same period Heysham, a non-scheme, west coast port increased its traffic by over 300 per cent. The numbers of registered dock workers employed in Liverpool and Birkenhead has fallen from 10,449 in 1970 to 1,244 in April 1989.

67. **Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many dockers were employed in dock labour scheme ports and in non-dock labour scheme ports in *(a)* 1959 and *(b)* 1989; and if he will make a statement.

89. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many dockers were employed in dock labour scheme ports and non-dock labour scheme ports in 1959 and 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: According to national dock labour board returns employment of registered dock workers in dock labour scheme ports declined from 71,846 in 1959 to 9,319 in May 1989. Figures for non-scheme ports over the same period are not available, but between 1983 and 1987 employment of dock workers in those ports rose by 10 per cent. to 3,900. A quarter of all dock workers are therefore now employed in non-scheme ports.

57. **Mr. Hill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the past operation of the dock labour scheme in Southampton.

Mr. Nicholls: The restrictions of the dock labour scheme have contributed to the declining share of business and jobs in the port of Southampton.

The growth in trade handled by ports on the south and east coasts outside the dock labour scheme has been far greater than for scheme ports such as Southampton.

The number of registered dock workers in Southampton has dropped by 66 per cent., from 1,944 in 1970 to 681 in April 1989.

58. **Mr. Robert B. Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the past operation of the dock labour scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: Since 1970, the number of registered dock workers has declined from 45,542 to 9,310—a drop of 79 per cent. Between 1967 and 1987, the share of the United Kingdom market held by non-scheme ports increased from 10 per cent. to nearly 30 per cent. of a smaller total tonnage.

The dock labour scheme has contributed to the declining share of business and jobs in the ports in which it operates.

59. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to discuss the reintroduction of casual labour into dock labour scheme ports with the National Association of Port Employers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: Arrangements following the abolition of the Dock Labour Scheme are a matter for employers and dock workers in the ports concerned, as is already the case for other workers in those ports and dock workers in ports outside the scheme. My right hon. Friend has no plans to enter into discussions with those concerned.

Employers of 93 per cent. of dock workers in scheme ports have given assurances not to return to a system of casual work. I understand that they have indicated a willingness to examine this and other issues on a port by port basis.

60. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many representations has he received on his White Paper, "Employment in the Ports, the Dock Labour Scheme"; and if he will make a statement.

53. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received on his plans to abolish the dock labour scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: I have received a number of such representations. The abolition of the dock labour scheme will lead to increased investment and employment opportunities in British ports and ports areas, and has been welcomed by all sectors of industry.

95. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the past operation of the dock labour scheme in Immingham and Grimsby.

Mr. Nicholls: The restrictions of the dock labour scheme have contributed to the declining share of business and jobs in the port of Grimsby and Immingham.

The growth in trade handled by ports on the south and east coasts outside the dock labour scheme has been far greater than for scheme ports such as Grimsby and Immingham. The number of registered dock workers in Grimsby and Immingham fell from 1,344 in 1970 to 684 in May 1989.

"Removing Barriers to Employment"

49. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received in response to his Green Paper, "Removing Barriers to Employment".

Mr. Nicholls: Our Green Paper "Removing Barriers to Employment" was published on 20 March and the closing date for comments is 20 June. We are, therefore, in the early stages of the consultation period. To date, six representations have been received.

Minimum Wage

50. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if the Government will implement the Council of Europe's decency threshold of an hourly rate of £3·80 as a minimum wage.

Mr. Nicholls: No. there is no such thing as a Council of Europe decency threshold for a minimum acceptable level of earnings.

70. **Mr. Jack Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he intends to introduce a statutory minimum wage; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: No. A national minimum wage would raise employers' costs and destroy jobs, including the jobs of those whom it was designed to help.

Work Force

54. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the anticipated changes in the make-up of the work force by age and sex over the next 10 years.

Mr. Lee: My Department's latest projections of the civilian labour force show a number of significant changes between now and the end of the century. In particular, it is expected that the share of young people in the labour force will decline markedly and the share of women will rise. These projections were published in the April 1989 edition of *Employment Gazette*, a copy of which is in the Library.

TUC

62. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, if he has any plans to meet the General Secretary of the Trades Union Congress to discuss industrial relations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend meets the general secretary of the Trades Union Congress from time to time to discuss matters of mutual interest.

Training Schemes

63. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people who would otherwise have been on the unemployment register have been on Government training schemes since 1979.

Mr. Lee: No such estimates are available.

Picketing

64. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to convert the current law on picketing to a voluntary code as recommended by the Trades Union Congress; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The Green Paper "Removing Barriers to Employment", published on 20 March, states that the Government propose no change to the law on picketing.

93. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to meet the general secretary of the Trades Union Congress to discuss picketing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has no current plans for such a meeting.

West Midlands (Engineering Apprentices)

66. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his latest estimate of the number of engineering apprenticeships in the west midlands, expressed as a percentage of the numbers available in 1979.

Mr. Cope: Currently in the midlands there are 54 per cent. of the number of apprentices registered with the engineering industry training board in 1979. It is not known how many engineering apprentices there are outside the board's registration system.

Wages Act 1986

71. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, what assessment he has made of the effects of the Wages Act 1986 on young workers' pay *(a)* by region and *(b)* nationally.

Mr. Nicholls: The removal of wages council minima has enabled employers to offer, and young people to accept, jobs at rates which would previously have been unlawful, and there is evidence that this has resulted in increased job opportunities for those under 21. It is not possible to measure the effect of this greater flexibility on pay levels, but there has been no general reduction in the earnings of young people in wages council trades. These have continued to increase in real terms.

Skill Training

72. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on skills training in Yorkshire and Humberside.

Mr. Cope: A skilled work force is essential to the growing economy in Yorkshire and Humberside. The Government recognise this and are playing their part. We are establishing local training and enterprise councils which will put employers in the lead in determining local skills training needs. Business growth training launched last month will help companies in Yorkshire and Humberside to improve the effectiveness of their training. In addition young people and unemployed adults are given the opportunity to train through YTS and employment training.

86. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on skills training in the west midlands.

Mr. Cope: A skilled work force is essential to the growing economy in the west midlands. The Government recognise this and are playing their part. We are establishing local training and enterprise councils which will put employers in the lead in determining local skills training needs. Business growth training launched last month will help companies in the west midlands to improve the effectiveness of their training. In addition young people and unemployed adults are given the opportunity to train through YTS and employment training.

80. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on skills training in the north-west.

Mr. Cope: A skilled work force is essential to the growing economy in the north-west. The Government recognise this and are playing their part. We are establishing local training and enterprise councils which will put employers in the lead in determining local skills training needs. Business growth training launched last month will help companies in the north-west to improve the effectiveness of their training. In addition young people and unemployed adults are given the opportunity to train through YTS and employment training.

Training Commission

73. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the development of the Training Commission.

Mr. Cope: The Employment Bill seeks to complete the abolition of the Training Commission.

New Businesses

74. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many new businesses have registered for value added tax during the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Cope: The net increase in the number of VAT-registered businesses in 1987 was 45,000, or nearly 900 a week on average.

National Port Employers

76. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to meet representatives of the national port employers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has no such plans.

YTS

77. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a further statement on the progress of two-year YTS.

Mr. Cope: Over 80 per cent. of those who complete their two-year YTS programme go into employment; over 60 per cent. of those who complete gain a qualification. YTS is providing the skills and qualification that young people and the country needs as we move into the 1990s.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many YTS trainees were in receipt of a

training agency lodging allowance to undertake training away from their home by training agency area, at the end of March 1988, and the end of January, February and March 1989; and how many were in receipt of the allowance by region at March of each year since YTS started.

Mr. Cope: The information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people of YTS eligible age, registered with jobcentres or the careers service were awaiting an offer of a YTS place at the end of January, February and March 1989; and of those how many were receiving bridging allowance or extended child benefit or income support.

Mr. Cope: I am satisfied that the Training Agency has more than sufficient YTS places available in all areas of the country for all those who apply for one.

Information on numbers receiving bridging allowance and for those whose parents were receiving extended child benefit is provided in the table. Information on the number of young people receiving income support is not available.

Numbers receiving bridging allowance

Date	*Number*
12 January 1989	11,994
9 February 1989	14,163
9 March 1989	13,955

Numbers whose parents are receiving extended child benefit

Date	*Number*
30 January 1989	1,451
27 February 1989	1,960
27 March 1989	2,000

Local Enterprise Agencies

78. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what amount of Government funding was made available in 1988-89 to local enterprise agencies.

Mr. Cope: Government support to local enterprise agencies in the United Kingdom in 1988-89 exceeded £8·3 million.

Job Creation

81. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what new initiatives he has to reduce unemployment.

Mr. Lee: Unemployment has fallen by over 1·2 million and for 32 months in succession, the longest and largest sustained fall on record, as a direct result of the sustained growth brought about by the Government's sound economic policies. Since 1983 the workforce in employment has increased by nearly 3 million and there are now more people in work in this country than ever before in our history. We will continue to provide the right conditions for this jobs growth to continue. In addition we already have in place a comprehensive range of measures to help unemployed people back into the jobs that are becoming available—in particular the restart programme, job clubs and employment training.

Unions (Secondary Action)

Mr. Curry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to review the legislation on secondary action in an industrial action; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: Proposals for the reform of the law on secondary action are contained in the Green Paper "Removing Barriers to Employment" which was published on 20 March 1989.

Smoking

87. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his departmental policy towards smoking in the work place.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend welcomes the publication by the Health and Safety Executive in November 1988 of a free booklet "Passive Smoking at Work" which recommends that employers, in consultation with employees or their representatives, develop and implement policies to control smoking in their work place. The booklet advises employers to limit the exposure at work of non-smokers to tobacco smoke.

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if, in the light of criticisms of the Health and Safety Executive's booklet "Passive Smoking at Work" he will take steps to withdraw this booklet from circulation and replace it with one which has the approval of the medical profession, and which takes account of the advice of the fourth report of the Independent Scientific Committee on Smoking and Health; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend supports the advice given by the Health and Safety Executive in the booklet "Passive Smoking at Work" and has no intention of asking the executive to withdraw or replace it. The booklet takes account of the fourth report of the independent scientific committee on smoking and health and also refers readers to other sources of more detailed advice such as that published by the Health Education Authority. It outlines practical ways in which smoking policies can be introduced at work and was agreed with representatives of employers, trade unions and the medical profession.

Job Clubs

88. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many job clubs have been closed down, and are to be closed down in *(a)* Strathclyde, *(b)* Scotland and *(c)* England and Wales.

Mr. Lee: Changes to the job club network were announced in my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) on 27 January 1989, *Official Report* column 810. As part of those changes the number of job clubs which have been closed down or are to be closed down shortly is:

	Number
(a) Strathclyde	5
(b) Scotland	7
(c) England and Wales	207

Alternative provision is available where job clubs have been closed.

Business Growth Training

91. **Mr. Bright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on business growth training.

Mr. Cope: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) on 19 April 1989, *Official Report*, column *211*.

Small Businesses

92. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to meet the general secretary of the Confederation of British Industry to discuss the expansion of small businesses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: My right hon. Friend and I are in regular contact with the CBI to discuss issues affecting small firms and other matters.

94. **Mr. Tracey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to meet the chairman of the British Venture Capital Association to discuss the development of small businesses.

Mr. Cope: I have regular contact with the BVCA but have no immediate plan to meet the chairman of the association.

Low Pay Unit

96. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has received the most recent report of the low pay unit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend is aware of this report and of similar publications prepared by the low pay unit, which do not call for any comment from him.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has received the low pay Unit report, "Ten Years On: The Poor Decade"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has seen this report and similar publications prepared by the low pay unit, which purport to show large increases in the numbers of low-paid people, based on the unit's own definition and quoting the so-called Council of Europe "decency threshold". The Government do not accept the validity of those calculations. Earnings and take-home pay have increased in real terms at all levels of income since 1979, and among both women and men.

Companies (Worker Representation)

99. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he next intends to discuss worker representation on company boards with his European Economic Community counterparts in the Council of Employment Ministers.

Mr. Cope: My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs will be attending a meeting of internal market Ministers on 12 June when this subject may be discussed.

Asbestos

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what investigation the Health and Safety Executive has conducted into the burning of asbestos at the protein fractionation centre in Edinburgh adjacent to the Liberton and Southfield hospitals; and what conclusions they have reached.

Mr. Nicholls: Inspectors from the Health and Safety Executive are currently investigating the incineration of filters at the protein fractionation centre in Edinburgh. I will write to the hon. Member when the investigation is complete.

Cobalt Dust

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the results of the Health and Safety Executive's recent hard metal special national project.

Mr. Nicholls: Results so far available show that measurements of cobalt dust in air were below the current recommended occupational exposure limit at 16 factories visited by the Health and Safety Executive in the hard metal special national project. At 17 factories visited the level of cobalt dust was not controlled below the recommended limit.

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action the Health and Safety Executive will be taking to ensure that compliance by the hard metal industry with the occupational exposure limit for cobalt is improved.

Mr Nicholls: Inspectors from the Health and Safety Executive have enforcement powers under section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 to require an employer to comply with his duties to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable the health, safety and welfare of his employees. These duties extend to the risks associated with the exposure of workers to cobalt dust.

At visits inspectors check that employers comply with the recommended occupational exposure limit for cobalt and its compounds and will take enforcement action necessary where companies do not meet the required standards.

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment under what instructions Health and Safety Executive inspectors have been working in taking enforcement action in relation to employers' failures to comply with the cobalt occupational exposure limit and to provide adequate medical surveillance.

Mr. Nicholls: At visits, inspectors consider whether employers have complied with their duties under section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of their employees. Inspectors check that employers comply with the recommended occupational exposure limit for cobalt and its compounds and will take any enforcement action necessary where companies do not meet the required standards.

Restart

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many claimants called for restart interview have failed to attend their interview; how many of those failing to attend are believed to have found work; how many of those failing to attend have not found work; how many failing to attend have their benefit stopped and

how many of these have successfully appealed against the benefit decision; and how many failing to attend have subsequently re-registered as unemployed in the most recent 12-month period.

Mr Lee: Between April 1988 and March 1989, 3,066,000 were called for restart interview of which 326,000 were referred to unemployment benefit offices for failing to attend that interview. 25,387 (7·8 per cent.) of these had their benefit or credits disallowed.

The other information requested is not available.

Unemployment Benefit

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many claimants each month have been referred to the unemployment benefit service due to doubts over non-availability or doubts about their restricted availability since December 1988 for each employment service region.

Mr. Lee: Up to December 1988 statistics on decisions by adjudication officers on availability cases were produced by the Department of social security on a six-monthly basis. From January 1989 the figures will be produced every quarter. The figures for the period ending 31 March 1989 are not yet available, but I will write to the hon. Member when statistics are to hand on decisions on availability cases for the period requested.

Child Minders

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many child minder allowances have been granted to lone parent ET participants since September 1988; and how many were granted during the most recently available monthly period, for each training agency area.

Mr. Nicholls: Information about the number of lone parents on employment training receiving child care payments before April 1989 is not available. The number of lone parents receiving child care payments during April is given in table 1.

Table 1
Employment Training
Number of lone parents receiving child care payments during April 1989

Training Agency area	*Lone parents*
South East region	
Berkshire and Oxfordshire	49
Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire	47
Essex	47
Hampshire and Isle of Wight	43
Kent	35
Surrey	22
Sussex	87
London region	
Inner London North	131
Inner London South	109
London East	92
London North	107
London South	74
London West	27
South West region	
Avon	123
Devon and Cornwall	121
Dorset and Somerset	35
Gloucester and Wiltshire	46
West Midlands region	
Birmingham and Solihull	229
Coventry and Warwickshire	55
Dudley and Sandwell	45
Staffordshire	48
The Marches, Hereford/Worcester	55
Wolverhampton and Walsall	16
East Midlands and Eastern region	
Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire	40
Derbyshire	17
Leicester and Northamptonshire	84
Lincolnshire	19
Norfolk and Suffolk	47
Nottinghamshire	87
Yorkshire and Humberside region	
Bradford, Calderdale and Kirklees	111
Humberside	71
North Yorkshire and Leeds	91
Sheffield and Rotherham	53
Wakefield, Doncaster and Barnsley	38
North West region	
Cheshire	45
Cumbria	23
Lancashire	42
Central Manchester	80
Greater Manchester North	46
Greater Manchester East	96
Merseyside	190
Northern region	
Cleveland	119
County Durham	56
Northumberland, North Tyneside and Newcastle	37
Sunderland, South Tyneside and Gateshead	41
Wales	
Dyfed and West Glamorgan	58
Gwent	21
Gwynedd, Clwyd and Powys	56
Mid Glamorgan and South Glamorgan	54
Scotland	
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	44
Central and Fife	44
Glasgow City	73
Grampian and Tayside	69
Highlands and Islands	16
Lanarkshire	37
Lothian and Borders	45
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	21

Claimants (Surveys)

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the terms of reference and other details of the surveys being carried out or commissioned by his Department amongst claimants at either unemployment benefit offices or jobcentres in the west midlands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: My Department commissioned the Harris Research Centre Ltd. to undertake a survey of claimants at unemployment benefit offices in the west midlands conurbation. Interviewing took place during March and April. All those interviewed were selected at random by interviewers. All interviews were anonymous and voluntary. The aim was to collect information about a representative sample of claimants, not about individuals.

This survey is part of a wider study of the labour market in the west midlands conurbation, which also includes a survey of employers' vacancies and recruitment practices. The aim of the study is to establish what the barriers are to the efficient operation of the labour market and, in particular to see what are the factors which prevent longer-term unemployed people from being able to take advantage of the available jobs and to help determine how best my Department's programmes can meet their needs.

Availability for Work

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list from the 1988 labour force survey by region, including Greater London and by male and female, the number of people not counted as unemployed by the definition using broad ILO guidelines on the grounds that they had not looked for a job in the four weeks prior to interview, but who stated that they would like a job if one was available, and *(a)* were available to start work within two weeks or *(b)* were not available to start work within two weeks.

Mr. Lee: Preliminary results from the 1988 labour force survey as requested are shown in the following table:

Persons not in employment and not unemployed on ILO-OECD definition who had not looked for work in four weeks prior to interview[1] but would like a job, by availability to start work

Spring 1988, thousands

	Available to start within two weeks		*[2]Not available to start within two weeks*	
	Males	*Females*	*Males*	*Females*
Great Britain	367	763	294	554
Northern	20	52	33	39
Yorkshire and Humberside	34	84	30	51
East Midlands	30	62	19	40
East Anglia	11	23	[3]	11
South East	93	201	63	175
of which Greater London	45	90	32	91
South West	18	57	16	40
West Midlands	44	70	30	53
North West	56	99	52	67
Wales	22	42	20	28
Scotland	39	74	26	51

[1] Includes those who did not state whether they had looked for work.

[2] Includes those who did not state whether they were available to start work.

[3] Sample size too small for a reliable estimate.

Fair Employment Act (Compensation Payments)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list those employers who have made a compensatory payment to a complainant under the Fair Employment Act; and what were the sums involved in each case, the original date of each settlement and the actual date of payment since the Act became law to the present time.

Mr. Viggers: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave on 21 April 1989 to the question from the hon. Member for Kingston-upon-Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) at column *316*.

ENVIRONMENT

Job Creation

102. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many part-time jobs have been created by Cleveland county council since 1979.

Mr. Gummer: Cleveland county council employed 10,616 part-time staff in December 1979. By December 1988 it employed 12,927, a net increase of 2,311, or 21·8 per cent.

National Business Rate

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much he estimates Lambeth will receive from the proceeds of the national business rate, in relation to the current yield from rates of non-domestic properties.

Mr. Gummer: The proceeds of the national business rate will be distributed as an equal amount per adult. The level of receipts in any area will depend on the distributable amount per adult and the number of adults in that area. This information will not be available before the autumn. It is of no significance to community chargepayers if the income from non-domestic ratepayers retained in Lambeth changes when the new system is introduced. Grant will be paid according to need. So if Lambeth retained more non-domestic rate income, the need for grant would be lower and chargepayers would not benefit.

Gipsy Sites

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the number of local authorities with designated gipsy sites and those without.

Mr. Trippier: The number of local authorities which are designated areas under the Caravan Sites Act 1968 is as follows:

	Designated	*Not designated*
Shire districts	94	203
Metropolitan districts	10	26
London Boroughs	22	10

Brodsworth Parish Council (Letter)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he replied to the letter sent to him by Brodsworth parish council in the county of South Yorkshire, dated 14 March, in respect of sewage and river pollution; and if he will publish his reply in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Moynihan: The Department replied to the council on 9 May and I have sent a copy to the hon. Member. I have no plans to publish the reply.

Puffins

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will commission a study into the disappearance of puffins along the south coast.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. The Nature Conservancy Council advised that there has been no fall in the overall

numbers of puffins on the south coast. The latest available figures show a maximum of some 260 birds in the area between 1985 and 1987, compared with 205 in 1969-70. While some small colonies may have declined or moved elsewhere, any localised changes are not considered so significant, in relation to the total British puffin population of over 500,000 breeding pairs, to justify commissioning a study.

Sulphur Dioxide

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on progress being made to remove sulphur dioxide from power station and factory emissions.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for St. Helen's, South (Mr. Bermingham) on 2 May, at column 53.

Community Charge

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table outlining how many people his Department estimates will gain and how many will lose as a result of the introduction of the community charge in *(a)* Leeds, West and *(b)* Kirkstall ward.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 16 March at column 318, to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen).

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out *(a)* all the exempt categories of those who will not have to pay the poll tax and *(b)* the exact nature and amount of the exemptions including housing benefit payment arrangements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The Government have no plans to introduce a poll tax. The categories of people who are exempt from liability to pay the personal community charge are listed in schedule 1 to the Local Government Finance Act 1988. We estimate that the number of individuals in these categories will be about half a million.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside of 8 May, *Official Report*, column *350*, he will publish the letter in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's reply of 11 May at column *521* to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham).

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who *(a)* collected the local information for and *(b)* distributed the newspaper articles on the poll tax in the name of the Minister for Local Government which appeared last week.

Mr. Gummer: The Government have no plans to introduce a poll tax. My articles were distributed by the Department's press office and the regional offices of the COI. The information they contained was collected from a range of sources.

Mr. Randall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many of the leaflets entitled "The Community Charge (the So-called Poll Tax); How It Will Work for You" have been printed.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 12 May 1989]:* A total of 23 million.

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the cost of printing the leaflets entitled "The Community Charge (the So-called Poll Tax); How it Will Work for You."

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 12 May 1989]:* The total cost of production was £367,887.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the newspapers which received articles on the poll tax in the name of the Minister for Local Government last week.

Mr. Gummer: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman shortly with this information.

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when regulations relating to the processing of information gathered for the purpose of compiling the poll tax register will come into effect; what guidelines his Department will issue to councils on this matter; what representations he has received concerning the sending out by Westminster city council of registration forms with a 21-day deadline for reply; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 10 May 1989]:* The Government have no plans to introduce a poll tax.

Regulations prescribing the powers of community charges registration officers to require information from the public were laid before Parliament on 17 March and come into force on 22 May. Where information is required under this provision, the person concerned has 21 days within which to respond. It is open to CCRO's to seek information before that date on a voluntary basis but they have been advised that such requests would not have any statutory character. I expect however that most recipients of requests before 22 May will co-operate by providing the information to compile the register in a smooth and economical manner.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to meet the costs which have so far been incurred in setting up the community charge system in Nottingham beyond the £307,000 specific grant for 1989-90 already made available.

Mr. Gummer: No. To agree to meet any costs incurred by authorities in preparing for the community charge would give no incentive to efficiency. Nottingham has been allocated £306,864 specific grant and a similar amount of expenditure has been supported through RSG. It is now for it to use its available resources to ensure that the new arrangements are effectively implemented.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what a managing director would pay *(a)* in community charge and *(b)* in a system of capital value rates plus local income tax paid in proportions of 80-20, respectively, if he or she lived in a typical five-bedroom house in Hornsey;

(2) what a home-help would pay *(a)* in community charge and *(b)* in a system of capital value rates plus local income tax paid in proportions of 80-20, respectively, if he or she lived in a typical council high-rise flat in Hornsey.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 2 May, at column 46.

Sea Dredged Aggregates

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total United Kingdom demand for sea dredged aggregates for the last five years; what is the percentage growth over the last ten years; and what are the predicted levels of demand during the next five years.

Mr. Chope: The total United Kingdom demand for sea dredged aggregates over the last five years for which figures are available (1983-87) was 70·03 million tonnes (mt).

The percentage growth over the last 10 years (1977-87) is 46 per cent. Specific predictions for the estimated level of demand over the next five years (1989-93) are not available. But an estimate is made in MPG5, "Guidelines for Aggregates Provision in England and Wales" that the total level of demand over this period is likely to be 81·1mt.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy, (Dr. Thomas) *Official Report*, 2 May, column *53*, he will list the 12 sites earmarked by UK Nirex Ltd for further appraisal.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) on 2 May *Official Report*, column *53*, if he will list the 12 sites chosen for further appraisal by Nirex.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has not received a list of the 12 reserve sites identified by Nirex.

Rent Arrears

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the gross amount owed to each local authority in England in rent arrears; what proportion such sums represent as a percentage of rental income; and how much has been owed in each case for *(a)* three months, *(b)* six months, *(c)* one year and *(d)* two years.

Mr. Trippier: A table was placed in the Library on 1 March this year showing rent arrears reported at 1 April 1988 and the arrears as a percentage of rent roll. Corresponding information for the position at 1 April 1989 will be available towards the end of this year.

Information about total tenants' arrears (including rates and service charges and so on) together with estimates of the length of arrears is contained in the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy publication "Housing Rents Statistics at April 1988", a copy of which is also in the Library.

BISF Homes

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he was invited to the national meeting of the BISF home owners held on 6 May; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I was not invited to this meeting. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 8 May at column 353, to my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart).

Waste Reduction

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to ensure that integrated pollution control will require industry to take account of waste minimisation and waste reduction.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Under the Government's proposals industrial processes scheduled for integrated pollution control will need a consent from Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution to operate. That consent will require the generation and emission of specified polluting wastes to be minimised through the application of best available technology not entailing excessive cost. The consent will also require the minimisation of the impact on the environment as a whole of all waste outputs from scheduled processes.

Energy Conservation

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to ensure that integrated pollution control will require industry to take account of energy conservation.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Integrated pollution control will not directly regulate the energy efficiency of prescribed processes.

Crown Suppliers

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Linlithgow of 24 April, *Official Report*, column *413*, if he will make a statement as to the parameters within which Her Majesty's Government will define pensions for Crown Suppliers employees as broadly comparable to present arrangements.

Mr. Chope: The pension terms on offer would be assessed by the Government Actuary.

Plumstead Baths and Library

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recommendations he has received from English Heritage about the possible listing of Plumstead baths and library; and what has been his response.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: English Heritage has recommended that the baths and library are not buildings of special architectural or historic interest, and I have decided to accept its advice. Accordingly, these buildings will not be included in the statutory list.

Cryptosporidia

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research is being undertaken to establish whether cryptosporidia is contained in water filter beds.

Mr. Howard: Research into cryptosporidia in water supplies is one of the questions being examined by the group of experts established by the Government under the chairmanship of Sir John Badenoch.

Bathing Waters

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the

estimated cost for each of *(a)* Morecombe South; *(b)* Morecombe North, and *(c)* Bardsea of (i) a long sea outfall, (ii) full sewage treatment works with a short sea outfall, and (iii) full sewage treatment works with a long sea outfall to enable them to comply with European Economic Community bathing water directive 76/160/EEC; and when the appropriate solution will be put in place, giving the estimated cost of commencement and completion.

Mr. Howard: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 8 May, at column *352*, to his question about the bathing waters at Formby, Ainsdale and Southport.

Domestic Waste

Dr. Glyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to encourage the reprocessing of domestic waste by local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is for waste disposal authorities to choose the most appropriate method of disposal for their own locality, taking account of the economic and environmental implications in so doing. We are currently considering changes to the legislation which will ensure that the true costs of waste disposal are met by those disposing of the waste. It may well be that recycling or other methods of treating waste will then be seen as more attractive options.

Local Government Boundaries

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive the results of the review of local government district council boundaries in the west midlands.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 11 May 1989]:* Before 31 March 1992—the date by which the Local Government Boundary Commission must complete its reviews.

Paper Recycling

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many paper recycling plants there are operating in the United Kingdom currently; what are their respective capacities; and how much recycled paper they produce.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 12 May 1989]:* I understand that there are 54 mills in the United Kingdom (approximately half of all the paper and board mills in the country) that use waste paper. In 1988 they consumed a total of 2·4 million tonnes of waste paper and produced an estimated 2·1 million tonnes of paper made wholly or partly from waste paper. Details of their respective capacities or production are not available.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to encourage the recycling of paper and the use of recycled paper.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 12 May 1989]:* The Department has shown the way by phasing in the use of recycled paper for correspondence since 1984; other Departments are doing the same.

We are also co-operating in the current series of seminars organised by the Department of Trade and Industry aimed at raising awareness of the growing demand for waste paper as a raw material for newsprint production.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary for Trade and Industry has responsibility for co-ordinating Government policy on recycling. I and other colleagues work closely with him to promote recycling whenever it is an economically viable method of waste disposal.

Local Authority Expenditure

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the consequences for local authorities of financing new capital expenditure direct from revenue after the introduction of the community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 15 May 1989]:* Under the proposed new capital finance system contained in the Local Government and Housing Bill, local authorities will be free to finance additional capital expenditure direct from a revenue account. This freedom will extend the accountability of the community charge to capital as well as revenue expenditure. I am discussing with the local authority associations how allowance for the direct financing of capital expenditure should be included in the total revenue needs assessment used to determine local authorities' needs grant.

Tree Preservation

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to be in a position to announce the results of his review of legislation relating to tree preservation orders.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 15 May 1989]:* The review of tree preservation policy and legislation is still in progress.

It is too soon to say when a further announcement may be made.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 17 May 1989

NATIONAL FINANCE

"Spot the Ball" Competitions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue was collected in value added tax on "spot the ball" competitions in each of the last three years.

Mr. Lilley: I regret that information is not available at a sufficient level of detail for estimates to be made.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Higher Education (Research)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish an estimate in current prices of his support for research in higher education through *(a)* the Universities Funding Council, *(b)* the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council and *(c)* the research councils.

Mr. Jackson: Estimated expenditure on research in higher education in 1989-90 is as follows:

	£ million
UFC	780.0
PCFC	10·3
Research councils	345·1
Total	1,135·4

Open University (Assistance to Commonwealth)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the contribution made by the Open university in assisting Commonwealth countries in establishing universities and other teaching-at-a-distance educational establishments.

Mr. Jackson: Staff from the Open university have undertaken numerous short-term specialist consultancies and have organised workshops throughout the Commonwealth, in Africa, Asia, and Australasia. They have also arranged familiarisation and specialist programmes for visitors from Commonwealth countries. In addition the Open university has played a major part in planning and developing Open universities in India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Hong Kong.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Immigration Appeals

Mr. Darling: To ask the Attorney-General if, pursuant to his answer of 5 April, *Official Report*, column *185*, he will list the total number of immigration appeals *(a)* lodged and *(b)* lodged and ready to proceed.

The Attorney-General: On 29 March, the most recent date for which figures are available, 14,186 appeals had been lodged with the immigration adjudicators and 465 applications for leave to appeal had been lodged with the immigration appeal tribunal. On that date, the total number of cases lodged and ready to proceed to a hearing *(a)* before the adjudicators was 2,627; and *(b)* before the tribunal was 262.

DEFENCE

Headquarters Contracts

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list in the *Official Report* the precise amounts paid to each of the following contractors by his Department in respect of headquarters contracts in the year ended 31 March 1988 *(a)* Wimet Wear Parts Ltd., *(b)* J. S. Chinn Holdings Ltd., *(c)* Abbey Panels Investments plc., *(d)* Coventry Climax Engines Ltd., *(e)* Cornercroft Engineering Ltd., *(f)* Rotherham and Sons Ltd., *(g)* Commercial Shearing Inc., *(h)* Dunlop Ltd., *(i)* Alvis Ltd., *(j)* Lucas Aerospace Ltd., and *(k)* GEC Telecommunications Ltd.

Mr. Sainsbury: The payment made to each of the following companies in the year ended 31 March in respect of headquarters contracts were as follows:

	£ million
Coventry Climax Engines Ltd.	1·75
Dunlop Ltd.	13·00
Alvis Ltd.	21·00
Lucas Aerospace Ltd.	35·00

Payments made to GEC Telecommunications Ltd. are included within the total payments made to the General Electric Company and cannot be separately identified.

We have no record of any headquarters contracts having been placed with any of the other companies listed.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will outline the general differences which occur between individual memoranda of understanding governing the international collaborative production of military equipment in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sainsbury: Within the general framework used for memoranda of understanding governing collaborative projects, issues which arise for consideration on a case-by-case basis include arrangements for management, contracting, cost and work-sharing, intellectual property rights and exports to third parties.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if it is possible to identify, from the records used to compile the regional disaggregation of expenditure published on page 62 of "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1988", volume 2, the proportion of expenditure made to Rolls-Royce plc. which was allocated to the west midlands standard region in that analysis.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is not possible to identify payouts to individual companies from the information used to compile the regional disaggregation of expenditure published in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates". Furthermore, it would be a breach of commercial confidence to give the degree of detail requested for an individual company.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list in the *Official Report* the precise amounts paid to each of the following contractors in respect of headquarters contracts by his Department in the year ended 31 March *(a)* National Plastics Ltd., *(b)* Commercial Hydraulics Keelavite Ltd., *(c)* Kalmar Climax Ltd., and *(d)* Jaguar Cars Ltd.

Mr. Sainsbury: The payments made to each of these companies in the year 31 March 1989 in respect of headquarters contracts were as follows:

	£ million
National Plastics Ltd.	4·7
Commercial Hydraulics Keelavite Ltd.	2·3
Kalmar Climax Ltd.	2·1
Jaguar Cars Ltd.	1·4

Mr. Nellist To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list in the *Official Report* the value of headquarter contracts awarded by his Department on behalf of foreign Governments in each of the five years up to 31 March 1988.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding reply 4 April 1989]:* The information in the format requested is subject to commercial confidentiality. However, defence export sales by British industry are expected to be worth some £3,500 million in 1988. In earlier years, the figures were:

	£ million
1984	2,250
1985	2,900
1986	5,900
1987	3,500

Further information concerning deliveries of defence equipment is given in table 2.7 of volume 2 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1989" (Cm. 675 II).

Malaysia (Arms Sales)

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether there was any reference to United Kingdom overseas aid to Malaysia in any of the correspondence in 1988 concerning arms sales to Malaysia, a memorandum of understanding on which was signed in September 1988.

Mr. Sainsbury: All dealings between the two Governments on the proposed sale of arms were formalised in the memorandum of understanding signed in September 1988. No mention is made in that document of overseas aid to Malaysia.

ENERGY

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has received any representations from the chairmen designate of Power Generator and National Power seeking the creation of a separate national nuclear generation corporation as part of the privatisation of the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have discussions from time to time with both chairmen-designate of the successor companies to the CEGB about a wide range of issues relating to the reorganisation and subsequent privatisation of the electricity industry. These discussions are necessarily confidential.

Druridge Bay

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many dwelling houses, including any used as holiday accommodation, will be transferred from the ownership of the Central Electricity Generating Board to National Power in connection with the transfer under the provisions of the Electricity Bill of the area proposed for a nuclear power station at Druridge bay, Northumberland.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Under clause 63 of the Electricity Bill, the CEGB would be required to prepare a transfer scheme for the allocation of all its assets to the successor companies. The proposed transfer of assets would be subject to my approval but is, initially, a matter for the CEGB. I am therefore asking the CEGB to reply to the hon. Member direct.

Oil Rigs (Safety)

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what information he has as to whether the process pipework and vessels on the Piper Alpha platform were originally designed to comply with requirements of the National Association of Corrosion Engineers MR 01 75 standard for handling sour oil and gas;

(2) if he is aware of any occasions in the United Kingdom continental shelf of premature failure of platform piping or vessels due to cracking induced by sour oil or gas;

(3) what information he has as to whether during production from the Piper Alpha platform any sections of piping or vessels handled oil or gas which would be designated as sour by the NACE standard;

(4) whether the operator of the Piper Alpha platform at any time informed the certifying authority of the handling of sour oil and gas and agreed a suitable programme of non-destructive testing to determine the suitability of the piping and vessels to handle sour oil and gas.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My Department has not received any reports of premature failure of offshore installation piping or vessels in the UKCS due to cracking induced by sour oil or gas. The bulk of the Piper Alpha installation was designed before the NACE MR 0175 standard was published. However, all installations are required to have a certificate of fitness issued by a certifying authority. The CA must ascertain, inter alia, that the materials employed are suitable for handling the products involved.

I am advised that, from 1986, the levels of hydrogen sulphide produced from some of the Piper Alpha wells was increasing, and that the NACE standard would now designate some of the oil and gas on the platform as "sour". The owner is required to provide sufficient information to the CA for an independent assessment of the design to be carried out and for a periodic survey of the equipment to be undertaken.

My Department understands from the CA that Occidental discussed with it a corrosion monitoring system, including non-destructive testing, which was designed to assess the suitability of the piping and vessels to handle the oil and gas involved, including the expected

levels of hydrogen sulphide. Only when the CA is satisfied that it is proper to do so will it issue or renew a certificate of fitness.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has received a report on the causes of the recent explosion on the Cormorant Alpha platform; if he will make it his policy to publish any such report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The investigation into the cause of this incident is still in progress. As the hon. Member knows, and for reasons I have already explained, it would not be in accordance with our normal practice to publish the report on the findings of the investigation. I shall ensure that any lessons to be learned will be passed on to the industry at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has concerning the recommencement of production on *(a)* the Cormorant Alpha platform and *(b)* the Brent pipeline system.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The latest information that my Department has from Shell indicates that the company believes there is a reasonable probability that start up of the Brent pipeline system will be achieved by 26 May 1989. Shell does not expect that the Cormorant Alpha platform will resume production before July 1989.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will obtain and place copies of the daily transcript of the inquiry into the Piper Alpha tragedy in the Library.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The transcript is already accessible to the hon. Member at a number of locations, including my offices at Millbank, but I am happy to assist him further by placing a copy in the Library.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Quangos

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the names of members of each quango and non-departmental public body.

Mr. Ian Stewart: A table giving this information has been placed in the Library.

Public Order

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many parades were notified to the police under the terms of the Public Order (N.I.) Order 1986 in each of the years 1986, 1987 and 1988; what information organisers of parades are expected to give in the notice to police; and what form this information has to take.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 5 May 1989]:* In respect of parades notified to the police in the years 1986, 1987 and 1988, I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to his question on 10 May 1989 at column *444*. Those figures relate to parades under the Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1981 and the Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1987. No similar order was made in 1986.

The information required from parade organisers is a matter for the Chief Constable. However, I understand that the organisers are expected to give sufficient information to enable him to make adequate policing arrangements for the particular occasion.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Gibraltar Shootings

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will now reconsider his decision not to hold a full public judicial inquiry into the shootings in Gibraltar of Mairead Farrell, Daniel McCann and Sean Savage;

(2) if he has received a copy of the independent report, commissioned by Amnesty International, on the Gibraltar shootings of Sunday 6 March 1988; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he has received a copy of the independent report, commissioned by the National Council for Civil Liberties, on the Gibraltar shootings of Sunday 6 March 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have received copies of the reports by Amnesty International and the National Council for Civil Liberties. We remain of the view that there are no grounds for holding a further inquiry into the deaths of Mairead Farrell, Daniel McCann and Sean Savage.

AIDS

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the role of his Department's AIDS unit; how many staff and at what grades are employed in it; what is its budget for the current financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: In the diplomatic wing, AIDS is the responsibility of the narcotics control and AIDS department. Its role is to consider the foreign policy implications of our AIDS-related policies. Staff dealing with AIDS are 15 per cent. × one DS4, 30 per cent. × one DS5, 100 per cent. × one DS9, 50 per cent. × one DS10 and 30 per cent. × one S2A. NCAD has no dedicated budget but AIDS-related assistance may be funded from assistant under-secretaries' general purpose budgets.

AIDS-related assistance under the overseas aid programme is coordinated by the Overseas Development Administration health and population division. HPD staff dealing with AIDS are 10 per cent. × grade 5, 90 per cent. × SEO, 55 per cent. × HEO, 95 per cent. × EO, 70 per cent. × AO, 5 per cent. × personal secretary, 40 per cent. × typist. The ODA has committed £7·2 million so far for expenditure this financial year on AIDS prevention and control. Of this, £5·4 million will be administered by HPD.

Guyana (Elections)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Guyanese authorities to ensure that procedures operate for free and fair elections; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We have no plans to make such representations to the Guyanese authorities. National elections are not due to be held in Guyana until 1990 and the great importance which we attach to the principle of free and fair elections is already widely known.

British Council

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what resources are specifically allocated to the British Council to subsidise the travel costs of scientists engaged in the British-German academic research collaboration programme; what is the maximum grant available to individuals; and what are the criteria by which this sum is determined.

Mr. Eggar: The British Council is contributing £175,000 towards the cost of the joint British-German academic research collaboration programme in this its first year. A part of this money is for organisational visits but the major part is intended to contribute to both the travel and the living costs of British scholars supported under the programme. A standard contribution of £150 is offered towards the cost of travel, together with a standard contribution towards living expenses while the British scientist is in Germany at the rate of £200 per week. The contribution towards travel, which is not intended to cover all travel costs, is based on the cheapest return air fare between most airports in Britain and Germany.

WALES

Welsh Language

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what guidelines he has given to health authorities in Wales on ensuring wherever possible that patients whose first language is Welsh, have access to Welsh-speaking nurses in hospitals in Wales.

Mr. Grist: Welsh Office Health Circular WHSC(IS)117 "The Health Service and The Welsh Language", a copy of which is available in the Library of the House, recognises the importance of individuals being able to converse in their mother tongue during contact with the Health Service, and asks authorities to offer appropriate services wherever this would be reasonable and practicable.

Museum of Welsh Antiquities

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received concerning his case for safeguarding the future of the museum of Welsh antiquities, and the associated art gallery, at Bangor; whether the Welsh Office are making any direct financial contribution towards the upkeep of these facilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Six representations about the future of the museum of Welsh antiquities and the art gallery at Bangor have been received. The Welsh Office does not provide direct financial support for local museums and galleries. But local sources of funding for such facilities may be supplemented by the Council of Museums in Wales and the Welsh Arts Council which are centrally funded.

Access (Development)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what additional monies are to be made available other than the higher education quantum to promote the development of access throughout Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: £50,000 is being made available from the higher education quantum in 1989-90 to establish a Wales access unit that will encourage the development of access courses giving entry to higher education. The university of Wales has been invited to join and contribute to the initiative.

Expenditure

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish an analysis of expenditure shown in table 17.1 of "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1989-90 to 1991-92" Cm. 617 on a similar basis to his reply of 25 January 1988, to the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams), *Official Report* column *108*.

Mr. Peter Walker: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer which I gave to the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) on 31 January 1989 at columns *97-110*.

Bathing Water

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To aks the Secretary of State for Wales on what date the Welsh water authority commenced its current review into the costs of alternative schemes to deal with the 11 Welsh bathing beaches that do not conform with European Community bathing water directive 76/160/EEC; on what date the current review is expected to be completed; and if he will arrange for the review to be published.

Mr. Grist: Conclusions from the review of the bathing water compliance programme will be included in information made available prior to the flotation of Welsh Water.

Campaigns

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library details of each campaign mounted by his Department in 1985-86 and each successive year, including, in each case, the objectives of the campaign, the intended audience and the outcome of the monitoring of the achievement of the intended objectives, and national research conducted for him by the Central Office of Information together with a note of the intended objectives in the campaign in 1989-90.

Mr. Peter Walker: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 10 May 1989, at columns *437-8*.

Housing Investment

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of his initial housing investment allocated to local authorities in Wales for (i) 1989-90, (ii) 1987-88, (iii) 1985-86, (iv) 1983-84, (v) 1981-82 and (vi) 1979-80, at constant 1989-90 prices, separately distinguishing each authority.

Mr. Grist: Initial housing allocations at constant 1989-90 prices, by local authority, for the years 1981-82, 1983-84, 1985-86, 1987-88 and 1989-90 are shown in the following table. Initial housing allocations are not available for 1979-80.

Initial local authority housing capital allocations: 1989-90 prices

Local Authority	*1981-82 £000*	*1983-84 £000*	*1985-86 £000*	*1987-88 £000*	*1989-90 £000*
Alyn and Deeside	2,803	3,796	2,195	2,178	1,728
Colwyn	2,087	3,376	2,083	1,989	1,598
Delyn	1,523	2,521	1,505	1,566	1,276
Glyndwr	1,021	2,279	1,568	1,400	1,114
Rhuddlan	1,066	1,616	935	1,032	841
Wrexham Maelor	3,519	5,211	4,285	4,555	3,680
Carmarthen	2,026	4,968	3,400	3,344	2,263
Ceredigion	2,894	4,178	2,609	2,696	1,916
Dinefwr	975	1,955	1,135	1,237	1,007
Llanelli	2,620	4,421	2,837	2,600	2,096
Preseli	1,889	3,030	2,297	2,084	1,554
South Pembrokeshire	1,325	3,255	2,081	2,146	1,483
Blaenau Gwent	4,158	9,635	5,833	10,389	6,105
Islwyn	3,153	6,456	4,789	6,009	3,194
Monmouth	2,133	4,407	3,606	2,920	1,898
Newport	7,190	10,622	6,576	6,198	4,798
Torfaen	3,549	5,941	3,795	4,378	3,343
Aberconwy	1,630	2,727	1,607	1,537	1,252
Arfon	3,077	4,231	2,588	2,450	1,944
Dwyfor	975	1,267	743	1,245	783
Meirionnydd	1,280	1,857	1,088	1,041	848
Ynys Mon	1,523	3,561	2,281	2,574	1,765
Cynon Valley	3,092	4,810	3,036	5,351	3,276
Merthyr Tydfil	3,488	4,280	2,603	3,758	3,061
Ogwr	6,215	7,981	5,135	5,656	3,599
Rhondda	6,215	8,195	5,554	7,980	10,392
Rhymney Valley	4,311	6,936	5,245	6,861	4,335
Taff Ely	6,976	8,114	5,224	5,382	3,792
Brecknock	1,417	2,181	2,043	2,123	1,360
Montgomeryshire	1,417	2,196	1,651	1,726	1,386
Radnor	640	1,659	972	1,042	747
Cardiff	14,410	19,609	12,962	17,085	11,037
Vale of Glamorgan	3,732	5,234	3,026	3,405	2,591
Port Talbot	2,133	2,695	1,654	3,359	2,323
Lliw Valley	3,549	5,427	3,189	3,222	2,464
Neath	2,056	3,508	2,642	3,301	2,251
Swansea	8,728	15,143	8,856	8,607	6,900
Total Districts	120,793	188,977	123,628	144,427	106,000

Local Authorities (Capital Allocations)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library, for each local authority in Wales, its capital allocation, in total for 1989-90, showing the percentage change from *(a)* 1988-89 and *(b)* 1981-82.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is shown in the following table. The total amount to be allocated for 1989-90 is £336·9 million of which £307·3 million has been allocated to date. A copy of this answer will be placed in the Library of the House.

Local authority	*1989-90 allocations to date £000*	*Per cent. change from 1981-82 to 1989-90*	*Per cent. change from 1988-89 to 1989-90*
Alyn and Deeside	2,774	−21·37	2·36
Colwyn	2,365	−8·69	23·82
Delyn	2,823	24·58	12·38
Glyndwr	1,616	16·01	29·49
Rhuddlan	2,995	60·93	−27·69
Wrexham Maelor	7,080	22·77	19·57
Carmarthen	3,319	12·89	16·17
Ceredigion	2,868	5·13	0·35
Dinefwr	2,131	111·20	−4·18
Llanelli	4,187	7·50	24·72
Preseli Pembs	3,358	67·31	2·79
South Pembs	2,196	53·78	−33·19
Blaenau Gwent	11,553	119·43	33·89
Islwyn	4,439	27·78	−42·21
Monmouth	2,779	31·71	2·81
Newport	6,928	−17·10	−9·34
Torfaen	6,069	76·37	−3·83
Aberconwy	3,645	75·58	103·97
Arfon	3,210	−10·41	−14·40
Dwyfor	1,464	34·81	−26·80
Meirionnydd	1,665	2·46	−14·26
Ynys Môn	2,973	52·15	−20·19
Cynon Valley	7,915	186·05	9·35
Merthyr Tydfil	5,478	39·00	5·61
Ogwr	5,475	2·26	−19·54
Rhondda	12,707	130·16	−28·12
Rhymney Valley	7,578	46·80	−25·20
Taff Ely	5,148	−19·27	−10·49
Brecknock	2,120	21·49	25·52
Montgomeryshire	2,171	53·86	19·42
Radnor	1,042	17·21	−12·22
Cardiff	15,290	−10·21	−12·27
Vale of Glamorgan	4,031	−20·68	−10·76
Port Talbot	3,544	56·68	−7·78
Lliw Valley	3,608	3·50	−0·82
Neath	3,512	62·22	−11·71
Swansea	10,418	10·85	−14·84
Clwyd	12,840	49,80	−23·56
Dyfed	16,948	89·00	9·66
Gwent	24,019	16·16	29·98
Gwynedd	7,903	10·93	−0·05
Mid Glamorgan	26,648	43·08	15·23
Powys	6,110	15·20	0·91
South Glamorgan	18,132	0·29	−38·76

Local authority	1989-90 allocations to date £000	Per cent. change from 1981-82 to 1989-90	Per cent. change from 1988-89 to 1989-90
West Glamorgan	22,247	79·44	22·49
Total	307,321		

Water Quality

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Gower on 2 May, *Official Report*, column *59*, if he will place in the Library details of the time limits on the derogations and delays relating to the non-compliance of potable waters in Wales with the European directive relating to the quality of water intended for human consumption 80/77/EC.

Mr. Grist: I shall arrange to place the relevant information in the Library of the House as soon as possible.

Sewage Sludge

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library a list of the outfalls around the Welsh coast where consents have been given by his Department to the Welsh water authority for the disposal of sewage sludge.

Mr. Grist: Yes.

PRIME MINISTER

EC Commission

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to her reply to the hon. Member for Southend, East of 8 May, if she has provided advice to Ministers about the procedures which are available to them in cases where the Commission submit proposals for legislation which do not fall within agreed Community competence; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: As I have told the House, we will continue to examine carefully whether proposals for EC legislation fall within agreed Community competence and we shall continue to deal with such proposals in the Council of Ministers in whatever way best protects and promotes British interests.

House of Commons (Attendance)

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister on how many occasions she has attended the Chamber on official duties in the past 12 months, apart from when dealing with oral questions.

The Prime Minister: I frequently attend the Chamber on official duties.

Poverty (Manchester)

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Prime Minister whether she will agree to meet, either in Manchester or London, a group of constituents of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton who are living in poverty.

The Prime Minister: No.

Airport Policy (Scotland)

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Prime Minister what representations she has received from Scottish industry and commerce concerning Scottish lowland airports policy; and what reply she has given.

The Prime Minister: I have received representations from a Scottish bank, the chairman of a major Scottish firm and two Scottish chambers of commerce. In reply I have said that it was clear from the financial information on Prestwick airport submitted by BAA plc, along with its request for a review of the Scottish lowland airports policy, that there had in fact been a steady improvement in Prestwick's financial position. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, having consulted my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, concluded that a review of current policy would not be appropriate. I also pointed out in my reply that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland considers that access to Prestwick could be improved and that steps are in hand to improve both rail and road access to the airport.

TRANSPORT

Channel Tunnel

86. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what forecast studies of increased rail freight tonnage, following the opening of the Channel tunnel, his Department has made; whether the proposed rail routes for this traffic will be able to cope with any substantial increase; and to what extent the exporting base of the country in the north will be efficiently served by these routes and thus able to fully compete in the European market.

Mr. Portillo: In compliance with section 40 of the Channel Tunnel Act, British Rail have to publish before the end of this year their plans for Channel tunnel freight and passenger services. The plans will take into account BR's widespread consultations with national and regional interests and customers. BR is satisfied that the rail network itself is capable of handling the substantial increase in freight traffic that is envisaged, but this report will look at the adequacy of road/rail interchange facilities and the need for improvements in local rail access.

Traffic Speed

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has available on the average speed of traffic in *(a)* central London, *(b)* Paris, *(c)* Rome and *(d)* Madrid.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have been asserting for a year that traffic moves faster in London than in comparable cities. I do not know whether this is true. So far no one has contradicted the claim.

Comparisons of average traffic speeds between cities are difficult. The figures we have show speeds of 20 kilometres per hour or less for most major cities. Differences in survey method and coverage do not permit any firm conclusions to be drawn about differences.

Speeds in central London are regularly surveyed at three or four-year intervals using timed runs over a

network of 160 km of road, including all A roads. In 1986, the average speed between 7 am and 7 pm was found to be 18 kph. Full details are published in statistics bulletin (87)41. A copy is in the library.

The available information for other cities is more limited. For Rome, the Rome municipal administration has provided figures for 1986 relating to the 13 km bypass route around the historic centre. The centre itself, covering roughly 14 square kilometres, is subject to traffic control measures which permit only residents, public transport and vehicles with special tickets to enter in the periods 7 am to 11 am and 3 pm to 7 pm. A series of timed runs commencing at 7.30 am, 10.00 am, 12.30 pm and 5.30 pm produced an average speed of 20 kph.

According to the office of the mayor, the average traffic speed in Paris in 1987 was estimated at between 14 and 15 kph. Details of the survey method used and the area covered are not available.

Our searches have failed to locate any statistics on the average traffic speed in Madrid.

I believe traffic does move faster in Berlin, where few drive in from the suburbs.

British Rail

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport with whom he is consulting over his Department's consideration of the future of British Rail; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend expects to consult widely in due course if a decision is made to privatise British Rail.

A1 Belford Bypass

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the most recently recorded traffic flows in each direction on the A1 Belford bypass.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department has no data on the A1 Belford bypass. The nearest point on the A1 for which a count has been made is at Ellingham south of Belford. The estimated 1987 annual average daily flow for combined directions at that point is 5,500. The AADF is not computed by direction. The count on which the AADF is based was carried out for 12 hours (7am to 7pm) on 5 October 1987 and recorded 2,569 vehicles northbound and 2,147 southbound. The records show that conditions were foggy on the day of the count, which may have affected traffic levels.

Severn Bridge

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration has been given to the safety implications of the dispute involving 200 maintenance workers on the Severn bridge and the recruitment of unskilled labour.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There have not been any safety implications for users of the bridge as a consequence of the dispute. Under the conditions of contract, the contractor is responsible for safety on site. Labour recruitment is also his concern.

Road Works

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the period of the following construction and maintenance works *(a)* Tees viaduct A19, *(b)* Darlington area A1(M), *(c)* Dishforth interchange A1 and *(d)* Doncaster area A1(M); what estimates he has of average delay times at peak periods for each set of works; and if he will make a statement on the reasons for undertaking all these works at the same time.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information requested is:

	[1]*months*	[2]*minutes*
(a) Tees Viaduct A19	28	3
(b) Darlington area A1(M)	4	20 to 30
(c) Dishforth Interchange A1	17	0 to 30
(d) Doncaster area A1(M)	[3]2¼	20 to 30

[1] Period of works.
[2] Estimated average delay at peak times.
[3] Now finished.

The delays vary greatly depending upon the stage of the works and traffic conditions.

These road works are essential to maintain and improve these heavily trafficked routes.

Road Traffic (Public Inquiries)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many public inquiries have been held, pursuant to section 19 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act; and if he will name and indicate the result of each such inquiry.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Central records are not kept of inquiries held in connection with traffic regulation orders made under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

ENVIRONMENT

Factory Building

85. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the level of factory building in 1988-89.

Mr. Trippier: The value of construction orders for new factories for private sector clients in 1988 was £2·1 billion in current prices, an increase of 36 per cent. over the previous year.

Community Charge

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received regarding the special situation of hon. Members regarding community charge payments and liability.

Mr. Gummer: A few hon. Members have raised the position of those whose parliamentary duties require them to keep more than one home. Just as in any other case, it is for the relevant community charges registration officers to decide where an individual's main residence is for the purposes of the community charge. Like any other citizen, a Member of Parliament has the right to take such a decision to a valuation and community charge tribunal if he is dissatisfied.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his proposal to exclude from standard community charge unoccupied property which is held for the purpose of being available for occupation by

a minister of religion as a residence from which to perform the duties of his or her office would also apply to unoccupied property owned by the Religious Society of Friends for the purposes of that society's ministry.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 11 May 1989]:* The Government are currently consulting on the draft of a regulation under section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988. The regulation—as drafted—sets a zero multiplier for the purposes of the standard charge for all unoccupied property which is held for the purpose of being available for occupation by a minister of religion as a residence from which to perform the duties of his office. The Government's proposal is to continue for the community charge the present position under the General Rate Act 1967. As is the case under the General Rate Act, the draft regulations do not give any definition of "minister of religion".

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the poll tax per head in Oxford city.

Mr. Gummer: The Government have no plans to introduce a poll tax. Illustrative 1989-90 community charges in England will be published once detailed budget returns from local authorities have been received and analysed.

Housing Act 1985

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to implement section 450A of the Housing Act 1985.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend proposes to make an order bringing into force section 5 of the Housing and Planning Act 1986, which inserted section 450A into the Housing Act 1985, as soon as the necessary regulations are ready to be made; they are in preparation and will be completed as soon as resources permit.

Urban Programme

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures have been introduced following the report of the National Audit Office to monitor payments of grants under the urban programme and to assess the effectiveness of the programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Various measures were introduced under the urban programme management initiative in 1985 in anticipation of the NAO report that year. These included the preparation by each local authority of standardised inner area programmes, annual reports and regular financial forecasts. The Department annually examines selected projects and has a continuing programme of research to assess the programme's effectiveness.

Football Stadiums

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what he estimates the cost to be of making every Football League ground all-seater.

Mr. Moynihan: The cost of making every Football League ground all-seater would depend on a variety of factors including the number and type of seats to be installed at each ground. I am not in a position to estimate these factors.

Planning Applications

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will change responsibility for notification to adjoining owners of planning applications from the local authority to the applicant.

Mr. Howard: No. The present arrangements reflect the purpose of the planning system which is to regulate the development and use of land in the public interest. The extent of publicity for planning applications is best left to the discretion of the local planning authority, which can exercise their judgment in the light of local circumstances. A general requirement for applicants to notify owners of adjoining land would be an additional and unwarranted burden for applicants, and for local authorities in ensuring compliance.

Drinking Water

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, if he will place in the Library, the information his Department holds concerning time-limited derogations and delays which have been granted on the non-compliance of potable waters in England with the European directive relating to the quality of water intended for human consumption 80/77/EC.

Mr. Howard: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) on 7 February 1989 at column *591-7* by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State.

"Tenants' Choice"

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the leaflet "Tenants' Choice" was withdrawn by his Department; what were the reasons for withdrawing it; and what was the cost of producing and distributing the leaflet.

Mr. Trippier: A tenants' choice leaflet was produced in June 1988 at a cost of £1,102 to explain the provisions of the then Housing Bill. About 5,000 copies were sent out in response to inquiries.

A second leaflet was produced in March 1989 at a cost of £22,598 to explain the tenants' choice provisions of the Housing Act 1988. More than 11,000 have been sent out, also in response to inquiries. Neither booklet was withdrawn, although the first is now obsolete.

Water Disconnections

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of water disconnections for each regional water authority for each of the last five years.

Mr. Ridley: The information requested by the hon. Member is set out in the following table. Information on disconnections in 1988-89 is not yet available. Information on disconnections by the Welsh water authority is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Water authority disconnections

Authority	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
North West	110	238	457	448
Northumbrian	70	59	300	480
Severn Trent	650	1,074	1,000	932

Authority	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88
Yorkshire	25	189	293	560
Anglian	218	774	2,268	1,586
Thames	788	235	576	1,594
Southern	115	1,249	1,152	1,164
Wessex	0	0	0	32
South West	76	404	404	324
England	2,052	4,212	6,450	7,120

There were approximately 6,600 water authority disconnections for non-payment in 1981-82.

Humber Estuary

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures are being taken to reduce water pollution in and around the Humber estuary.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 16 May 1989]:* The Humber estuary from its confluence with the River Trent to the sea, is classified as good or fair quality (class A or B). Since the early 1960s there has been a progressive improvement in water quality. Measures being taken to reduce pollution include improvements to sewage treatment works, particularly at Leeds, Huddersfield, Sheffield and Chesterfield; a new long sewage outfall at Grimsby; and improvements by several factories to their effluents discharges to the Humber and the Ouse.

Sea Pollution (Study)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the pilot study for the testing of viruses in sea water will include the Solent and adjacent waters; if he will place in the Library the details and parameters of the study; and if he will extend the study to include the effect of disposal of sewage at sea on marine wildlife and the food chain.

Mr. Howard: I can today announce that my Department has let a contract to establish the risks of health of bathing in the seas off the United Kingdom. This is on the recommendation of a working group of experts which was set up last year to advise me on the best way to assess the risk of contracting illnesses from sea bathing. The working group has recommended that two types of study should be made at bathing waters that meet the standards set in the EEC bathing water directive.

The first study involves bathers who are on the beach of their own volition. Information of any perceived symptoms will be obtained by means of a questionnaire at the time and subsequent telephone follow-ups.

The second study will involve the use of healthy volunteers who will be asked to swim in waters meeting EEC standards. The volunteers will be examined medically both before and after swimming. The Committee on Ethical Issues in Medicine of the Royal College of Physicians has given clearance for this study.

A contract has now been let to the Water Research Centre to carry out the first stage of the study this year. Further studies are likely to be required in 1990 and later years. The bathing waters at which the studies are to take place have yet to be selected.

Reports of the studies will be placed in the Library in due course. The studies will not be extended to study the effect of sewage disposal at sea or marine wildlife and the food chain. This area of research is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Water Meters

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made by the Property Services Agency in installing water meters in residential buildings owned by Her Majesty's Government; and whether a water meter has been installed at No. 10 Downing street.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 11 May 1989]:* Departments are responsible for water comsumption in the buildings they occupy: the PSA gives professional advice and recommends the installation of meters where justified on economic grounds.

Nos. 10, 11 and 12 Downing street are jointly served by one water meter.

Bathing Water

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the estimated cost for each of *(a)* Minehead terminus, *(b)* Dunster North West, *(c)* Burnham jetty, *(d)* Barrow, *(e)* Weston Super Mare uphill slipway, *(f)* Weston Super Mare grand pier and *(g)* Clevedon swimming pool of (i) a long sea outfall, (ii) full sewage treatment works with a short sea outfall and (iii) full sewage treatment works with a long sea outfall to enable them to comply with European Economic Community bathing water directive 76/160/EEC; and when the appropriate solution will be put in place, giving estimated cost of commencement and completion.

Mr. Howard: I understand that Wessex water authority has schemes in progress which aim to bring these bathing beaches into compliance with the EC bathing water directive by mid-1991. The details are as follows:

Beaches	Scheme/type	Total capital expenditure £ million	Expected completion date
Minehead Terminus; Dunster North	Sea outfall with headworks	10·8	1989-90
Burnham Sea Jetty; Barrow	Diversion of Sewage to inland works	3·1	1990-91
Weston Super Mare; Uphill Slipway and Grand Jetty	New headworks for sea outfall	4·4	1990-91
Clevedon Swimming Pool	Diversion of sewage to inland works	1·2	1990-91

The comparative costs of alternative schemes is not available.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Yemen (Aid)

Mr. Robert Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) how much public money has been allocated to the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen during the past 12 months; for what purposes; and whether the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen has taken up all these allocations;

(2) how much public money has been allocated to the Yemeni Arab Republic during the past 12 months; for what purposes and whether the Yemeni Arab Republic has taken up all these allocations.

Mr. Chris Patten: For details of the level and nature of our aid to the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen and the Yemen Arab Republic in the financial year 1988-89, I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) on 10 April at column 572.

Expenditure for the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen was somewhat lower than originally anticipated mainly because of problems arising from delay to the signature of a memorandum of understanding on technical cooperation. Expenditure for the Yemen Arab Republic was somewhat higher following approval of a project to be funded from the aid and trade provision.

Mr. Robert Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) how much public money has been allocated to the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen by the European Community and the United Nations and its specialised agencies during the past 12 months; for what purposes; and whether the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen has taken up all these allocations;

(2) how much public money has been allocated to the Yemeni Arab Republic by the European Community and the United Nations and its specialised agencies during the past 12 months; for what purposes; and whether the Yemeni Arab Republic has taken up all these allocations.

Mr. Chris Patten: We are not aware of any pre-set annual allocations but in 1987, the latest year for which we have information, actual net flows of aid to the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen from the European Community and from the United Nations system were US$0·06 million (£0·04 million) and US$18·49 million (£11·4 million) respectively. Comparable figures for the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) are US$2·45 million (£1·48 million) and US$16·75 million (£10·09 million) respectively.

European Community aid to the PDRY was in the form of medical assistance; and to the YAR was in the form of food aid and assistance for rural development. The register of development activities of the United Nations system 1987, a copy of which is in the Library, provides a breakdown of United Nations aid to these countries by project.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Immigration

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list *(a)* the number of notices of intention to deport under the Immigration Act 1971 and *(b)* the number of persons subsequently removed for each week in 1989; if he will indicate the average length of time between issuing a notice of intention to deport and deportation in 1988 and 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The latest available information about the number of notices of intention to deport and the number of persons removed under the deportation powers is contained in table 14 of the Home Office statistical bulletin 10/89 "Control of Immigration: Statistics—Fourth Quarter and Year 1988", a copy of which is in the Library. Corresponding information for the first quarter of 1989 is due to be published next month. The average length of time beween the issue of a notice of intention to deport and removal under the deportation powers is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. The period varies greatly from case to case.

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make a statement about the outcome of the meeting of EC Immigration Ministers and of Trevi Ministers in Madrid on 12 May.

Mr. Hurd: The meeting of Ministers responsible for immigration, attended also by a vice-president of the Commission, was the sixth such meeting following an initiative taken during the United Kingdom presidency in 1986 to help prepare the EC's approach to the creation of the single market by end 1992 so far as the movement of persons is concerned.

The meeting on 12 May took a significant step forward on asylum by instructing the official group to prepare a draft convention to deal with the so-called "refugee in orbit" problem. This would establish the criteria for determing which state should be responsible for examining an application for asylum. The meeting reviewed the other work done by officials, and in particular noted with satisfaction that the first regular bulletin on forged and false documents had been produced in April in accordance with the group's earlier recommendations. I welcome this example of solid, practical co-operation on shared operational problems.

I took the opportunity of the meeting to re-state the Government's view of the interpretation of the relevant provision of the Single European Act and the frontier controls of persons, as endorsed by the House on 4 May at column 417.

The later meeting of Trevi Ministers took further measures to enhance collaboration between European Community countries to combat terrorism and other crime. Agreement was reached on the study of forged documents, streamlined procedures for secure communications between Trevi countries, further exchanges on specialist matters, and the establishment in all member states of national drugs intelligence units similar to our own, as well as the later examination of the establishment of a European drugs intelligence unit. Ministers agreed to further work on closer co-operation between police forces.

They also considered the preliminary work of the Group established within Trevi to study border checks and other security measures post 1992 in order that the changes to take place should not adversely affect the prevention of terrorism, drug trafficking and other serious crime in the Community.

Accommodation Agencies

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* accommodation agencies and *(b)* directors of accommodation agencies have (i) had summons issued against them, (ii) been successfully prosecuted and (iii) continued to trade after successful prosecution under the Accommodation Agencies Act 1953 for each year since 1975.

Mr. John Patten: Information available to me relates to the number of prosecutions and convictions under the Accommodation Agencies Act 1953 in England and Wales for 1986 and 1987.

	1986	*1987*
Prosecutions	21	3
Convictions	8	2

To produce further information for each year from 1975 would involve disproportionate cost. Information as to whether the prosecution was against the agency or a director and whether the agency continued to trade is not available.

Police National Computer

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will list the projected size of each index and the projected number of accesses to each index, including those accesses that retrieve information from more than one index of the new police national computer for each year until 1993.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The projected size of each index on the new police national computer for the years 1991, 1992 and 1993 is as follows:

millions

	1991	*1992*	*1993*
Criminal Names	6·300	6·700	7·200
Wanted Missing	0·100	0·120	0·140
Disqualified Drivers	0·250	0·270	0·290
Impending Prosecution	0·500	0·540	0·570
Convictions	2·300	2·500	2·600
Fingerprints	4·000	4·300	4·600
Vehicles	42·800	45·800	49·000
Stolen Property	0·030	0·032	0·034

The estimated number of inquiries to each index on the new police national computer for the years 1991, 1992 and 1993 is as follows:

millions

	1991	*1992*	*1993*
All names indexes combined	15·700	16·700	17·700
Vehicles	19·100	20·300	21·500
Stolen Property	0·090	0·950	0·101

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will place the operational specification of the new police national computer and its accompanying management summary in the Library.

Mr. Hurd: I have placed a copy of the functional specification for the new police national computer in the Library.

Parking

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps have been taken to review the enforcement of parking restrictions.

Mr. Hurd: Parking enforcement has been under review by a working party under Home Office chairmanship on which the Department of Transport, the police service and the local authority associations have been represented. The working party has now completed its report, which identifies a number of areas of concern and possible proposals for change. I am placing a copy of the report in the Library. The Government will consider their conclusions carefully over the next few months.

Political Refugees

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what reply has been sent to the letter sent to his Department from Amnesty International dated 21 April about political refugees.

Mr. Renton: None, as yet. Amnesty International's letter raises a number of different points which we need to consider fully before replying.

War Crimes

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to announce his decision on the possible prosecution of Nazi war crimes perpetrators now resident in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hurd: I shall consider what further action is required when I have had an opportunity to study the report of the war crimes inquiry, which I expect to receive in June.

Football Stadiums

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to discuss all-seater football stadiums with the football authorities.

Mr. John Patten: The Government will be consulting the football authorities about the introduction of all seated accommodation at major football clubs. I understand that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is hoping to meet them for this purpose later this month.

Private Remand Centres

Mr. Irving: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of cells in any privately managed remand centres will be for *(a)* single and *(b)* double occupation.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is too early to take detailed decisions, but if the contracting out of the design, construction and operation of remand centres were to go ahead, I would expect inmates normally to be accommodated in individual cells, with some provision for circumstances where it is considered there are advantages for inmates to share with others.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 14 April, *Official Report*, column *748*, what information his Department possesses concerning the incidence and location of confirmation of bovine spongiform encephalopathy infection in cattle at slaughterhouses of fatstock markets.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to him on Friday 12 May at column *57*.

National Office of Animal Health

Mr. Speller: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the duties of the National Office of Animal Health together with the sources of its income and any specific tasks that it has been set by Government.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The National Office of Animal Health Ltd. is a trade organisation representing manufacturers of veterinary medicines. I do not know how it is financed. It has not been set tasks by Government although it is consulted, along with other representative organisations, on matters affecting its members.

Food and Wine Surpluses

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total amount, expressed in pounds sterling, which the EEC plans to spend this year on the disposal or destruction of food and wine surpluses; and if he will also publish a table showing these amounts in respect of the previous 15 years.

Mr. Ryder: The 1989 Community budget made provision for expenditure of £8,281·9 million on export refunds, subsidies for internal disposals, losses on sale out of intervention and depreciation of stocks. Comparable data for earlier years are shown in the table.

	£ million
1974	431·1
1975	677·3
1976	1,058·4
1977	1,284·8
1978	2,836·2
1979	3,860·1
1980	3,947·5
1981	3,417·9
1982	3,565·0
1983	4,280·4
1984	5,249·1
1985	5,384·0
1986	6,272·4
[1]1987	8,130·8
[1,2]1988	8,451·4
[2]1989	8,281·9

[1] 1987 budget year covered 10 months' expenditure, 1988 budget year covered 11½ months' expenditure.
[2] Excluding provision for additional depreciation of old stocks; 1,240 mecu in 1988 and 1,449 mecu in 1989.

Food Labelling

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, pursuant to his answer to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South, *Official Report*, 25 April, column *493*, he will list the mechanical problems that he believes would arise if the European Commission's proposal for information labelling on food was implemented.

Mr. Ryder: The European Commission's proposal concerns only post-harvest pesticide treatments. Some pesticide active ingredients can be used either pre or post-harvest. A requirement to label post-harvest might mislead consumers into believing no pre-harvest treatment had been given. In some cases it may be possible to evade the control by switching treatment which is normally post-harvest to the pre-harvest stage; it will be very difficult for the enforcement authorities to police such switching, and, more fundamentally, to test for the wide range of possible treatments.

There could also be problems for packers, wholesalers and retailers especially when they are dealing with consignments from a number of sources which have been subject to differing treatments. The costs need to be weighed against the benefits which might arise from the proposal, especially when the results of pesticide residue monitoring are published.

Pesticides

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food pursuant to his answer to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South, *Official Report*, 25 April, column *492*, whether any of the maximum residue levels for pesticides are at such a level they would result in any of international acceptable daily intakes being exceeded.

Mr. Ryder: No. The MRLs used in the United Kingdom are either the same as, or less than, those used by international bodies such as the WHO/FAO Codex Alimentarius Commission and should not be expected to result in international ADIs being exceeded.

Salmonella

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, pursuant to his reply of 3 March, *Official Report*, columns *373-74*, he will list for each of the 17 measures he has taken to control salmonella in poultry; whether primary or secondary legislation has been or will be implemented giving dates for each; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 15 May 1989]*: The measures listed in my earlier reply are either covered by secondary legislation or are non-statutory. For each of the measures mentioned in my reply of 3 March, numbered as in that reply, the information is as follows:

	Entry into force
1. The Diseases of Animals (Protein Processing) (Amendment) Order 1989	2 February 1989
2. Achieved by administrative action	
3. The Processed Animal Protein Order 1989	14 April 1989 and 13 June 1989
4. Achieved by administrative action	
5. See my rely of 3 March	
6. The Testing of Poultry Flocks Order 1989	16 March 1989
7. Still to be implemented	
8. Achieved by administrative action	
9. Achieved by administrative action	

	Entry into force
10. Still to be implemented	
11. Still to be implemented	
12-17. Non-statutory	

Set-aside Scheme

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of *(a)* registrations and *(b)* applications for the set-aside scheme were validated by field inspections in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: *[holding answer 11 May 1989]:* About one quarter of total applications for set-aside in the United Kingdom in 1988-89 were subject to field inspection before acceptance. Further field inspections of farms accepted into the scheme will be taking place as part of the ongoing monitoring of set-aside obligations. Farms which have been registered have not in general been field inspected, but will be liable to inspection on a sample basis if and when applications are made under the scheme.

EMPLOYMENT

Task Force

87. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment has been made of the impact on British business of the activities of the task force on small and medium-sized enterprises; and what plans there are to extend the role of the task force in the run up to 1992.

Mr. Cope: As part of its action programme for small and medium sized enterprises, the task force has introduced a number of initiatives designed to assist SMEs. Most of these are at a pilot stage and have yet to be assessed, but some evaluation has been carried out of the network of European information centres set up by the Commission, of which there are four in the UK. Clients of these centres have reported a high level of satisfaction with these services and the commission now proposes to extend the network.

The Commission has also put forward a proposal for a formal legal base for the activities of the task force, and closer involvement by member states in its plans for the future. The UK Government welcome these proposals, placing particular priority on the task force's deregulatory activities and the need to evaluate its cost-effectiveness carefully.

Bridging Allowance

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many 16 and 17-year-olds were in receipt of bridging allowance by region at the end of January, February and March 1989.

Mr. Cope: The numbers of 16 and 17-year-olds in receipt of bridging allowance for the nearest available dates are as follows:

Region	9 February 1989	9 March 1989	13 April 1989
East Midlands and Eastern	1,513	1,380	1,170
West Midlands	1,498	1,507	1,298
Wales	832	774	671
Eastern Division	620	657	542
Southern Division	576	543	521
Western Division	667	612	554
South West	753	760	630
Northern	1,088	1,124	1,021
Yorks and Humberside	1,820	1,816	1,487
Scotland	2,194	2,182	1,912
North West	2,602	2,600	2,235

YTS

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list at the most recently available date, YTS providers by the following occupation categories *(a)* administration and clerical, *(b)* creative, education, recreation, *(c)* health and community, *(d)* personal services, *(e)* selling and storage, *(f)* construction, *(g)* electrical engineering, *(h)* mechanical engineering, *(i)* motor vehicle repair, *(j)* non metal processing, *(k)* catering and food, *(l)* agriculture, horticulture, forestry, *(m)* mining, *(n)* fishing, *(o)* transport, *(p)* scientific, *(q)* printing, and *(r)* clothing and textiles.

Mr. Cope: The information is not available in the form requested. A copy of the YTS directory of approved training organisations is in the Library.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list at the most recently available date, YTS providers by the following industry categories *(a)* agriculture, forestry, fishing, *(b)* energy and water, *(c)* extraction, metals, minerals, chemicals, *(d)* metal goods, engineering, vehicles, *(e)* other manufacturing, *(f)* construction, *(g)* distribution, hotel, catering, repairs, *(h)* transport and communications, *(i)* banking and finance, *(j)* other services, and *(k)* not classified.

Mr. Cope: The information is not available in the form requested. A copy of the YTS directory of approved training organisations is in the library.

Training Schemes

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the number of trainees on each employment training scheme operating in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and give the name of each scheme and the total allowances paid to each scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: Information about the number of people in training with individual employment training managers in England and Wales can only be provided at disproportionate cost. The names and addresses of Training managers are held in the employment training directory of training agents and training managers, a copy of which is held in the House of Commons Library. Information about the amount of trainee allowances paid to trainees with individual training managers is not available. Government programmes in Northern Ireland are the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment for how many trainees has each employment training scheme management agency and employer in England, Wales and Northern Ireland contracted to fill for

each month since the inception of the scheme; and what percentage of these places have actually been filled in each case on a monthly basis.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested can be provided in respect of England and Wales only at disproportionate cost. Government programmes in Northern Ireland are the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the number of staff involved in monitoring fraud by employment training scheme management agencies and employers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Nicholls: Employment training in England and Wales is delivered by the Training Agency's network of 50 area offices, each of which has a team of officers who, as part of their duties, are responsible for investigating cases of fraud. In England and Wales, the incidence of fraud in the programme is monitored by the Training Agency's head office on the basis of quarterly returns provided by each area office.

Responsibility for Government programmes in Northern Ireland lies with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many cases of fraud his Department has detected among employment training scheme management agencies and employers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland; what sums were involved; and how many prosecutions have proceeded.

Mr. Nicholls: No cases of fraud by employment training agents and managers in England and Wales have been detected since the start of the programme on 1 September 1988.

Responsibility for Government programmes in Northern Ireland lies with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employment training scheme management agencies and employers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland have been terminated because of fraud or other malpractice.

Mr. Nicholls: No training agents or managers contracting with the Training Agency under employment training in England and Wales have been terminated because of fraud or other malpractice.

Responsibility for Government programmes in Northern Ireland lies with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

HEALTH

Pensioners

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list by region the estimated growth in the population over 75 years old for each of the next 10 years.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is given in the table.

Change in population 75 and over from 1989 to 1999 by Standard Region: Absolute change in thousands and percentage change[1]

75 and over	*1989-90*		*1990-91*		*1991-92*		*1992-93*		*1993-94*	
	Absolute change	*Percentage change*	*Absolute change*	*Percentage change*	*Absolute change*	*Percentage change*	*Absolute change*	*Percentage change*	*Absolute change*	*Percentage change*
North	3·3	1·7	2·5	1·2	0·5	0·3	−1·7	−0·8	−1·1	−0·6
Yorkshire and Humberside	4·7	1·4	2·0	0·6	−0·9	−0·3	−4·3	−1·3	−3·3	−1·0
East Midlands	5·3	2·0	3·5	1·3	1·1	0·4	−1·7	−0·6	−1·0	−0·4
East Anglia	4·2	2·8	2·6	1·6	1·3	0·8	−0·3	−0·2	−0·2	−0·1
South East	10·8	1·5	7·2	0·6	−2·4	−0·2	−14·5	−1·2	−10·8	−0·9
Greater London	2·9	0·6	−2·0	−0·4	−5·6	−1·2	−9·9	−2·1	−8·6	−1·9
Rest of South East	15·9	2·1	9·2	1·2	3·1	0·4	−4·6	−0·6	−2·2	−0·3
South West	8·7	2·2	4·2	1·0	1·2	0·3	−2·6	−0·6	−1·3	−0·3
West Midlands	6·0	1·9	4·6	1·4	0·4	0·4	−2·3	−0·7	−1·4	−0·4
North West	5·0	1·2	1·5	0·3	−2·3	−0·5	−6·6	−1·5	−5·3	−1·2
Wales	3·7	1·8	1·9	1·0	1·1	0·5	−0·2	−0·1	0·3	0·2
Scotland	5·0	1·5	1·6	0·5	−0·7	−0·2	−3·1	−0·9	−2·2	−0·7

75 and over	*1994-95*		*1995-96*		*1996-97*		*1997-98*		*1998-99*	
	Absolute change	*Percentage change*	*Absolute change*	*Percentage change*	*Absolute change*	*Percentage change*	*Absolute change*	*Percentage change*	*Absolute change*	*Percentage change*
North	7·6	3·7	7·0	3·3	5·2	2·4	3·3	1·5	2·9	1·3
Yorkshire and Humberside	10·6	3·2	8·4	2·5	6·0	1·7	3·1	0·9	2·7	0·7
East Midlands	10·3	3·9	8·8	3·2	6·8	2·4	4·3	1·5	3·9	1·3
East Anglia	6·9	4·3	5·2	3·1	4·3	2·5	2·9	1·7	2·8	1·6
South East	38·2	3·1	29·5	2·3	21·7	1·7	11·4	0·9	10·1	0·8
Greater London	9·4	1·9	5·4	1·2	2·6	0·6	−1·0	−0·2	−1·3	−0·3
Rest of South East	29·8	3·8	24·1	3·0	19·1	2·3	12·3	1·4	11·5	1·3
South West	14·7	3·7	10·0	2·4	7·8	1·8	4·7	1·1	4·5	1·0
West Midlands	12·8	3·9	11·6	3·4	8·8	2·5	5·5	1·5	4·9	1·3
North West	12·0	2·9	9·5	2·2	6·4	1·5	2·8	0·6	2·3	0·5
Wales	7·0	3·4	5·8	2·7	4·5	2·0	2·9	1·3	3·2	1·4
Scotland	10·0	3·0	6·8	2·0	5·7	1·7	3·1	0·9	3·5	1·0

[1] 1985 based population projections.

Pain

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what provision is being made for research into alternatives to narcotic analgesics for nerve pain sufferers who cannot be relieved by these means.

Mr. Freeman: The Department is not directly funding research into the problem, but the pharmaceutical industry in the United Kingdom carries out research and development in virtually all therapeutic areas.

This is supported by the Department through the prices of National Health Service medicines. The current cost of this support is approximately 20 per cent. of the National Health Service drugs bill.

Drug Addicts

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what effect the National Health Service reforms will have on the current situation in which drug addicts living in one health authority area are treated in another without refund because of the restrictive prescribing policies in the former.

Mr. Freeman: Under the proposed reforms of the National Health Service, district health authorities will have powers to charge each other for patients from outside their administrative boundaries, either under contract or, exceptionally, through extra-contractual arrangements.

Head Lice and Nits

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has concerning the incidence of head lice and nits in schoolchildren in North Staffordshire; and if he will direct extra resources to enable school nurses to carry out more frequent and regular inspections.

Mr. Freeman: Information specifically about the incidence of head lice infestation is not available. However, the following details relate to health surveillance by nurses in the area covered by North Staffordshire health authority:

Maintained nursery, primary, secondary and special schools

Number of infestations[1]	*1987-88 North Staffordshire health authority*
Number of pupils examined (thousands)	80·5
Number of pupils found to be infested (thousands)	2·4
Infested pupils as a percentage of the maintained school population aged 5 to 14 years	4·26

[1] Infestations include head lice, vermin, scabies, ringworm, impetigo and verrucæ.

Responsibility for the control of head lice infection among pupils rests with individual health authorities through the school health service. It is for them to determine the policy for dealing with this problem in the light of local circumstances. Many have stopped routine head inspections and are now adopting more positive practices through health education programmes and advice to parents on head lice infestation and how to deal with the problem. By increasing parental awareness cases of infestation can be indentified and dealt with more promptly.

West Lancashire District Health Authority

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total budget for the West Lancashire district health authority in 1978-79, 1983-84 and 1988-89; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is not held centrally. My hon. Friend may wish to pursue his inquiries with Mr. R. B. Martin, chairman of North Western regional health authority, which is responsible for allocating resources to its districts.

Midwives (Regrading)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the Social Services Select Committee's recommendations on midwives' regrading.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to my hon. and learned Friend's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) and the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Garrett) on 10 May at columns *450-51*.

GPs (Expenditure)

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average expenditure per patient by general practitioners.

Mr. Freeman: in 1988-89, the estimated average cost of drugs and appliances prescribed by general medical practitioners per patient in England was about £37. The average cost per patient on the general medical services was about £29·50. These figures are based on provisional and estimated returns and exclude the costs of hospital referrals initiated by general medical practitioners, and the administrative costs of family practitioner committees.

Physiological Measurement Technicians

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals he has to improve the pay and career prospects of physiological measurement technicians.

Mr. Freeman: Pay and grading structures are matters for negotiation in the appropriate Whitley council. I understand that yesterday (16 May) the management side of the professional and technical B Whitley council made an offer to the staff side which would improve the pay and grading structures applicable to many NHS technical staff groups, including physiological measurement technicians.

Nurses (High Technology)

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action is being taken to expand post registration training opportunities for nurses in high technology care.

Mr. Mellor: To assist health authorities to expand their post-registration training opportunities for nurses in high technology care we created a central fund of £3 million and invited authorities to submit bids against this fund. Allocations have now been made as follows:

Regional health authority	*£*
Northern	202,000
Yorkshire	190,000
Trent	242,000

Regional health authority	£
East Anglia	123,000
North West Thames	162,000
North East Thames	238,000
South East Thames	265,000
South West Thames	200,000
Wessex	152,000
Oxford	128,000
South Western	163,000
West Midlands	353,000
Mersey	150,000
North Western	202,000
London Post Graduate SHA's	142,000
Total	2,902,000

We have also allocated £100,000 to the English national board to fund five additional nurse tutor posts.

The purpose of the additional funds is to provide start-up costs, additional tutors and some student salaries for courses in high-technology care. Detailed decisions on allocations will be for regional health authorities, but we shall be asking them to expand student numbers in courses which are already running, to start extra courses and develop new types of courses in critical care nursing.

We are separately providing £400,000 to the English national board to undertake a review of all post-registration nurse education and training.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Income Support

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications he has received since April 1988 from hon. Members on behalf of 19-year-olds, or the families of 19-year-olds, for extra-statutory payments of income support to be made in order to allow such students to complete courses of non-advanced education; and how many of such applications have been successful.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Since April 1988, we have received 31 such requests. Extra-statutory payments are made only where legislation is faulty, and does not meet our intention. This is not appropriate in these circumstances; accordingly, none of the applicants has been successful.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will detail how councillors' expenses are taken into account when computing eligibility for income and support and family credit; and if he will give the reference to the regulations which determine these rules.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Councillors' expenses are treated in the same way as the expenses incurred by anyone in employment and receiving income support or family credit.

Payments made in respect of income tax, socal security contributions and one half of a contribution towards an occupational or personal pension scheme are disregarded under regulation 36(3) of the Income Support (General) Regulations 1987 and regulation 20(3) of the Family Credit (General) Regulations 1987. In addition, payments received for employment expenses which are wholly, exclusively and necessarily incurred are not treated as earnings and are also disregarded under regulation 35(2)(c) of, and paragraph 3 of schedule 9 to, the Income Support Regulations and regulation 19(2)(b) of, and paragraph 32 of schedule 2 to, the Family Credit Regulations. However, any payments for employment expenses which are not wholly, exclusively and necessarily incurred are treated as earnings in the normal way in accordance with regulation 35(1)(f) of the Income Support Regulations and regulation 19(1)(d) of the Family Credit Regulations.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many 16 and 17-year-olds had made applications for income support on grounds of extreme hardship and how many had been granted at the end of January, February and March 1989; and how many at the same dates had been granted income support on grounds of being within exempted categories, shown by category and by region.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The number of applications from 16 and 17-year-olds on grounds of "severe hardship" and the number of directions given to enable benefit to be paid, at each of the dates specified, are in the following table:

Cumulative totals—period ending	Totals
27 January 1989	
Applications received	3,492
Directions given	2,332
24 February 1989	
Applications received	4,770
Directions given	3,092
31 March 1989	
Applications received	6,336
Directions given	4,104

Notes:
1. Based on 100 per cent. count of applications received.
2. Information relates to the number of applications received rather than to the number of individual young people involved. Some individuals may have received more than one direction.
3. Figures are cumulative to the last Friday in each month.

The numbers of 16 and 17-year-olds granted income support because they fall within one of the groups defined in regulations ceased to be collected after October 1988. They could be obtained now only at disproportionate cost.

Members' Letters

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many letters he received from hon. Members in each month for the last four months;

(2) what was the average delay between receipt of letters from hon. Members to date of reply in each of the last four months.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information in respect of letters, most of which were from hon. Members receiving a ministerial reply, is as follows:

	Totals
January 1989	
Letters received	1,333
Average time to reply	45 days
February 1989	
Letters received	1,533
Average time to reply	35 days

	Totals
March 1989	
Letters received	1,676
Average time to reply	32 days
April 1989	
Letters received	1,714
Average time to reply	38 days

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what steps are being taken to deal with correspondence from hon. Members more expeditiously;

(2) what proportion of letters from hon. Members sent to his office he estimates could have been dealt with more speedily by the local Department of Social Services office concerned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We are constantly seeking to improve the service provided to hon. Members.

As my hon. Friend suggests, usually the most satisfactory way to resolve queries relating to the personal circumstances of individual constituents is to take them up directly with the manager of the appropriate local or Central office. Many hon. Members already do so. However, no figures are kept on which an estimate could be made of the proportion of letters which could be dealt with more speedily in this way.

Social Fund

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total value of applications for *(a)* budgeting loans, *(b)* cash loans and *(c)* community care grants from the social fund for the year 1988-89 in respect of the Department of Social Security local offices at Eston, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Stockton.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on the numbers of community care grant, crisis loans and budgeting loan applications processed and the value of these applications is available in the Library.

Pensioners (Income)

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of pensioners' income was derived from *(a)* social security benefits, *(b)* occupational pensions, *(c)* savings and investment and *(d)* earnings in 1974, 1979, 1983 and 1988.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is as follows:

Source of pensioners' gross incomes

Per cent.

	1974	*1979*	*1983*	*1986*
All social security benefits	55	61	60	59
Occupational pensions	15	16	18	20
Savings and investment	13	11	14	14
Employment earnings	17	12	8	7

Source: Family expenditure survey.
Note: Information for 1986 is the latest available.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the increase in pensioner income for each quintile of the income distribution in each year since 1974.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is as follows:

Real changes in pensioners' income by quintile (percentage)

	1974 to 1975	*1975 to 1976*	*1976 to 1977*	*1977 to 1978*	*1978 to 1979*	*1979 to 1980*	*1980 to 1981*	*1981 to 1982*	*1982 to 1983*	*1983 to 1984*	*1984 to 1985*	*1985 to 1986*
Net income												
Quintile												
Lowest												
Q1	5	3	1	6	−2	4	4	2	6	2	−1	1
Q2	2	4	−3	7	−2	2	6	3	6	1	0	2
Q3	0	4	−5	8	−3	1	6	2	7	−1	1	3
Q4	0	1	−3	8	−2	2	3	2	9	−2	1	5
Highest												
Q5	−3	−5	2	6	−1	2	5	−6	16	−2	4	7
All	0	0	−1	7	−2	2	5	−1	11	−1	2	5
Equivalised Net income												
Quintile												
Lowest												
Q1	4	3	1	6	−3	1	6	1	6	1	−2	2
Q2	4	2	−1	6	−2	1	6	1	6	1	−1	3
Q3	3	0	−2	6	−2	1	5	2	7	0	0	3
Q4	2	0	−4	8	−1	0	6	1	8	0	1	4
Highest												
Q5	−2	−6	1	4	−2	2	6	−6	17	−1	1	9
All	1	−2	−1	6	−2	1	6	−1	10	0	0	5

Source: Family Expenditure Survey. Comparison with one year with another may be affected by sampling error.
Note: Equivalised figures allow for the different circumstances of pensioners, eg householders/non-householders, single/married.

Income Support

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the maximum level of income support payments, in cash and constant prices, available to meet residential care and nursing home fees in each of the last five years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The tables show the supplementary benefit-income support limits for help with fees in private and voluntary residential care and nursing homes. The figures given without brackets are amounts in cash prices; the ones in brackets are rounded March 1989 prices.

£ cash (March 1989 prices)

	April 1985	November 1985	July 1986	April 1987	April 1988	April 1989
Residential care homes						
Elderly	110 (130)	120 (140)	125 (144)	130 (143)	130 (138)	140
Very dependent or blind elderly	— —	— —	140 (161)	145 (160)	155 (165)	155
Mentally ill	120 (142)	130 (152)	130 (150)	130 (143)	130 (138)	140
Drug-alcohol dependent	120 (142)	130 (152)	130 (150)	130 (143)	130 (138)	140
Mentally handicapped	140 (166)	150 (176)	150 (173)	150 (165)	160 (170)	165
Physically disabled under pension age	170 (201)	180 (211)	180 (207)	190 (210)	190 (202)	200
Others	110 (130)	120 (140)	125 (144)	130 (143)	130 (138)	140
Nursing homes						
Elderly and others	138·60 (164)	170 (199)	170 (196)	175 (193)	185 (196)	190
Mentally ill	148·60 (176)	180 (211)	180 (207)	180 (199)	185 (196)	195
Drug-alcohol dependent	148·60 (176)	180 (211)	180 (207)	180 (199)	185 (196)	190
Mentally handicapped	168·60 (200)	200 (234)	200 (230)	200 (221)	200 (212)	205
Physically disabled under pension age	198·60 (235)	230 (269)	230 (265)	230 (254)	230 (244)	235
Terminally ill	198·60 (235)	230 (269)	230 (265)	230 (254)	230 (244)	235

Attendance Allowance Board

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many of his Department's staff, and what grades, have been seconded to the attendance allowance board under paragraph 9, schedule 11, Social Security Act 1975; how many are located in London and Blackpool; and what are the comparable figures for the past three years;

(2) if he will publish the arrangements made under paragraph 9, schedule 11, Social Security Act 1975.

Mr. Scott: The requested information is in the table. Staff are made available to the attendance allowance board having regard to its needs, the type of work involved and the personnel policies of the Department. I should emphasise that these staff are not involved in the decision-making process.

Numbers, grades and locations of Department of Social Security staff made available to act as officers and servants of the attendance allowance board 1986-87 to 1989-90

	1986-87		1987-88		1988-89		1989-90	
Grade	*London*	*Blackpool*	*London*	*Blackpool*	*London*	*Blackpool*	*London*	*Blackpool*
SMO	1·0	—	1·0	—	1·5	—	1·5	—
Principal	0·5	—	0·5	—	0·5	—	0·5	—
SEO	0·6	—	0·6	—	0·6	—	0·6	—
HEO	1·0	0·5	1·5	0·5	2·0	1·0	2·0	1·0
EO	1·4	12·0	1·8	12·0	1·8	16·0	1·8	18·0
AO	1·0	—	1·0	—	1·0	—	1·0	—
AA	1·0	—	1·0	—	1·0	—	1·0	—
Total	19·0		19·9		25·4		27·4	

Community Charge

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what discussions have taken place involving his Department as to the effects of the poll tax on the social security budget.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No discussions have taken place with any organisations outside Government.

Availability for Work

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the current average length of time between an unemployed claimant receiving an adjudication officer's adverse decision on grounds of restricted availability and non-availability for work and a subsequent appeal, by standard Great Britain region, including Greater London.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the information is not available.

SCOTLAND

Hospital Beds

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each year since 1979 *(a)* the number of acute beds available and *(b)* the number of non-acute beds available in each regional health authority; and if he will give the national total for each year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There are no regional health authorities in Scotland. The nearest equivalent to a regional health authority is Scotland taken as a whole. The average available number of staffed beds in NHS hospitals in Scotland at 30 September in each year since 1979 is set out in the table below.

Year	[1]*Acute*	[2]*Non-acute*	*Total*
1979	24,546	33,956	58,501
1980	24,412	33,793	58,205
1981	24,222	33,808	58,028
1982	23,727	33,715	57,440
1983	23,574	33,722	57,295
1984	23,367	33,849	57,216
1985	33,936	33,399	56,335
1986	22,450	33,284	55,734
1987	22,113	32,775	54,888
1988	21,691	32,235	53,925

These figures reflect changes in clinical practice and more extensive use of community care offset by increased provision for priority groups such as the elderly.

[1]Includes the following specialty groups: acute, supra-area, obstetrics and special categories

[2]Includes long-stay, psychiatric and mental handicap specialty groups.

Hospital Closures

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list, for each year since 1979 *(a)* each hospital closed completely and *(b)* each hospital closed partially; and if he will break that list down by each region.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information is not available by region, and details are not held centrally of partially closed hospitals. The information requested on hospitals closed completely is as detailed below and covered 2,883 beds. During the same period, 60 projects involving 6,747 beds and 521 day places were opened:

1979
Broadstones Jubilee Hospital, Port Glasgow
Duncan McPherson Hospital, Gourock
Gateside Hospital, Greenock
Greenock Eye Infirmary
Greenock Royal Infirmary
Dunbar Cottage Hospital
Kings Cross (West) Hospital, Dundee

1980
Shotts Hospital
Charleton Maternity Home, Montrose
Sidlaw Hospital, Auchterhouse

1981
Carnbooth Children's Home, Glasgow
Homoeopathic Hospital for Children, Glasgow
Burghmuir Hospital, Perth

1982
Kilmarnock Infirmary
Torrance House, Kilmarnock
Strathmore, Hospital, Blairgowrie

1983
Peebles County Hospital
Peebles War Memorial Hospital
Ear, Nose and Throat Hospital, Glasgow
Brevik Hospital, Lerwick

1984
Finnartmore Auxiliary Hospital, Kilmun
Buckreddan Maternity Hospital, Kilwinning
County Hospital, Dufftown
Old Gilbert Bain Hospital, Lerwick

1985
Caldwell House Hospital, Uplawmoor
Northern Hospital, Dunfermline
Centre for Rheumatic Diseases, Glasgow

1986
Broadfield Hospital, Port Glasgow
Royal Alexandra Infirmary, Paisley
Royal Alexandra Infirmary Annex, Paisley
Royal Victoria Eye Infirmary, Paisley
Thorn Hospital, Johnstone
Hozier House, Lanark
Schaw Hospital, Bearsden
Bignold Hospital, Wick

1987
Ochil Hills Hospital, Milnathort
Windsor Hospital, Falkirk
Glenlomond Hospital, Mawcarse, by Kinross
Hilton Hospital Inverness
Leith Hospital, Edinburgh

1988
Galashiels Hospital
Selkirk Hospital
Peel Hospital, Galashiels
Elsie Inglis Maternity Hospital, Edinburgh

1989
Bruntsfield Hospital, Edinburgh

Staff Statistics

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by each region for each year since 1979 the numbers of staff expressed as a whole-time equivalent and as actual full-time and part-time members in the following categories *(a)* ancillary, *(b)* administration and clerical, *(c)* nurses and midwives and *(d)* professional and technical.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There are no regional health authorities in Scotland. The nearest equivalent to a regional health authority is Scotland taken as a whole. The information requested for the years 1979 to 1987 can be found at table 9.2 in successive volumes of "Scottish Health Statistics", published annually by information and statistics division of the Common Services Agency in Scotland. Copies are held in the Library. The latest information, provisional data relating to 30 September 1988, is as follows:

Selected staff groups	*Whole time*	*Part time*	*Whole time equivalent*
Ancillary	11,855	18,584	22,067·8
Administrative and Clerical	12,203	4,670	14,752·2
Nurses and Midwives[1]	27,060	14,585	35,663·3
Professional and Technical[2]	9,980	2,352	11,084·6

[1] Qualified staff only.

[2] Includes scientific, paramedical, technical and works staff, opticians and pharmacists.

Capital Projects

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give detail of each capital project costing more than £1 million *(a)* actually under construction and *(b)* at the proposal or planning stage; if he will give the estimated date of completion for each project; and if he will break this list down by each region.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There are no health regions but the information for Scotland is as follows:

	Estimated date of Completion
Projects Under Construction	
Pollok Health Centre, Glasgow	Spring 1989
Castlemilk Health Centre, Glasgow	Spring 1989
Raigmore (Control of Infection Unit and on-call accommodation), Inverness	May 1989
Balfour Hospital, Kirkwall	July 1989
Gilbert Bain Hospital (Phase I), Lerwick	August 1989
Ravenscraig Phase IIIA, Greenock (Alcohol and Rehabilitation Unit)	December 1989
Dumfries and Galloway Services for the mentally handicapped	[1]1989
City Hospital, 2nd 60 bed unit, Aberdeen	May 1990
Seafield Hospital, Ayr	December 1990
West Lothian District General Hospital, Livingston	
a. Phase II	1991
b. Residences	February 1990
Royal Cornhill Phase I, Aberdeen	Spring 1991
Royal Infirmary, Perth	April 1991
Acute Hospital, Ayr	July 1991
Maternity Hospital, Bellshill	1992
Hairmyres Hospital, East Kilbride	1992
Udston Hospital, Hamilton	1992
Western Isles Hospital, Stornoway	1993
Schemes Completed but under Commissioning	
Royal Infirmary Phase I, Stirling	Due to open October 1989
West Lothian District General Hospital Phase I, Livingston	Due to open October 1989
Projects at Proposal or Planning Stage	
Whitefield Road Phase II, Dunfermline	1990
Edinburgh Dental Hospital	1991
Oban Hospital	1991-92
Campbeltown Hospital	1992-93
Bo'ness Hospital	1993
Lochgreen Hospital, Falkirk	1993
Royal Scottish National Hospital, Larbert	1993
Ayrshire Central Laundry	not known
Rutherglen Geriatric Services	not known
Leverndale Support Services	not known

[1] This is a phased development on a number of sites, other stages will follow.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give, for each region, details of proposed capital developments costing more than £1 million which have been cancelled for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No hospital project has been cancelled by my right hon. and learned Friend or his predecessor since 1979.

Roads

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) in what respects his announcement of 8 May concerning surface access to Prestwick airport changes the timetable for the Ayr road route as set out in his letter of 8 April 1987 to the hon. Member for Eastwood;

(2) what measures he now intends to take to improve road links between East Kilbride new town and Prestwick airport; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The announcement of 8 May does not affect the timetable for the Ayr road route. The Secretary of State for Scotland is now considering the report of the public local inquiry in respect of this project. The works are at present programmed to start late 1990 but achieving this will depend on the outcome of the inquiry.

Following the planned upgrading of the A77, further improvement of the road links between East Kilbride new town and Prestwick airport would depend upon the upgrading of a local road which would be a matter for Strathclyde regional council to consider.

Press Officers

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of press officers employed in his Department; in what capacity they serve; and what is the scope of their duties.

Mr. Rifkind: At 30 April 1989 there were 27 press officers, namely:

1 chief information officer (A)
1 chief information officer (B)
3 principal information officers
9 senior information officers
10 information officers
3 assistant information officers

Their function is to support (by the provision of advice and specialist skills) Ministers and the Scottish Office Departments in supplying information to press, radio and television. They also provide a service, on request, to United Kingdom Departments, the Crown Office, those other departments that fall within my responsibilities such as Scottish Courts Administration, and a range of non-departmental public bodies. SIO is also responsible for media arrangements in relation to royal and state visits to Scotland; the provision of information overseas through the Central Office of Information; and the overseas visitor programme of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

The office, which provides a 24-hour service, also lends support to the emergency services on media matters in the event of major civil emergencies such as Lockerbie.

The Scottish information Office has press offices in Edinburgh, London and Glasgow.

Radioactive Waste

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what factors Nirex took into account in choosing to shortlist Dounreay as a possible site for the disposal of solid low and intermediate-level radioactive waste.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 16 May 1989]:* The factors which Nirex took into account in choosing Dounreay and Sellafield as sites for investigation for the disposal of radioactive wastes, are set out in Nirex's report to the Government, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what information he has concerning the future location of radioactive waste disposal sites in Scotland by Nirex; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) on Wednesday 17 May 1989.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if Nirex has advised him that it has identified any other sites besides Dounreay as being suitable for the disposal of nuclear waste.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: *(holding answer 15 May 1989):* I am aware that Nirex has identified sites in addition to Dounreay as potentially suitable for the disposal of radioactive waste. Its report to the Government, a copy of which is in the Library of the House, indicated a short list of 12 sites, but it recommended, and the Government has accepted, that investigations should be limited to Dounreay and Sellafield in the first instance.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Competitiveness

16. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the change in competitiveness of British industry in the last 10 years.

49. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the change in competitiveness of British industry in the last 10 years.

Mr. Newton: Competitiveness involves numerous factors including quality, reliability, assurance of delivery and after-sales service. In relation to price competitiveness alone, unit labour costs in United Kingdom manufacturing compared with those in other industrial countries, allowing for the effects of exchange rate movements, are thought to have been on average the same in 1988 as in 1979.

24. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the change in competitiveness of British industry in the last 10 years.

Mr. Newton: Competitiveness involves numerous factors including quality, reliability, assurance of delivery and after-sales service. In relation to price competitiveness alone, unit labour costs in United Kingdom manufacturing compared with those in other industrial countries, allowing for the effects of exchange rate movements, are thought to have been on average the same in 1988 as in 1979.

Girobank

17. **Mr. Sean Hughes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what recent representations he has received on the future of Girobank.

Mr. Newton: Since the beginning of the year I have received a small number of representations from MPs and members of the public, raising a variety of questions about the future of Girobank.

34. **Mr. Allan Roberts:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a further statement on the future of Girobank.

61. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a further statement on the future of Girobank.

70. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a further statement on the future of Girobank.

Mr. Newton: As I stated in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) on 20 April, the Post Office board accepted a conditional offer by the Alliance and Leicester Building Society for Girobank, and I endorsed the decision. Detailed negotiations between the two parties are continuing with a view to completion as soon as possible in the coming weeks.

The regulatory authorities will need to be satisfied and my consent will be needed before a sale can take place.

Manufacturing Sales

18. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the share of imports in United Kingdom manufacturing sales three years ago; and what it is at the present date.

52. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the share of imports in United Kingdom manufacturing sales in each of the last three years; and what it is now.

Mr. Alan Clark: The share of imports in United Kingdom manufacturing sales was 34·3 per cent. in 1985 and 35·8 per cent. in the 12-month period ending in the first quarter of 1988.

Post Boxes (Sealing)

19. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has had any discussion with Sir Bryan Nicholson of the Post Office regarding the case for reviewing the legal basis whereby post boxes may be sealed off.

Mr. Forth: No, Sir. Section 59 of the British Telecommunications Act 1981 makes it clear that the Post Office is entitled to interrupt, suspend or restrict any service provided by it in an emergency. On occasion, the Post Office is obliged to suspend collections from certain letter boxes during periods of industrial action and, in such circumstances, the letter boxes are sealed up.

World Trade

21. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the United Kingdom share of world trade in *(a)* 1978 and *(b)* 1988.

44. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the United Kingdom share of world trade in *(a)* 1978 and *(b)* 1988.

68. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the United Kingdom's share of world trade in *(a)* 1978 and *(b)* 1988.

Mr. Alan Clark: The United Kingdom share of world exports was 5·2 per cent. in 1978 and in January to September 1988, the latest period for which figures are available.

25. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which three industrial countries have lost the largest share of world trade over the last 10 years.

31. **Mr. Alan Williams:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which three industrial countries have lost the largest share of world trade over the last 10 years.

42. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which three industrial countries have lost the largest share of world trade over the last 10 years.

73. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which three industrial countries have lost the largest share of world trade over the last 10 years.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Netherlands, France and Greece recorded the largest reductions in share of world trade between 1978 and 1988.

Anti-dumping Duties

22. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many anti-dumping duties the European Economic Community has established on imports into the European Economic Community over the last year.

Mr. Alan Clark: In the period May 1988 to April 1989, definitive anti-dumpting duties were imposed by the EC in 30 cases involving 15 products.

Manufactured Goods (Exports)

23. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the most recent United Kingdom share of world exports of manufactured goods; and what was the level in 1979, 1969 and 1959.

Mr. Alan Clark: The United Kingdom share of the main manufacturing countries' exports of manufactures was 8·2 per cent. in the first three quarters of 1988, 9·1 per cent. in 1979, 11·2 per cent. in 1969 and 17·9 per cent. in 1959.

"The Observer"

26. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met representatives of the Newspaper Publishers Association to discuss control of *The Observer* newspaper.

Mr. Maude: I have had no meeting with the Newspaper Publishers Association to discuss control of *The Observer* newspaper.

Consumer Affairs (EC)

27. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next expects to meet his European Community counterparts to discuss consumer affairs.

28. **Mr. Stuart Bell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next plans to meet the European Community Commissioner for Consumer Affairs; and what he expects to discuss.

41. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next plans to meet the European Community Commissioner for Consumer Affairs; and what he expects to discuss.

43. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what matters he proposes to discuss at the forthcoming meeting of European Economic Community Consumer Ministers.

53. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what matters he proposes to discuss at the forthcoming meeting of European Economic Community Consumer Ministers.

62. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what matters he proposes to discuss at the forthcoming meeting of European Economic Community Consumer Ministers.

74. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next expects to meet his European Community counterparts to discuss consumer affairs.

76. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next expects to meet his European Community counterparts to discuss consumer affairs.

Mr. Forth: I hope to meet my European Community counterparts and Mr. Van Miert, Commissioner with responsibility for consumer issues, at the Council of Consumer Ministers which the Spanish Presidency has planned for 1 June. The provisional agenda is as follows:

Proposal for a Council directive amending directive 87/102/EEC for the approximation of laws, regulations and administrative provisions of member states concerning consumer credit.

Draft resolution for the relaunch of EC consumer policy.

Commission report on the European home and leisure accident surveillance system.

Exchange of views on the Commission report on consumer education.

Commission presentation of the general product safety directive.

Any other business.

Brewing Industry (MMC Report)

29. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has received any representations concerning the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the brewery industry.

Mr. Maude: I have received a large number of representations expressing various points of view.

51. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he intends to respond to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission Report on the supply of beer.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend and I are currently considering the various representations being made to us, and we will announce as soon as possible the action that we propose to take.

Pound Sterling

30. **Mr. Beaumont-Dark:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what effect the current rate of the pound sterling against the deutschmark and dollar is having on export performance of manufacturing industry.

Mr. Alan Clark: Manufacturing industry continues to improve its expert performance. The first quarter volume rose by 5 per cent. compared with the last quarter of 1988.

36. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what advice his Department is giving to export industries regarding the exchange rate of sterling.

Mr. Alan Clark: Our consistent advice to exporters on exchange rates has been that they should consider protecting themselves against the risk of exchange rate fluctuation and to consult experts, primarily the banks, about the best way of doing this.

Interest Rates

32. **Mr. Nicholas Baker:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will introduce regulations to require moneylenders, banks and credit agencies, including credit card companies, to show clearly and simply in statements to customers the real rate of interest on any balance outstanding.

Mr. Maude: I have no plans to amend the current regulations under the Consumer Credit Act 1974, which have been in force since May 1985, relating to the disclosure of the rate of interest applied to outstanding balances due under running account credit agreements. These types of agreement apply to credit cards, store cards and budget accounts. Discussions are currently underway with the banks on making known the rate of interest that has been applied to an overdraft.

46. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the impact of the current level of interest rates on United Kingdom manufacturing industry.

Mr. Atkins: Manufacturing industry will greatly benefit from the Government's firm anti-inflationary policy because inflation is the greatest threat to the nation's prosperity.

47. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the cost to industry of the rise in base rates since April 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The cost to industrial and commercial companies to date of the changes in bank base rates since April 1988, compared with the cost if bank base rates had remained the same since April 1988, is estimated to be about £1·3 billion. The hon. Member should bear in mind, however, that a one percentage point increase in interest rates, even if sustained for a full year, costs companies far less than a one percentage point increase in pay settlements.

Manufacturing Output

33. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the output per employee in manufacturing industry in the United Kingdom, France, the United States of America, West Germany and Japan.

71. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the output per employee in manufacturing industry in the United Kingdom, France, the United States of America, West Germany and Japan.

78. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the output per employee in manufacturing industry in the United Kingdom, France, the United States of America, West Germany and Japan.

83. **Mr. John Hughes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which of the seven major industrial countries have a higher manufacturing productivity level than the United Kingdom; and which have a lower.

84. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the output per employee in manufacturing industry in the United Kingdom, France, the United States of America, West Germany and Japan.

Mr. Atkins: No reliable comparisons exist for absolute levels of output per employee in manufacturing industry between different countries, but available figures show that in the 1980s output per employee in manufacturing industry has grown faster in the United Kingdom than in France, the United States of America, West Germany or Japan.

77. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the most recent United Kingdom share of world exports of manufactured goods; and what was the level in 1979, 1969 and 1959.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given to the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) on 10 May 1989, *Official Report* column *435*.

72. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the most recent figure for output in manufacturing industry; and what was the figure for the same month in 1973.

Mr. Atkins: In March 1989 manufacturing output was at a level of 118·5, based on 1985 equal to 100. This is 7½ per cent. more than the level of 110·4 for March 1973. But my hon. Friend will appreciate that monthly data can be erratic. A firmer based comparison would be that in the first quarter of 1989 manufacturing output was 7½ per cent. higher than in the same period in 1973. It was also 6½ per cent. higher than in the first quarter of 1988. Manufacturing output is now at its highest ever level.

Information Technology

35. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the United Kingdom trade deficit in information technology products in 1988.

67. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the United Kingdom trade deficit in information technology products in 1988.

Mr. Alan Clark: The United Kingdom trade deficit in the products of the electronic and information technology sector was £2·3 billion in the 12 months to September 1988.

Borrowers (Advice)

37. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has received recent representations from United Kingdom banks, other financial institutions and credit-giving institutions in general concerning proposed regulations giving advice to borrowers on secured and unsecured loan obligations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Maude: Draft proposals were recently circulated to credit trade associations, enforcement bodies and consumer organisations on amendments to the consumer credit advertisements regulations. These include a warning that a borrower's home is at risk if repayments are not kept up on a secured loan. Comments were invited by 28 April and these are under consideration.

Inward Investment

38. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the total of inward investment recorded by industries engaged in motor and component manufacturing since 1979.

Mr. Atkins: Since 1984 there have been 83 inward investment projects in the United Kingdom in the motor and component manufacturing sectors involving the creation of around 12,000 new jobs and the safeguarding of around 18,000 existing jobs. These projects include the establishment of new businesses, the expansion or acquisition of existing businesses and involvement in joint ventures. Comparable figures for earlier years are not available. The job figures are based upon information provided to the Department at the time the investment decisions were made and take no account of subsequent developments.

Included among these figures are the major investments by Nissan in 1984 creating 2,700 jobs in the North East (later expanded in 1987, creating a further 1,400 jobs); and of Ford in 1988 which will create more than 1,700 jobs in Wales. In April 1989 Toyota announced its decision to manufacture cars in Derbyshire with the eventual creation of 3,000 new jobs. Bosch announced that it will be manufacturing alternators in Wales creating over 1,000 new jobs; and Fujitsu announced a new factory in the North East with the eventual creation of 1,500 new jobs.

From 1980 to 1987 inclusive, the latest years for which such information is available, foreign companies directly invested £0·9 billion net in the their subsidiary associate and branch conerns in the United Kingdom vehicle industry. This figure, which excludes funds raised locally understates the amount of new investment in production capacity because other overseas funding flows are included.

48. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the level of inward investments in 1979 and for the most recent year for which information is available.

Mr. Atkins: The latest available information on the level of inward investment in the United Kingdom is given in table 9.1 of the United Kingdom Balance of Payments —1988 (the CSO Pink Book). A copy of this publication is available in the Library.

Monopolies and Mergers Commission

39. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are his current criteria for referring a bid to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

58. **Mr. Faulds:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are his current criteria for referring a bid to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Maude: The Government's policy remains as we set it out on 3 March 1988. Our review, the results of which we announced at that time, concluded that the effect of a merger on competition in the United Kingdom should continue to be the main criterion in deciding whether a merger should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Household Electrical Goods

40. **Mr. Jack Thompson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the current import penetration of the market for household electrical goods.

59. **Mr. Orme:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the current import penetration of the market for household electrical goods.

82. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the current import penetration of the market for household electrical goods.

Mr. Atkins: Taking the coverage of "household electrical goods" to be the same as that of business monitor PQ 3460—"Domestic electrical appliances"—it is estimated that in 1988 the import penetration of the market for household electrical goods was 40 per cent.

Manufacturing Productivity

45. **Mr. Geoffrey Robinson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which of the seven major industrial countries have higher manufacturing productivity than the United Kingdom; and which have a lower level.

Mr. Atkins: No reliable comparisons exist for absolute levels of manufacturing productivity between different countries, but available figures show that in the 1980s the United Kingdom has had the fastest rate of growth of manufacturing productivity of the seven major industrialised countries.

Chemical Industry

50. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what contribution the chemical industry has made to the balance of payments over the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Atkins: The contribution for the three-year period is estimated as a positive balance of some £9 billion.

EC (Inward Investment)

54. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has as to the total amount of *(a)* United States inward investment into member states of the European Community and *(b)* inward investment into the United States by European firms, over the past three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information, as published by the United States Department of Commerce, is as follow:

Flows of United States direct investment

US$ billion

	1986	*1987*	*1988*
United States 'outward' direct investment in the EC	12·8	20·9	[1]5·8
'Inward' direct investment in the United States by the EC	19·1	31·4	[1]22·4

[1] provisional estimates

Source: United States Department of Commerce—Survey of Current Business

Estate Agents

55. **Mr. Cousins :** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what changes to the Estate Agents Act 1979 he is considering; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: I am currently in the process of concluding a review of estate agency. The review has examined the operations of the Estate Agents Act 1979 and has considered recommendations from the Director General of Fair Trading and proposals from estate agency bodies. I hope to make an announcement shortly.

81. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress has been made in drawing up a statutory code on practice for estate agents.

Mr. Forth: I am currently in the process of concluding a review of estate agency. In the course of my review I have given particular consideration to whether it might be appropriate to develop a code of practice for estate agents to supplement the existing consumer protection provisions of the Estate Agents Act 1979. I hope to make an announcement shortly.

British Shipbuilders

56. **Mr. Clay:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met the Chairman of British Shipbuilders; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Newton: I last met Mr. John Lister on Thursday 12 January and am in regular contact with him on matters relating to the corporation's disposals programme.

Textiles

57. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on trends in productivity and output in the United Kingdom textiles industry over the last three years.

Mr. Atkins: In 1988 output and productivity in the United Kingdom textiles industry are estimated to have been 2·5 per cent. higher and 7·1 per cent. higher respectively than in 1985.

Chlorofluorocarbons

60. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what effect he expects there to be on industry from the controls on chlorofluorocarbon production and consumption; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Because of the wide variety of uses to which chlorofluorocarbons are put, the effects of the controls will vary for both producers and industrial consumers depending on the precise products and applications involved. Market forces should encourage the development of alternative technologies, products and processes.

The controls represent both a challenge and an opportunity to which industry is already making positive responses.

Single European Market

63. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a further statement on the help which is being given to companies to enable them to take full advantage of the establishment of the internal market in 1992.

Mr. Maude: DTI's "Europe Open for Business" campaign provides a comprehensive service to business including:

A 24-hour telephone 'hotline': 01-200 1992.
Factsheets on the single market programme.
An 'action checklist for business'.
"Spearhead" database giving the up-to-date position on single market proposals and details of relevant Community legislation.
Range of booklets on standards.
Video pack on the Brussels decision-making process.
Quarterly newsletter *Single Market News*.
Proposals.

64. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he has taken to ensure that industry in *(a)* the North East of Scotland and *(b)* the other regions of the United Kingdom is ready to benefit from the single European market.

Mr. Maude: The completion of the single market by the end of 1992 will affect all regions, directly or indirectly. The central message of our "Europe Open for Business" campaign is therefore to encourage all firms, wherever they are located, to take action now to ensure that they benefit from the opportunities the single market will bring.

Barlow Clowes

65. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proportion of their investments has now been recovered by investors in the McDonald Wheeler and Barlow Clowes funds; and how many criminal charges have now been preferred in respect of those involved in these businesses.

Mr. Maude: I understand that investors in McDonald Wheeler have received 36p in the pound in distributions made to date. Investors in Barlow Clowes Gilt Managers Ltd., whose accounts were with Lloyds Bank trustee account have received 75p in the pound and other investors in Barlow Clowes Gilt Managers Ltd. have received 25p in the pound to date.

Mr. John David William Wheeler has been charged on three charges of fraudulent trading, 11 of theft, two of using a false instrument, one of publishing a false statement and one of false accounting. These charges are the subject of extradition proceedings in the Republic of Ireland. Mr. John Arthur Woodall has been charged on three charges of fraudulent trading, one of theft, one of false accounting and one of publishing a false statement. Mr. Peter Clowes and others have been charged on two charges of conspiracy to steal, 13 of theft, one of false accounting and one of perverting the course of justice.

Building Societies and Insurance Companies

66. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assessment he has made of the impact on consumer choice of the development of tied arrangements between building societies and insurance companies.

Mr. Forth: I have made no formal assessment but this is an issue which my Department and the other departments concerned are keeping under review.

Competition

69. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next intends to meet with the responsible vice-president of the European Commission to discuss competition policy.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend and I expect to meet Sir Leon Brittan from time to time, to discuss a variety of competition issues.

Machine Tools

75. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what recent representations he has received from the machine tool industry.

Mr. Atkins: I have not recently received any representation from the machine tool industry.

"Releasing Enterprise"

79. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress has been made in helping to achieve a greater understanding between Government and business following the publication last year of "Releasing Enterprise".

Mr. Maude: Departments have now drawn up their action programmes to boost the number and range of secondments and attachments of employees from the Civil Service to business and vice versa and the number of civil servants holding non-executive directorships. Overall, these programmes imply a doubling of the numbers involved by the end of this year. On 1 March, the Government launched the bridge programme to alert businesses to these new interchange opportunities and to encourage direct contact with Departments. I sent a copy of the documents to all hon. Members.

Departments' plans also include training, workshops and management action to improve awareness of the impact of Government on enterprise.

Packaging (Security)

80. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what recent talks he has held with food manufacturers with regard to packaging security.

Mr. Forth: No such talks have been held as food matters are not the responsibility of this Department.

UniChem

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects to publish the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report on UniChem; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: The report is published today. The Monopolies and Mergers Commission concluded that UniChem has arrangements for the allotment of shares in its capital which are anti-competitive and against the public interest.

I accept the MMC's findings and conclusions. As from tomorrow, 18 May 1989, purchases from UniChem by its members will not be able to contribute towards the allotment of shares in its capital. A notice will shortly be published describing in detail the order I propose to make with a view to achieving this result.

UniChem is an industrial and provident society whose main activity is the wholesale supply of pharmaceutical goods. The Monopolies and Mergers Commission was asked to investigate UniChem's allocation of shares prior to its proposed conversion into a public limited company in mid 1990. UniChem had decided to allocate a large number of shares at £1 per share nominal value (refundable if members left the society) to new and existing members of the society. The allocations to be made on the basis of the levels of business placed by them with UniChem in the period up to May 1990.

Because UniChem is a profitable business with a large share of the market, the value of shares on conversion is likely to be well in excess of the nominal value. Partly as a result of this prospect of considerable capital gain, UniChem has attracted both new members and additional business from existing members, and increased its market share.

The commission found that the arrangements enabled UniChem to increase market share by means other than price reduction or improved quality of service, and that competitors were not likely to be able to compete using similar arrangements, or, having regard to the low margins prevailing in the industry, through price reductions or other forms of discount. The commission concluded that UniChem's arrangements had distorted competition and were therefore anti-competitive. The commission went on to conclude that the arrangements were also against the public interest and, if the arrangements were allowed to remain in place, would continue to be, as leading to reduced competition in the supply of goods to retail pharmacies, reduced choice of wholesalers, and reduced quality of service.

The commission also concluded that measures should be taken to prevent further damage to the wholesale pharmaceutical market, and recommended that any shares to be issued by UniChem in future should not be related to purchases from UniChem made after publication of the report. Nor should UniChem change the minimum level of turnover required for membership, or the number of shares to which new members must subscribe.

I accept the commission's recommendations. I intend to make an order which will prohibit UniChem Limited from continuing to operate its "share scheme", under which shares will be allotted by reference to the amounts of goods and services acquired from UniChem, except in respect of allotment by reference to goods and services acquired by 17 May 1989. UniChem may not make or carry out any agreement in respect of allotment by reference to later acquisitions of goods or services.

UniChem must also hold its minimum purchase qualification for continued membership to £3,000 per month and its initial share subscription qualification to 200 per premises, up to a maximum of 1,000.

National Engineering Laboratory

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has any further announcement to make concerning the National Engineering Laboratory.

Mr. Newton: My right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State has now received the report from Touche Ross Management Consultants appointed on 29 November 1988 to undertake a detailed study of the National Engineering Laboratory and to advise on the restructuring that is necessary as the way forward towards privatisation. Copies of a summary of their report are being placed in the Libraries of both Houses and made available to staff at NEL.

Taking account of the report and the advice of the NEL supervisory board, we concluded that the considerable skills of the laboratory are best exploited in a framework

which provides greater opportunities for commercial drive. In our view this is best secured through privatisation. We have concluded that in order to achieve a successful privatisation, restructuring and a new commercially oriented approach to business must first be established. This process could take some years.

To prepare for privatisation, we propose to follow the recommendation of Touche Ross and to transfer the laboratory out of the Civil Service into the ownership of a limited company, to be called the National Technology Centre Ltd., whose shares will be held initially by Government, but which could later be sold when the business of the laboratory has been transformed. The necessary legislation will be brought forward as soon as possible. The laboratory will play a central role within the National Technology Centre and within the East Kilbride site. The future of the East Kilbride site is also important, and we intend that it should be developed as a science and technology park which will be an attractive location for science based companies.

Management Training

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what action he has taken in support of the charter group initiative for management training.

Mr Forth: My Department's strong support for the management charter initiative (charter group initiative) is set out clearly in the 1988 White Paper, "DTI—the Department for Enterprise"(Cm. 278). We have offered pump-priming funding of up to £0·5 million a year for up to five years, to match employer donations. £500,000 was awarded during financial year 1988-89. DTI and all major Government Departments have become founder members of the management charter initiative.

Link

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the LINK programmes so far announced, showing in each case the funds committed to them by *(a)* the Government, *(b)* higher education institutions, *(c)* the research councils and *(d)* the private sector.

Mr. Forth: The LINK programmes so far announced, together with the funding authorised, are listed below. Higher education institutions are normally recipients of research council funding. The private sector is required at least to match the Government funding for each LINK programme.

Programme	*Funding (£ million)*		
	Government Departments	*Research councils*	*Private sector*
Molecular electronics	5·00	5·00	10·00
Advanced semiconductor materials	9·00	3·00	12·00
Industrial measurement systems	5·40	5·40	10·80
Eukaryotic genetic engineering	1·50	0·80	2·40
Nanotechnology	6·00	1·50	7·50
Biotransformations	1·00	1·00	2·00
Personal communications	3·35	3·00	6·35
Drug delivery and targeting	0·50	1·00	1·50
Construction maintenance and refurbishment	0·75	0·75	1·50
Food processing sciences	7·00	—	7·00
Ventilation, air conditioning and refrigeration	0·75	0·75	1·50
Optoeolectronics	10·00	5·00	15·00
Design of high speed machinery	5·00	5·00	10·00
Structural composites	14·00	6·00	20·00

Telephones (Pensioners)

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if, when he next meets the Director-General of Oftel, he will direct him to make it a condition of British Telecom's licence that they abolish rental charges on telephones for pensioner customers.

Mr. Atkins: Under the terms of the Telecommunications Act 1984, it would be entirely for the Director General of Telecommunications to consider whether such a licence condition would be appropriate. I understand that he is considering with British Telecom the details of a more effective replacement for the existing low user rebate scheme and that he is aware of the importance such a scheme has for those pensioners who spend relatively little on telephone calls.

Space

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards space and its exploitation.

Mr. Atkins: The Government work primarily through the European Space Agency in pursuing space science research and in developing those areas of space activity that have commercial potential. Earth observation is now the centre piece of civil space policy. The United Kingdom has joined ESA's Columbus programme, concentrating on the polar platform element: and the Government are funding the establishment of the earth observation data centre at Farnborough. The civil space programme is implemented through the British National Space Centre which brings together the space interests of various Departments and research councils. Greater private sector participation in space programmes is being encouraged. But the Government expect to maintain its own expenditure on civil space at the level of approximately £130 million per annum. Further details are given in the Government's response to the Second Report of the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology, 1987-88 Session. The memorandum containing this response was placed in the Libraries of both Houses on 28 July 1988 [*Official Report, House of Lords*, c. 477.] and was subsequently published in HL Paper 105 (11 October 1988).

House of Fraser

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Linlithgow of 12 April, *Official Report*, column *543*, when he expects the urgent and thorough investigations into the leaking of his Departmental inspectors' report on the acquisition of the House of Fraser to be concluded.

Mr. Forth: This investigation is still in progress. It is not yet possible to forecast when it will be concluded.

Kemp Report

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will consult interested parties before reaching any decision on the recommendations of the Kemp report on the future of the Export Credits Guarantee Department.

Mr. Alan Clark: The report on the future status of ECGD has only just been received by DTI Ministers. The procedures for considering it are still being examined.

Mr. Dover: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has received the report by Mr. Kemp on the future status of Export Credits Guarantee Department.

Mr. Alan Clark: Mr. Kemp has submitted his report on the future status of ECGD to the Secretary of State and other relevant DTI Ministers.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 18 May 1989

NATIONAL FINANCE

European Monetary System

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consequences would ensue for the United Kingdom economy and United Kingdom citizens in the event of sterling joining the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system and what would be the necessary changes in public policy.

Mr. Lilley: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) on 8 May, at column *318*.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Conway: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether value added tax is charged on Ministry of Defence purchases from the United States of America which are delivered direct to British forces in Germany; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: United Kingdom VAT is not applicable to such purchases. By virtue of international agreements, German VAT is not charged.

Advertising

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much advertising air time Her Majesty's Treasury purchased with each commercial television company in each of the last five years.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 15 May 1989]:* None.

PRIME MINISTER

Civil Service (Discipline)

Q17. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister what assessment has been made of the effects on discipline in the Civil Service of the practice of officials sanctioning the unauthorised release of official information other than through conventional channels without prior explicit ministerial consent.

The Prime Minister: None.

Court of Auditors

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the procedure for considering the annual reports of the Court of Auditors; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The annual reports of the Court of Auditors are discussed each year at the Economic and Finance Council in line with a procedure which the United Kingdom was instrumental in securing.

Engagements

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 18 May.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 18 May.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 18 May.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 18 May.

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 18 May.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Teaching Vacancies (Bolton)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the current number of teaching vacancies at educational establishments in the Bolton education authority area; and what categories of subject the vacancies fall into.

Mrs. Rumbold: In January 1989 (the latest date for which figures are available) there were 10 full-time teacher vacancies in nursery and primary schools maintained by bolton local education authority—one in the nursery, five in the infant and four in the junior age group.

At the same date there was one full-time teacher vacancy (in English) in maintained secondary schools.

No information is available regarding vacancies in other educational establishments.

Open University

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the outcome of the latest meeting of the visiting committee of the Open university in terms of evaluation of the future course profile and financial stability of the university.

Mr. Jackson: At its latest meeting on 13 and 14 April the Open university visiting committee began its consideration of the university's programmes and financial forecasts. It will complete its assessment, and report to my right hon. Friend in the summer.

Volunteer Youth Workers

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what response he has made to the letter of 7 March from the chairman of Warwickshire association of youth clubs, Mrs. B. E. Winstanley, about grant aid for the training of volunteer youth workers; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department sent a reply to Mrs. Winstanley on May 10. A copy of the reply has been sent to the hon. Member.

Student Grants

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the total cost of

maintenance grants paid to part-time students in each of the past 10 years in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms with 1979=100.

Mr. Jackson: This information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the projected cost of maintenance grants to be paid to part-time students in each of the next five years.

Mr. Jackson: The information which would be required to provide such a projection is not collected centrally.

College Lecturers (School Teachers)

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to encourage college lecturers to become school teachers.

Mrs. Rumbold: Last October the Department published a discussion paper on the staffing implications of projected student numbers in LEA-maintained FE colleges in England. That paper suggested that local education authorities should consider redeploying suitably qualified surplus FE lecturers to teach shortage subjects in schools. Under the proposed licensed teacher scheme, FE lecturers with two years' experience will become eligible for qualified teacher status after one year's service as a licensed teacher instead of two as will be the case generally.

Incentive Allowances

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Bridgend of 5 May, *Official Report*, column 256, that no further information is at present available, what further information he intends to collect in relation to awards of incentive allowances, for each school or financial year since 30 September 1987; when and by what means he intends to collect such further information; if he will estimate the date or dates of publication of such further information; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The database of teacher records will provide detailed information on an annual basis about the numbers of teachers in receipt of incentive allowances. The first such data, showing the position in March 1988, are likely to become available early next year.

University Statistical Record

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he collects information from, or has access to, the University Statistical Record.

Mr. Jackson: The Department has no direct access to the University Statistical Record. Given prior notice, the USR can on occasions supply information not available in published reports, although details of individual institutions normally remain confidential.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

British Citizens Imprisoned Abroad

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the figures for each of the last five years for which records are available of the numbers of British citizens imprisoned abroad who returned to this country within that year.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will state for the last year for which figures are available how many British citizens imprisoned abroad received *(a)* one, *(b)* two, *(c)* three, *(d)* four and *(e)* more than four visits from consular officials.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list in the *Official Report* all those consular posts which have a local benevolent fund or charity on which they can draw for buying extra food, soap, and so on for British citizens imprisoned abroad, stating against each *(a)* the total drawn for each of the last five years for which figures are available and *(b)* the total amount available from each source in this financial year.

Mr. Eggar: Many of our consular posts around the world have access to local benevolent funds. Such funds exist purely due to private donations. Since public funds are not involved we do not keep a central list. The funds also vary enormously in their extent and purpose as well as the degree to which consular posts may draw on them.

Lorrain Esme Osman

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the issue in Hong Kong on 30 November 1985 of a warrant for the arrest of Lorrain Esme Osman, and the quashing of the warrant by the Hong Kong Court of Appeal on 4 May 1989 on the grounds that it was vitiated by bias.

Mr. Eggar: These are matters for the relevant authorities in Hong Kong and for the courts here.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from the Government of the Republic of Liberia in respect of Lorrain Esme Osman; whether Mr. Osman has diplomatic immunity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: There has been an exchange of notes with the Liberian Government through its embassy in London about Mr. Osman's appointment as Liberian ambassador-at-large to the European Community and his status in the United Kingdom. It is for the courts to decide whether Mr. Osman has any diplomatic immunity, in accordance with the Diplomatic Privileges Act 1964 and the facts presented to them.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Gas Masks (Israel)

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster why his Department is refusing an export licence to allow gas masks to be sold to Israel for purely defensive purposes.

Mr. Alan Clark: No application has been received for a licence to export gas masks to Israel.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Population Control

Sir Charles Morrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many applications were received for 1989 for allocations through the joint funding scheme for population and family planning projects; what these applications were and from which organisations; how many and which were accepted; and what amounts were allocated to each organisation.

Mr. Chris Patten: This information is maintained by financial year rather than calendar year. Details of the population and family planning project applications which have been received under the joint funding scheme for the current financial year, 1989-90, and following years are:

Agency and country	*Project name*	*Requested 1989-90* £	*Requested 1990-91* £	*Requested 1991-92* £	*Requested 1992-93* £	*Requested 1993-94* £
Accepted						
Marie Stopes International						
Kenya	Extension of Family Planning Education and Service Programme for National Youth Service	96,957	52,599	101,490	—	—
Lesotho	Creating a Corps of Village-based Family Planning Educators and Motivator	41,269	33,205	35,652	—	—
Pakistan	Lahore reproductive health extension services	22,844	24,270	25,540	—	—
Population Concern						
Bangladesh	Chittagong Family Planning	32,820	36,360	—	—	—
Ethiopia	Development of Manual for Training Rural Women Development Agents	39,670	—	—	—	—
Pakistan	Family Planning through Community Institutions	21,535	23,565	23,835	—	—
Pakistan	Training for Womens Development	24,835	25,985	28,240	—	—
	Totals	279,930	195,984	214,757	—	—
Rejected						
Marie Stopes International						
Haiti	Condom Social Marketing	36,355	44,110	39,935	—	—
Nigeria	Combat Aids	252,080	352,835	208,454	—	—
Tanzania	National Family Planning Radio Education/ endorsement Programme	53,793	53,397	53,882	—	—
	Totals	342,228	450,342	302,271	—	—
Under consideration						
Marie Stopes International						
Ethiopia	Maternal and Reproductive Health Clinic	114,473	91,500	91,476	—	—
India	Comprehensive Family Planning and Preventive Health Service for employees	69,806	73,382	73,382	—	—
India	Contraceptive Social Marketing	57,843	63,627	64,206	—	—
India	Marketing Educational Family Planning Materials	85,000	85,000	85,000	—	—
India	Soap Drama	26,500	—	—	—	—
Sierra Leone	Work based Maternal and Child Health and Family Planning	45,171	33,668	30,544	—	—
Population Concern						
Caribbean	Family Planning Motivational video Series	40,158	50,098	44,374	—	—
Nepal	Newalparasi Womens Development Project	36,880	52,635	42,555	34,300	29,590
	Totals	475,831	449,910	431,537	34,300	29,590
Application withdrawn by Agency						
Marie Stopes International						
Africa	Health Education Family Planning film	18,245	—	—	—	—

Sir Charles Morrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which organisations received allocations from the joint funding scheme for population and family planning projects for each of the years 1987 and 1988; what amounts were allocated to each organisation; and for what purposes.

Mr. Chris Patten: This information is maintained by financial year rather than calendar year. Details of the population and family planning projects which have been supported under the joint funding scheme in the financial years 1987-88 and 1988-89 are:

Agency and country	*Project name*	*Spent in 1987-88* £	*Spent in 1988-89* £	*Under offer for 1989-90* £	*Under offer for 1990-91* £	*Under offer for 1991-92* £
Africa Now Marie Stopes International						
Kenya	Chogoria Family Planning Programme	—	10,300	9,213	8,358	11,182
Bangladesh	Family Planning, preventative health care	23,550	23,793	52,868	—	—

Agency and country	Project name	Spent in 1987-88 £	Spent in 1988-89 £	Under offer for 1989-90 £	Under offer for 1990-91 £	Under offer for 1991-92 £
India	Brass Tacks Family Planning Programme	13,550	39,537	71,700	—	—
Kenya	National Youth Service	11,000	22,369	41,950	—	—
Malawi	Health Programme for poor women and families	—	47,910	42,550	32,257	—
Mexico	Family Planning Leon	21,038	13,525	—	—	—
Peru	Provision of Maternal Health and Family Planning Services	8,427	—	—	—	—
Sierra Leone	Youth Fertility Education Programme	16,174	—	—	—	—
Sri Lanka	Family Planning Educators and Motivators	—	—	37,244	45,049	45,049
Swaziland	Male Oriented Family Planning	6,000	23,772	49,430	—	—
Zimbabwe	Training Programme Zimbabwe Association of Womens Clubs	—	23,793	23,840	31,650	—
Oxfam Population Concern						
Pakistan	Family Planning Project	—	2,825	—	—	—
Bangladesh	Family Planning Health and Education	15,876	18,429	—	—	—
Caribbean	Two workshops for Family Planning personnel Antigua	—	25,754	30,928	—	—
Caribbean	Towards accreditation sex education in Caribbean schools	—	23,820	51,861	38,569	—
Caribbean	Two workshops for teachers	—	41,592	44,665	—	—
Caribbean	Three workshops Family Planning Fieldworkers	—	23,117	24,784	25,512	—
Ethiopia	Training rural women development agents	17,051	55,027	42,240	—	—
Mauritius	Construction of Mauritius Family Planning Association building	—	3,000	—	—	—
Nepal	Three micro projects in Nepal	6,150	—	—	—	—
Nigeria	Non Government Organisation Workshops on Population Policy	34,682	—	—	—	—
United Kingdom Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific						
Fiji	Family Planning	—	5,500	33,000	—	—
	Totals	173,498	404,063	556,273	181,395	56,231

Sir Charles Morrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contributions for 1989 are being made to the International Planned Parenthood Federation, the United Nations Fund for Population Activities and the World Health Organisation's special programme on human reproduction.

Mr. Chris Patten: We have made the following pledges for 1989:

International Planned Parenthood Federation:
£6·75 million (including £0·5 million for AIDS prevention programme);
United Nations Population Fund:
£5·5 million:
World Health Organisation's special programme on human reproduction: £2·2 million.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list bilateral disbursements for population and family planning activities in each of the years 1987, 1988 and 1989, classified by project and country.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Overseas Development Administration funded the following population-related projects in 1987:

Bangladesh
World Bank Third Population and Family Health Project (825,000)
Botswana
Public Health and Primary Nurse Tutor (£20,000)
Fiji
Population Census (£15,000)
The Gambia
Provision of family planning materials (£2,000)
India
Orissa Family Welfare Project Phase I (£566,000)
Integrated Family Welfare Gujarat (£8,000)
Assistance to the Registrar General's Office (£18,000)
Kiribati
Population Census (£4,000)
Malawi
Population Census (£62,000
Malaysia
Adviser in Demography (£52,000)
Nepal
ODA/UNFPA Project (Pilot Operational Research in Community Based Family Planning/Mother and Child Health Activities (£2,000)
Pakistan
Population Welfare Projects I and II (141,000)
Tanzania
Family Planning Study (£22,000)
Population Census (£6,000)

In addition, the provision of family planning services formed part of a large number of primary health care projects and programmes in which we were involved. The Overseas Development Administration also provided £78,000 under its research and development programme for population-related work.

Disbursement figures for 1988 and 1989 are not yet available. The following projects were under way or were approved in 1988 and 1989:

Bangladesh
World Bank Third Population and Family Health Project
Botswana
Public Health and Family Planning Tutor
Fiji
Assistance to Population Census
India
Orissa Family Welfare Project phases I and II
Integrated Family Welfare Project Gujarat
Population components in Slum Improvement Projects (Hyderabad, Indore and Vijayawada)
Assistance to the Registrar General's Office
Kenya
World Bank Third Population Project
Population Census

Kiribati
Population Census
Malawi
Population Census
Malaysia
Adviser in Demography (Economic Planning Unit)
Nepal
Population Studies
Pakistan
Population Welfare Projects I and II
Reproduction Health Services Project
Tanzania
Population Census

In 1987, 29 trainees came to the United Kingdom on population-related courses. In 1988 a further 37 trainees began similar courses.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Pornography

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has received representations about the increase in pornographic books and magazines in circulation; whether he is giving consideration to a more effective definition of obscenity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: We receive correspondence about a number of aspects of our controls on obscene material. The Government have supported recent attempts to strengthen the test of obscenity in the Obscene Publications Act 1959, and have strengthened the controls on child pornography. Attempts to change the 1959 Act have not yet commanded the support of Parliament.

Car Pound (Metropolitan Police)

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to whether maximum use and benefit is currently being derived from the Metropolitan police car pound at Calthorpe street, London WC1; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the commissioner that although the car pound at Calthorpe street WC1 has not yet been used to full capacity it is regarded as an important acquisition, allowing the Metropolitan police scope for expansion of their removal operations and providing additional space which may be required in the event of closure of other car pounds.

Electoral Registration

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will update his Department's 1982 research into electoral registration entitled "Electoral Registration in 1981".

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The 1981 study was based on replies to questions included in the post-enumeration survey following the 1981 census. Parliament will be informed of any proposal, in the light of consideration in due course, to include similar questions in the post-enumeration survey following the 1991 census.

Greyhound Racing

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the estimated turnover of off-course betting on greyhound racing for 1989.

Mr. John Patten: The Home Office is not in a position to make an estimate of the proportion of off-course betting attributable to greyhound racing.

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether he will announce if there will be an inquiry into greyhound racing finances;

(2) how many representations he has received in favour of an inquiry into greyhound racing finances.

Mr. John Patten: Between November 1988, when the British Greyhound Racing Board launched a campaign for an inquiry into the finances of greyhound racing (and of horseracing) and their relationship to off-course betting, and 15 May, we have received 13 letters from Members of Parliament in support of or asking about such an inquiry. In addition, in that period there have been two earlier questions asking if such an inquiry is to be established, and early-day motion 185, which calls on the Government to undertake a

"wider inquiry into off-course bookmaking and the feasibility of a levy for greyhound racing".

In his reply on 22 March to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt), my right hon. Friend said that he would announce his conclusion on the recommendation from the Government-appointed members of the Horserace Betting Levy Board that there should be an inquiry into the long-term funding of racing when he had received and considered advice from Lloyds merchant bank as to the feasibility of privatising the Horserace Totalisator Board. Whether or not the financing of greyhound racing should be included in such an inquiry is among the considerations which my right hon. Friend is taking into account.

Polling Stations (Access)

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give instructions to all electoral returning officers that every polling station should have reasonable access for disabled people, including those in wheelchairs.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I would refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) on 6 April 1989, at column *738*.

Remand

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the longest period during the past 20 years for which a person has been held in custody on remand; and who currently on remand has been held for the longest time.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Information about the longest periods held on remand during the last 20 years is not available centrally. On 31 March 1989 one unconvicted prisoner had been held in Pentonville prison for more than three years having been committed to custody pending completion of extradition proceedings. An indication of the length of time spent in prison service establishments by persons received on remand is published annually in "Prison Statistics England and Wales" (tables 2.3, 2.4 of the latest issue, for 1987, Cm. 547), copies of which are in the Library.

Lorrain Esme Osman

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how long Lorrain Esme Osman, currently held in Her Majesty's prison, Pentonville, has been in custody; what grounds there are for Mr. Osman's continued detention; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Mr. Osman has been in custody since 7 December 1985. He was committed in custody by Bow street magistrates court on 1 June 1987 to await the Home Secretary's order for his surrender to the Hong Kong authorities under the provisions of the Fugitive Offenders Act 1967. Since then his surrender has been repeatedly deferred pending the outcome of applications for writs of habeas corpus and related appeals.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make available the request for extradition received from Hong Kong accompanying a warrant of arrest dated 30 November 1985 in respect of Lorrain Esme Osman.

Mr. John Patten: The request for Mr. Osman's extradition has been considered by the courts. The information provided to the courts in accordance with the Fugitive Offenders Act 1967 included the arrest warrant and supporting documents. It is not the practice to publish other communications about extradition cases.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy not to order Lorrain Esme Osman to be returned to Hong Kong until the English courts have completed their consideration of the effect of the decision by the Hong Kong Court of Appeal on 4 May 1989 quashing a warrant dated 30 November 1985 on the grounds that it was vitiated by bias; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Under the provisions of the Fugitive Offenders Act 1967 my right hon. Friend cannot order the return of a fugitive until any proceedings challenging the committal for surrender by the Bow street magistrates, whether by way of an application for habeas corpus or an appeal arising from such an application, have been concluded.

Police (Deaths)

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers in England and Wales have lost their lives in the course of their duty in each of the past five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The number of police officers in England and Wales who were killed in the course of duty during each of the past five years is as follows:

	Number
1984	15
1985	7
1986	9
1987	11
1988	2

In each of the years 1987 and 1988 one officer in addition to the above figures lost his life as a result of responding to criminal action while off duty.

Passports

Mr. David Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many complaints he has received during 1989 about delays in the renewal of passports held by United Kingdom citizens.

Mr. Renton: We have received about 250 letters of complaint about delays at the passport offices since the beginning of the year. Not all of these related specifically to applications for renewal or replacement of an existing passport.

Electronic Tagging

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Beverley of 15 May, what he treats as legitimate uses to which electronic surveillance listening devices may be put as distinct from television-based devices.

Mr. Hurd: The Younger report on privacy referred to the use of equipment for aural surveillance in investigative and documentary journalism and in the observation of patients by hospital staff.

Firearms (Amendment) Act

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he plans to implement the remaining provisions of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988.

Mr. Hurd: I signed a commencement order on 17 May 1989 which will bring into effect the remaining provisions of the Act as follows:

Sections coming into force on 1 July 1989	
Section 2	(Re-definition of exempted shotguns)
Section 3	(Grant and renewal of shotgun certificates)
Section 4	(Transfers of shotgun)
Section 5	(Restriction on sale of ammunition for smooth-bore guns)
Section 6	(Shortening of barrels)
Sections 7(2) and 7(3)	(Conversion of weapon to which section 1 of the 1968 Act applies not to affect classification)
Section 11	(Grant of co-terminous certificates)
Section 13(1)	(Firearms dealers)
Section 15	(Rifle and pistol clubs)
Section 19	(Firearms and ammunition in museums)
Section 20	(Removal of arms and ammunition to Northern Ireland)
Section 23(4) 23(5) 23(6)	(Minor and consequential amendments)
Section 24(2)	(Expenses and receipts)
Sections coming into force on 1 October 1989	
Section 17	(Visitors' permits)
Section 18	(Firearms acquired for export)
Section 23(8)	(Repeal of section 14 of the 1968 Act)

Transitional arrangements have been made to allow owners of smooth-bore guns raised to section 1 control a period of seven months—from 1 July 1989 to 31 January 1990—in which to comply with the new controls. During this time they will have a number of options open to them. If they wish to retain the weapon in its existing condition they may apply for a firearm certificate, or a variation to an existing one, subject to the criteria laid down in the Firearms Act 1968 being met. They may continue to hold the gun on a shotgun certificate by adapting it so that it has

a non-detachable magazine incapable of holding more than two cartridges in the manner approved under section 2(3) of the Act. Or they may arrange to have it de-activated. Alternatively, the weapon may be sold to a registered firearms dealer or to the holder of a section 1 firearm certificate who is authorised to acquire it.

Immigration

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what decision he has made regarding allowing Fiore, an Italian citizen, to remain in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton *[holding answer 17 May 1989]:* In 1981 the Italian Government requested the extradition of Mr. Fiore for a number of offences, but the request failed in the courts because a prime facie case could not be established. No further request has been received from the Italian Government for his extradition. When the extradition provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 are brought into force later this year the United Kingdom will be able to ratify the European convention on extradition, which does not impose a prime facie requirement.

Consideration has also been given to Mr. Fiore's deportation under section 3(5)(b) of the Immigration Act 1971. Under Community law, a Community national working here can be deported on grounds of public policy, public security or public health. In accordance with case law established by the European Court, however, it would be necessary to have evidence of personal conduct constituting a present threat to the requirements of public policy. Mr. Fiore has been interviewed by officers of the immigration department of the Home Office, but the evidence available does not meet the strict criteria for deportation required under European law.

WALES

Administrative and Clerical Staff

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many letters he has received concerning the pay of administrative and clerical staff in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: None.

Student Nurses

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what provision there is in Wales for student nurses, whose first language is Welsh, to study for nursing qualifications; and if he will list those schools of nursing in Wales who provide training for nurses whose first language is Welsh.

Mr. Grist: For individuals in Wales to register and practise as a nurse they must obtain qualifications prescribed by the United Kingdom central council for nursing, midwifery and health visiting. Registration enables nurses to practise anywhere in the United Kingdom. Student nurses in Wales are therefore trained solely through the medium of English.

Polytechnic of Wales

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are his intentions regarding the future funding and status of the Polytechnic of Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Polytechnic of Wales will continue to be funded from the higher education quantum on the advice of the Wales Advisory Body for Local Authority Higher Education. If it acquires corporate status as a limited company it will become an assisted, rather than a maintained, institution, but its funding arrangements would not change. The question of the polytechnic acquiring corporate status in this way is a matter for Mid Glamorgan county council as the maintaining local education authority.

Dental Services

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has for improvement of community dental services; what additional resources he is making available to district health authorities for this purpose; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Welsh Office officials will be discussing community dental services with officers of district health authorities in order to assess the adequacy of current levels of provision in the light of the recently issued circular WHC(89)28 entitled "The Future Development of Community Dental Services".

Housing Associations

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether there is any cash limit on the central Government resources available to housing associations in Wales for 1989-90; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: There is currently no technical cash limit on central Government resources available to housing associations in Wales, but I determine each year the allocation within which Housing for Wales must plan its development programme.

Mental Health

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if the two recent changes in the staff of his Department responsible for mental health provision were post deletions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: No.

Regional Selective Assistance

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number and value of regional selective assistance applications in Wales in *(a)* 1987-88 and *(b)* 1988-89.

Mr. Peter Walker: The number and value of regional selective assistance applications received by my Department was as follows:

Year	[1] *Number of applications*	*Value of grant applied for (£ million)*
1987-88	198	68
1988-89	267	135

[1] RSA project and training grants.

NHS (Complaints)

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many complaints he has received about the National Health Service in Wales in the calendar years of *(a)* 1986, *(b)* 1987, and *(c)* 1988.

Mr. Grist: This information is not readily available and could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

Regional Development Grant

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number and value of regional development grant applications in Wales for *(a)* 1985-86, *(b)* 1986-87, *(c)* 1987-88 and *(d)* 1988-89.

Mr. Peter Walker: The number of applications received by my Department under the revised regional development grant scheme (RDG II) and the related project expenditure were as follows:

Year	[1] *Number of applications*	[2] *Related project expenditure (£ million)*
1985-86	952	169
1986-87	1,640	351
1987-88	3,438	1,567

[1] The RDG II scheme closed to new applications on 31 March 1988. Ineligible applications received subsequent to that date have been excluded from the answer.

[2] The related project expenditure represents the capital expenditure forecast to be incurred by applicants on projects toward which grant is sought. An RDG II applicant is not required to state the value of grant applied for.

National Health Service (Expenditure)

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the inflation-adjusted expenditure on the National Health Service in Wales per year over each of the last 10 years up to the year ending March 1989.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is set out in the following table:

Total National Health Service gross expenditure

Year	[1] *£ million*
1979-80	904·7
1980-81	982·0
1981-82	1,018·6
1982-83	1,048·9
1983-84	1,064·1
1984-85	1,096·1
1985-86	1,109·7
1986-87	1,154·3
1987-88	1,219·0
1988-89	1,273·7

[1] Actual expenditure has been adjusted for the effect of general inflation by using the gross domestic product market price deflator, brought to a 1988-89 price base.

Perinatal Mortality

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the figures for perinatal mortality in Wales for each year since 1979, in a form statistically comparable to those produced elsewhere in western Europe.

Mr. Grist: The numbers of registered perinatal deaths and the perinatal mortality rates for Wales since 1979 are given in the following table:

Perinatal deaths in Wales

Year	[1] *Number*	[2] *Rate*
1979	569	15·6
1980	483	12·8
1981	508	14·1
1982	400	11·1
1983	405	11·3
1984	380	10·5
1985	378	10·2
1986	384	10·3
1987	351	9·2

[1] The number of registered stillbirths and deaths within the first week of life.

[2] Perinatal deaths per 1,000 total (ie live and still births).

Source: OPCS.

Precise data comparability with countries outside the United Kingdom are problematic as the legal requirements of the registration systems vary, as do the recording practices, particularly as regards stillbirth.

Within the United Kingdom stillbirths of 28 weeks gestation and over should be registered. Lower gestation limits apply in some countries for example France (26 weeks). In other countries a physical measurement of the stillborn is the criterion. For example birthweight of 1,000g or more applies in Federal Republic of Germany and in some countries the criterion is either gestation or physical measurement.

Talgarth and Crickhowell Bypasses

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will be able to publish the final line of route of *(a)* the Talgarth and *(b)* the Crickhowell bypass.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Not for some time yet.

Public consultation on alternative options for a bypass of Talgarth will be undertaken towards the end of the year and a fee competition for the appointment of consultants to undertake a bypass feasibility study for Crickhowell will be held shortly.

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales during which year he expects work to commence on *(a)* the Talgarth and *(b)* the Crickhowell bypass.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: "Roads in Wales 1989—Progress and Plans for the 1990's" shows Talgarth bypass for possible start in the medium term period April 1991 to March 1994 and Crickhowell bypass as a long-term scheme unlikely to start before 1994-95. It is not possible to be more precise.

NHS Hospitals

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of National Health Service hospitals in each of the Welsh health authority areas for every year from 1979 to the end of 1988.

Mr. Grist: A list of hospitals in Wales, up to and including 1987, has been published annually in "Health and Personal Social Services Statistics for Wales" copies of which are in the Library of the House. During 1988, one hospital—Neath annexe in west Glamorgan—closed and one hospital—Minffordd in Gwynedd—reopened.

Tai Cymru

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much has been allocated to Tai Cymru for its rural

housing initiative; and how much of this money will be allocated to each district and borough council area in Wales for 1989-90.

Mr. Grist: No specific allocation has been made to Housing for Wales-Tai Cymru for rural housing, but I have asked it to maintain its investment in rural areas in line with previous years at around 25 per cent. of its development programme. With regard to detailed allocations by Housing for Wales to district and borough council areas, I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Gentleman.

Water Bill

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if his Department's water and environmental protection division will now reply to the letters sent on 14 December 1988 and 19 March 1989 to M. Mathews, R. H. Lockyear and P. M. Jones regarding the effects of the Water Bill on the Swansea City Council (Tawe Barrage) Act 1986.

Mr. Grist: A letter was sent on Wednesday 17 May.

Farm Incomes

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing the average farm income in Wales for each of the last five years for which figures are available and adjusted for inflation.

Mr. Peter Walker: Average net income for dairy and livestock farms in Wales for each of the five years since 1983-84 was as follows:

Year	*Average net income £ per farm*
1982-83	8,052
1983-84	7,562
1984-85	6,746
1985-86	7,914
1986-87	8,509

On an index basis, and adjusted for inflation, the figures are as follows:

Year	
1982-83	100
1983-84	92
1984-85	79
1985-86	84
1986-87	81

1982-83 = 100

ENVIRONMENT

Rating Reform

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the additional powers poll tax registration officers have to the current rate collection system in terms of access and examination of personal details.

Mr. Gummer: The Government have no plans to introduce a poll tax and there will be no poll tax registration officers.

World Habitat Day

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what special steps are being taken by his Department to mark World Habitat Day.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Following the United Nations General Assembly adoption, in December 1988, of a global strategy for shelter to the year 2000, the Department will be preparing regular national monitoring reports, to be presented on World Habitat Day, on progress towards implementing the global strategy.

New Towns (Sale of Assets)

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* the total sum realised by sale of assets by the Commission for the New Towns for each year since 1979-80.

Mr. Trippier: The sums realised by the Commission for the New Towns are as follows:

Year	*£ million*
1979-80	6·43
1980-81	29·61
1981-82	61·85
1982-83	51·18
1983-84	55·25
1984-85	57·59
1985-86	78·67
1986-87	169·31
1987-88	216·66
[1]1988-89	334·00
Total	1,060·55

[1] Provisional.
Figures are gross, before deduction of selling expenses.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Dr. Michael Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he now expects the United Kingdom to meet the Montreal protocol target of a 50 per cent. reduction in the use of chlorofluorocarbons.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Montreal protocol requires consumption of chlorofluorocarbons to be cut to 50 per cent. of 1986 levels by 1999. We expect this to be achieved within the United Kingdom by the end of this year, 10 years ahead of the protocol timetable.

Water Pollution

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will ban the discharge of raw sewage into the Bristol channel; when he expects these waters will meet EC bathing water standards; and if he will seek a clean water policy for this waterway on the part of both English and Welsh water authorities.

Mr. Howard: All the English and Welsh water authorities discharging into the Bristol channel have investment programmes to improve the quality of these waters, taking account of the best available technology. It is the Government's policy that all identified bathing waters should meet the standards set in the EC directive as soon as possible.

Domestic Rates

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing, in

descending order, the domestic rate in the pound set by the London boroughs for (i) 1983-84 and (ii) 1989-90, showing for each borough the political control at each date.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested is as follows:

Domestic rate poundage and political control in London

1983-84	*Poundage (P)*	*Control at April 1983*
Haringey	242·5	Labour
Southwark	226·5	Labour
Brent	223·5	Labour
Greenwich	209·1	Labour
Islington	204·6	Labour
Lambeth	201·5	Labour
Lewisham	197·5	Labour
Hackney	196·5	Labour
Newham	189·0	Labour
Camden	188·4	Labour
Tower Hamlets	177·5	Labour
Waltham Forest	169·5	No control
Hammersmith and Fulham	167·2	No control
Harrow	157·0	Conservative
Hounslow	155·5	Labour
Bexley	145·7	Conservative
Hillingdon	145·7	Conservative
Havering	142·0	Conservative
Richmond-upon-Thames	140·3	No control
Merton	140·0	Conservative
Barking and Dagenham	137·5	Labour
Barnet	135·0	Conservative
Kensington and Chelsea	134·4	Conservative
Ealing	133·5	Conservative
Enfield	133·0	Conservative
Wandsworth	130·0	Conservative
Sutton	130·0	Conservative
Westminster	128·6	Conservative
Redbridge	128·5	Conservative
Bromley	127·5	Conservative
Kingston-upon-Thames	122·5	Conservative
City of London	117·0	Independent
Croydon	108·5	Conservative

1989-90	*Poundage (P)*	*Control at April 1989*
Haringey	363·4	Labour
Brent	344·5	Labour
Newham	297·6	Labour
Hounslow	253·4	Labour
Waltham Forest	250·8	Labour
Greenwich	247·3	Labour
Ealing	235·0	Labour
Hammersmith and Fulham	234·9	Labour
Islington	224·4	Labour
Hillingdon	223·8	No control
Hackney	218·5	Labour
Enfield	217·0	Conservative
Richmond-upon-Thames	215·0	Liberal
Camden	210·7	Labour
Lambeth	209·4	Labour
Sutton	209·0	Liberal
Lewisham	207·2	Labour
Barking and Dagenham	205·4	Labour
Kingston-upon-Thames	203·2	Conservative
Harrow	200·5	Conservative
Bexley	197·0	Conservative
Barnet	195·2	Conservative
Southwark	193·5	Labour
Havering	184·5	No control
Merton	181·1	Conservative
Croydon	165·0	Conservative
Tower Hamlets	162·0	Liberal
Bromley	161·8	Conservative
Redbridge	159·0	Conservative
Westminster	143·2	Conservative
Wandsworth	142·6	Conservative
City of London	124·9	Independent
Kensington and Chelsea	103·7	Conservative

Parkinson Houses

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether an acceptable repair scheme for individual semi-detached Parkinson houses is in prospect.

Mr. Trippier: PRC Homes Ltd. licence No. 050 allows for the repair of individual semi-detached Parkinson houses, but access is needed to the adjoining property to carry out works to the party wall. It is for the individual owner of the property to decide whether this is acceptable.

Homelessness

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make any changes to his review of the legislation on homelessness as a result of the report published on 8 May by the London Boroughs Association.

Mr. Trippier: The review of homelessness legislation is not yet complete: the recommendations in the London Boroughs Association's report will be taken into consideration in drawing up our conclusions.

Water Authority Employees (Discussions)

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance has been given to *(a)* senior management and *(b)* other employees of water authorities about the application of the terms of the Financial Services Act to their right to discuss matters relating to the industry.

Mr. Howard: Detailed guidelines on the implications of the Financial Services Act 1986 have been given to water authority chairmen. Guidance to their employees is a matter for them.

Mercury (River Yare)

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide in the *Official Report* the most recent sampling data for medium, mean and maximum values of mercury in fish and eels downstream of the Whitlingham sewage treatment works in the River Yare, Norfolk.

Mr. Howard: The most recent analyses of mercury in fish flesh carried out by Anglian water authority were in 1985 and 1986. The results were:

	December 1985	*December 1986*
Sample Fish	Eels	Roach and Pike
Number of Samples	28	17
Mean	0·48	0·43
Maximum (mg/Kg wet flesh)	1·21	2·35

The amount of mercury entering the river has been reduced considerably in recent years, and the concentrations in the water column of the river are now regularly below the limit of detection.

The improvement can be illustrated by the decline in the concentration of mercury in sediment samples:

Year	Mean (mg/Kg)
1986	6·5
1987	3·2
1988	0·5

A further survey of eels and fish is planned for later this year.

Bathing Waters

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why, contrary to the requirements of the EEC bathing water directive 76/160, no bathing waters in the United Kingdom are designated or monitored for directive compliance.

Mr. Howard: None of the United Kingdom's inland waters meet the criteria for identification set out in article 1(2)(a) of directive 76/464/EEC.

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many United Kingdom bathing waters passed the EEC standards for enteroviruses and salmonella in 1988;

(2) how many bathing waters in the United Kingdom were monitored for salmonella in 1988; and how many failed the EEC standard for this parameter.

Mr. Howard: This information is contained in the reports on the 1988 survey of bathing water quality, which I placed in the Library. I also refer the hon. Gentleman to the answers given on 21 February 1989, column *572*, and 14 April 1989, column *682*.

Integrated Development Operation Programme

Mr. Duffy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much allocated aid South Yorkshire and Humberside will lose if funds currently available under the integrated development operation programme of the European Community are shared with other parts of Yorkshire and the north midlands.

Mr. Chope: Under new Community regulations the Government are shortly to submit to the European Commission the eastern England regional conversion plan and a decision on this plan is expected from the Commission in October 1989. In the plan, the United Kingdom will be seeking adequate provision for all existing and proposed programmes. I cannot anticipate what the outcome will be.

Mr. Duffy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the estimated cost of the eastern England plan by the European Commission; and what assessment he has made of the extent to which it will delay the projects already earmarked under the integrated development operation programme scheme and affect their financing.

Mr. Chope: The eastern England regional conversion plan is being finalised in consultation with the plan partners for submission to the Commission. This plan will propose provision for funding the Yorkshire and Humberside steel area IDO as well as all other existing and proposed programmes and other measures which are eligible for ERDF support.

I cannot anticipate what the Commission's decision on support will be.

Pesticides

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research the Government are sponsoring into the effects of pesticide residues on British wildlife.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A number of Government grant-aided bodies are undertaking or have commissioned research projects on the effect of pesticide residues on British wildlife. For example, a joint Nature Conservancy Council (NCC)/Vincent Wildlife Trust project on the effects of pesticide residues in otters is being undertaken by the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology (ITE); the sea mammal research unit of the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) is conducting similar research on the effects on seals, and the NCC has commissioned research from NERC on the effects of pollution on birds.

I am also advised that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is currently sponsoring a number of projects including:

- Methods of assessing the effects of pesticides on wildlife.
- Indirect effects of pesticides on wildlife.
- The economic and ecological effect of pest, disease and weed control in intensively produced cereals.
- The ecological and economic effects of pest, disease, weed control and fertiliser inputs in crop rotations.
- Deposition, activity and fate of agrochemicals applied to crops.
- Invertebrate fauna of cereal fields.
- Small mammal studies.
- Cereal pest—predator interactions.
- Spatial and temporal consequences of the effects of insecticides on the non-target invertebrate fauna of winter wheat.

In addition, pesticides residues in wildlife are monitored by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food working party on pesticide residues and all reported incidents suspected of involving pesticide poisoning in England and Wales are investigated under the wildlife incident scheme.

Community Charge

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total cost of the delivery of the Government's information leaflet on the community charge; how many such leaflets were prepared for delivery; and what was the unit cost of production and delivery.

Mr. Gummer: The total cost of production and distribution of the information leaflet on the community charge delivered to households in England is some £950,000, including the cost of display in post offices. A total of 23 million leaflets were produced at a unit cost for production and delivery of 4·1p.

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the estimated cost of storing the 21 million leaflets entitled "The Community Charge (The So-called Poll Tax): How It Will Work For You."

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 17 May 1989]:* The Central Office of Information is currently in negotiation with the Post Office, on behalf of my Department, in relation to any additional costs which may have been incurred as a result of the temporary suspension of the household distribution of the community charge leaflet.

Warrington and Runcorn Development Corporation (Housing)

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much the Main Group, Warrington housing association, Manchester and District housing association and the Grosvenor housing association are being paid to manage the Warrington and Runcorn development corporation rented housing.

Mr. Trippier: The agency fee was negotiated between the development corporation and the housing associations. The size of the fee is commercially confidential information.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much of the rent increase imposed on Warrington and Runcorn development corporation tenants will go towards paying the management costs of the housing associations involved in managing the Warrington and Runcorn development corporation rented housing.

Mr. Trippier: The rents of tenants of all the English new town development corporations have recently increased. The percentage change of the average rent has been similar in each town. There is no connection between this general increase and the particular decision of the Warrington and Runcorn corporation to change its arrangements for managing its stock.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what date Warrington and Runcorn development corporation tenants will be balloted about who their future landlords will be; and if Warrington and Runcorn development corporation will be one of the names on the ballot paper.

Mr. Trippier: I can assure tenants that they will be given the opportunity to choose their new landlord at the earliest appropriate time. The provisions in the Local Government and Housing Bill for the transfer of ownership of new town housing enable the local district council and approved landlords to be the new landlords. The development corporation, or its successor the Commission for the New Towns, will not be a choice available to tenants.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to ensure that between now and when the ballot is held the Warrington and Runcorn development corporation tenants will not be approached by the consortium of housing associations operating in Warrington under the tenants' choice provisions of the Housing Act 1988.

Mr. Trippier: No.

Kent Structure Plan

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish his proposed modifications to the second review of the structure plan for Kent.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend published his proposals today. Copies of his proposals and of the report of the panel which conducted an examination in public into selected matters arising from the review have been placed in the Library.

The review sets out the county council's policies for development in Kent up to the year 2001. My right hon. Friend supports its main objective, which is to stimulate economic developments in Kent without harming the environment; he also supports its proposals for the growth of Ashford and for increased development of Dartford. As recommended by the panel, he proposes to increase the housing provision for the county up to the year 2001 to more than 89,000 houses, including 57,000 in the 1990s.

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he took the proposed high speed rail link from the Channel tunnel to London into his consideration of the second review of the structure plan for Kent.

Mr. Chope: No. As the review was submitted before British Rail put forward its proposals for a high-speed rail link from the Channel tunnel to London, the choice of route was not a matter for this review. It is for the county council to consider the strategic implications of any decision relating to the link and whether any further alterations to the structure plan to take account of this should be put forward in the future.

Water Privatisation

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the capital structure of water plcs to be created at flotation.

Mr. Howard: Subject to the approval by Parliament of the Water Bill, the Government will put in place new capital structures appropriate for the nominated holding companies in the private sector. This will be done in the run up to flotation and implemented by extinguishing all the national loans fund debt and taking new securities which may consist of both equity and new debt. The assets of the NLF will be reduced accordingly, but the Government will have new assets in the form of securities in the holding companies for England and Wales. The capital structure of each of the holding companies will be determined in the light of the circumstances of that company. It is too soon to say what the market value of the Government's securities in each holding company will be at the time of flotation. The total value of these securities implied by the share price of the equity sold, will depend on market conditions at the time. It may or may not cover the book value of funds now invested in each business. The Government will, however, choose a capital structure calculated to ensure a proper return to the Exchequer and hence the taxpayer and that the industry is in a position fully to meet its obligations. In the meantime the Government will continue to meet the industry's requirements for capital from the national loans fund.

Rose Theatre

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer of 21 February to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), *Official Report*, column *572*, if he will take steps to ensure that the Rose theatre is available for the public to see as an interpretable monument.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 12 May 1989]:* I refer the hon. Member to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in the House on Monday 16 May.

Leaflets

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what method his Department uses to destroy redundant leaflets; and at what cost.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 17 May 1989]:* Surplus copies of leaflets are sold to the paper industry for recycling.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Consultants

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the cost to his Department of employing *(a)* computer consultants and *(b)* management consultants for each financial year from 1983 to date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The estimated total cost of employing computer and management consultants on social security matters since 1984-85 is as follows:

Year	*Computer £ million*	*Management £ million*
1984-85	6·589	0·959
1985-86	10·223	1·722
1986-87	11·971	0·976
1987-88	21·930	1·082
1988-89	42·099	1·203

Expenditure up to and including the 1988-89 financial year has been from a joint health and social security budget. Where appropriate the cost of projects has been apportioned when the work involved both social security and health aspects.

Expenditure by the DHSS on computer and management consultancy in 1983-84 amounted to £3·623 million, but it is not possible to apportion this between the two Departments with any accuracy, or to differentiate between computer and management consultancy.

Funeral Payments

Mr. Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many funeral payments were made in 1988-89 and at what cost; how much of this amount has been repaid; and how much is regarded as recoverable.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is as follows:

Year	*Number of payments*	*Cost £*	*Amount recovered £*
1988-89	[1]40,248	[1]19,744,925	[1]659,930

[1]Provisional figures.

Separate data are not held on the extent to which payments made are regarded as recoverable.

Income Support and Housing Benefit

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many women aged 70 to 75 years receive *(a)* income support and *(b)* housing benefit; and if he will state these figures as a proportion of the total number of women aged 70 to 75 years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd The latest estimate is that there are some 249,000 women aged 70 to 74 (inclusive) dependent on income support. This represents 20 per cent. of all women in this age group.

I regret that similar information is not available for housing benefit.

Tax Statistics

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether, pursuant to his reply given to the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) of 8 May, *Official Report,* column *309,* he will give an estimate of the distribution of households facing marginal tax/benefit withdrawal rates of more than 40 per cent. in total and in each band stated by standard region.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Estimates of those working heads of tax units facing combined marginal withdrawal rates of over 40 per cent. are available only at national level.

Transitional Payments

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what guidance is given to adjudication officers by his Department as to eligibility for transitional payments; and what steps have been taken to ensure that adjudication officers do not treat as an increase in income the restoration of full retirement pension to pensioners who were in receipt of reduced rate pensions during their attendance at hospital.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Part 35 of the "Adjudication Officers Guide," a copy of which is in the Library, gives extensive guidance on the legislation which applies to income support transitional protection. Adjudication officers who follow the guidance will have no difficulty in handling these cases correctly.

Transitional Housing Benefit

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many staff are *(a)* on the establishment and *(b)* in post, together with relevant gradings, at the transitional housing benefit unit, Glasgow.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The staff in post on 15 May were as follows:

	Number
Grade 6	1
Grade 7	1
SEO	1
HEO	12
EO	59
AO	169
AA	155
Personal secretary	1
Typist	4
Messenger	4
Total	407

A detailed complement for the transitional protection unit—TPU—has not been laid down, but a budget of 160 man-years has been agreed for 1989-90 and reductions in staff during the year will ensure that the allocation is not exceeded.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications have been *(a)* received, *(b)* processed and *(c)* outstanding for each month of transitional housing benefit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is given in the table showing the cumulative position on the last working day of each month:

Month	*Applications received*	*Applications processed*	*Applications outstanding*
July 1988	135,433	8,434	126,999
August 1988	267,009	69,498	197,511
September 1988	316,473	117,638	198,835
October 1988	359,866	235,753	124,113
November 1988	390,942	296,931	94,011
December 1988	400,584	333,254	67,330
January 1989	415,065	372,844	42,221
February 1989	436,681	397,669	39,012
March 1989	463,751	416,194	47,557
April 1989	472,243	433,002	39,241

NOTE: The majority of cases outstanding are where the TPU is awaiting the return of inquiry forms about housing benefit details from local authorities.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in how many cases transitional housing benefit was sent to the wrong local authority by the transitional housing benefit payments unit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Family Income Supplement

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many decisions were made on new claims for family income supplement and family credit; and how many awards resulted in each month since April 1987.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 15 May 1989]:* The available information for all claims is as follows:

Month[1]	*Claims dealt with*[2] *New claims*[4]	*Claims dealt with*[2] *Total*[3]	*Awards* *New claims*[4]	*Awards* *Total*[3]
FAMILY INCOME SUPPLEMENT				
1987				
April	20,337	28,628	8,868	15,433
May	25,635	37,195	11,978	21,308
June	21,907	31,837	10,143	17,998
July	28,065	39,814	13,499	23,007
August	20,387	28,797	9,830	16,473
September	19,633	28,534	8,843	15,893
October	21,217	31,074	10,281	18,186
November	28,143	42,004	13,687	24,598
December	19,332	27,768	9,199	15,854
1988				
January	17,789	27,432	8,130	15,619
February	21,245	31,904	9,132	17,454
March	20,913	31,516	9,384	17,345
April	13,327	18,886	6,380	10,346
May	5,613	7,677	3,424	4,928
June	2,171	3,066	1,258	1,905
July	2,383	3,208	1,076	1,637
August	409	692	308	485
September	207	438	148	275
October	108	176	87	145
November December	57	100	57	100
1989 January				
FAMILY CREDIT				
1988				
April May	—	64,269	—	40,213
June	—	52,867	—	36,145
July	—	55,647	—	37,912
August	—	58,275	—	40,249
September	—	34,808	—	24,158
October	—	62,838	—	44,944
November	—	64,150	—	46,234
December	—	50,947	—	35,797
1989				
January	—	62,029	—	42,712
February	—	65,908	—	45,180
March	—	66,652	—	47,184
April	34,671	62,465	18,658	43,300

[1] The figures are for the four or five weeks ending on the last Friday of the month.

[2] The figures for claims dealt with include awards, disallowances, renewal claims received more than four weeks before the expiry of an existing award (and therefore invalid) and withdrawn claims.

[3] Includes claims made to renew an existing award on its expiry.

[4] A breakdown of the family credit figures between new claims and renewal claims is not available for the period before April 1989.

DEFENCE

UDR and TA (Vetting)

22. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Royal Ulster Constabulary will be revising vetting arrangements for recruits to the Ulster Defence Regiment and the Territorial Army in Northern Ireland to prevent infiltration by paramilitary members.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We seek to exclude members of paramilitary and extremist organisations from any form of service in the armed forces. The procedures for achieving this are well established and are kept under constant review.

Short Brothers

23. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action he is taking to ensure that defence-related confidential information acquired in Short Bros., Belfast, is not transferred to foreign powers.

24. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures he is taking to ensure that confidential information relating to defence is not transferred from Short Brothers, Belfast, to Armscor, South Africa.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is the responsibility of firms which receive classified defence contracts to meet the security requirements specified by the Ministry of Defence and to facilitate inspection of their security arrangements. Given his general responsibilities for security, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland also maintains close contacts with the firm.

Nuclear Submarines

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the amount spent by the Ministry

of Defence in each year since the start of the nuclear submarine programme on repairs as a result of fire aboard nuclear submarines.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: While there have been occasional fires aboard nuclear-powered submarines, it is not possible to identify separately all the repair costs attributable to this cause. However, in the vast majority of cases the fires were so minor that the sums involved would have been minimal in relation to the overall expenditure on submarine repairs or refits.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library the technical details on which his Department bases its evaluation of the consequences of a nuclear submarine accident in or near dock with regard to 550 m limits and radiation spread.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The predictions of consequences of accidents involving Royal Navy nuclear-powered submarines are carried out by experts from both within and outside this Department, and are assessed by independent consultants. The technical information upon which the predictions are based cannot be released, since it would enable conclusions to be drawn about classified aspects of the design of submarine nuclear reactors.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list in the *Official Report (a)* all fires aboard nuclear submarines whilst in dock since the start of the nuclear submarine programme, *(b)* how these fires started, *(c)* the location of the fires within the submarine, *(d)* the time of day the fires started and how long they burned, *(e)* whether civilian police, fire services and ambulance services were informed, *(f)* under what conditions civil emergency personnel were allowed on board, *(g)* if there were any military or civilian casualties, *(h)* what inquiries were instigated into the cause and consequences of any fires, what subsequent recommendations were made, and which have been put into practice and *(i)* the guidelines governing the involvement of civilian fire personnel in fighting fires aboard nuclear submarines.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The majority of the detailed information requested is not readily available and could not be provided without disproportionate effort and cost. I shall write to the hon. Member about the guidelines for the involvement of civil fire personnel in fighting fires aboard nuclear submarines.

Zirconium

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contracts have been placed with United Kingdom universities for the research on zirconium for fuel cladding for submarine nuclear fuel by the atomic weapons establishment at Aldermaston in the past five years.

Mr. Sainsbury: None.

Arms Reduction

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the definition of *(a)* tanks and *(b)* artillery and *(c)* armoured personnel carriers adopted by the Western Alliance at the conventional force reduction talks in Vienna.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the document "Conventional Forces in Europe: The Facts" published by NATO in November 1988, a copy of which is in the Library. The NATO proposals tabled at the negotiation of conventional forces in Europe (CFE) deal with main battle tanks and artillery which fall within those categories in that document, and with armoured troop carriers. The latter include armoured personnel carriers and armoured infantry fighting vehicles.

NATO

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has received any recent communication from the British American Security Information Council over its report on the comprehensive concept of defence and disarmament for NATO.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As far as I can ascertain, the Ministry of Defence has received no recent communication from the British American Security Information Council.

Defence Export Services Organisation

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the proceedings of the Defence Export Services Organisation's annual symposia with industry can be made available to *(a)* hon. Members and *(b)* the public.

Mr. Sainsbury: No. The proceedings of the DESO symposium are commercial in confidence and circulated only to those companies taking part.

Nuclear Bomber (Emergency Landing)

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the emergency landing of a United States Air Force F111 nuclear bomber at Upper Heyford and the fireball caused by the jettisoning of fuel; and what implications this has for the safety of the local population.

Mr. Neubert: An F111E aircraft developed an engine problem shortly after take-off on a routine training mission from RAF Upper Heyford just after 7 pm on May. The pilot immediately decided to return to base. Shortly before landing he jettisoned excess fuel to reduce the weight of the aircraft and ensure a safe landing. the jettisoned fuel was ignited by the exhaust plume of the aircraft's engine, causing a brief flame. The pilot performed the routine operational procedures designed to cope with a problem of this sort exactly as he is trained to do and the aircraft landed without further incident. At no time was there any danger to local residents. The incident is being investigated by the USAF authorities at the base to determine the cause of the problem.

Victoria Barracks, Windsor

Dr. Glyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what conclusions have been reached with regard to the rebuilding of Victoria barracks since the joint visit of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence for the Armed Forces and the hon. Member for Windsor and Maidenhead, on 1 September 1988; if he will give an indication of the dates when the rebuilding will commence and finish; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: Approval to proceed with the rebuilding of Victoria barracks on the site of the old barracks at

Windsor has now been given. Formal tenders will be invited shortly and it is hoped to start work on site towards the latter part of 1989. Work is expected to take about three years.

Premature Voluntary Release

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the Army premature voluntary release figures for the fourth quarter of each year from 1983 to 1988 and the first quarter of each year from 1983 to 1989; and if he will provide the information in the form as in his reply of 15 December 1988, *Official Report*, columns *685-86*.

Mr. Neubert: The information that my hon. Friend has requested is set out in the table:

Army PVR figures for 1st and 4th quarters 1983-1st quarter 1989

	Male Officers	*Female Officers*	*Service men*	*Service women*	*Total*
1983					
1st quarter	69	2	417	19	507
4th quarter	130	5	563	21	719
1984					
1st quarter	83	2	569	23	677
4th quarter	155	8	700	21	884
1985					
1st quarter	128	9	730	19	886
4th quarter	190	15	779	36	1,020
1986					
1st quarter	128	6	686	28	848
4th quarter	136	6	807	36	985
1987					
1st quarter	116	7	618	30	771
4th quarter	178	12	839	34	1,063
1988					
1st quarter	120	7	861	42	1,030
4th quarter	154	3	1,024	24	1,205
1989					
1st quarter	103	9	1,042	27	1,181

ENERGY

Coal Reclamation Scheme (Garw Valley)

Mr. Ray Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will publish in the *Official Report* the estimated volume and value of coal to be extracted from the proposed reclamation scheme in the upper Garw valley.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Welsh Development Agency and Mid Glamorgan county council are jointly responsible for the proposed reclamation scheme in the upper Garw valley. However, I understand that the British Coal Corporation retained mineral rights to the coal and that the landscaping proposals involve about 3 million cu m of colliery tips containing about 0·5 million tonnes of recoverable coal. The value of the coal is a matter for commercial negotiation and will reflect future market conditions.

TRANSPORT

Air Transport (Belfast-Dublin)

25. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the level of passenger air transport between Belfast and Dublin.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There is a small amount of charter traffic between Belfast and Dublin. In addition, the Irish airline Iona National Airways operated scheduled services on the route during the period May-September 1988. A total of 1,007 passengers were carried in 1988. Our liberal air services arrangements with the Irish authorities apply to this route, but there are currently no scheduled services.

Airports

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport further to his answer to the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire of 2 March, *Official Report*, column *291*, what further steps he proposes to take to encourage local authorities to involve the private sector in the ownership, development, management and running of airports.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A number of authorities are now involving the private sector. Before considering further steps, the Government need to assess how far the objectives of their policy are being achieved.

A1 (North Yorkshire)

Mr. Curry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to make an announcement about further improvements to the A1 in north Yorkshire.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Schemes to improve the A1 for the majority of the length in north Yorkshire are already included in the national trunk road programme. The following announcements about these are expected before the end of the summer:

(i) the joint decision by the Secretaries of State for Transport and the Environment on whether to make the published orders for the Wetherby to Dishforth section; and

(ii) the publication of draft orders for a new junction at Gatenby lane.

The remaining lengths were considered as part of the review of the trunk road programme. My right hon. Friend announced the results of that review earlier today.

Motor Accidents (Deaf Drivers)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many motor vehicle accidents resulting in *(a)* death, *(b)* injury and *(c)* other have taken place each year since 1980 where deaf drivers have been involved and deafness has been (i) the main cause or (ii) a contributory cause.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information requested cannot be obtained as the STATS19 road accident report form records neither cause of accident nor the incidence of deaf drivers involved in road accidents.

There is no reason to believe that a deaf person is more at risk of causing, or being involved in, a crash than any other driver.

Hazardous Materials (Transport)

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement regarding the sealing off of part of the Corley service station area on the M6 motorway on Thursday 23 March in connection with a lorry carrying hazardous materials, and what information he has as to what consideration had been given to escort provision for this load.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A lorry carrying explosives broke down on the M6 and was towed to the nearest service area for replacement of an alternator before continuing its journey. It was isolated from other vehicles and a fire engine was called to stand by as a precautionary measure.

For the type and quantity of material involved an escort was not required. Pre-arranged routes have to be agreed with the police and followed where a vehicle carries large quantities of certain types of explosive material.

Leeds-Bradford Airport

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will make a decision and an announcement on the Leeds-Bradford airport's application for an extension of operating hours.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A joint decision by my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Transport and for the Environment will be made as soon as possible.

Drivers (Eye Tests)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the total number of people required to take regular eyesight tests in order to retain their driving licences; and what proportion fail on average every year.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There is no information about the number of people required to take regular eyesight tests. In 1988-89 the total number of people required to take a prescribed eyesight test to determine their fitness to drive was 2,981.

Eyesight problems account for around 8 per cent. of the medical declarations on applications and notifications (during the currency of the licence), and around 8 per cent. of referrals and revocations relate to eyesight. In 1987-88 there were 10,442 revocations/refusals in all and in 1988-89 there were 10,891 revocations/refusals in all, resulting in over 800 revocations/refusals on eysight grounds in each year.

Road Improvements (North-East)

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will summarise the progress made by his Department in *(a)* improving the A1 link to the north-east and *(b)* other major road improvements in the north-east.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The trunk road and motorway plans announced earlier today in the White Paper "Roads for Prosperity" provide for the conversion to motorway of the Redhouse to Hook Moor section of the A1 in Yorkshire, and for a comprehensive review of the route, including investigation of the possibility of full motorway status from London to Tyneside.

The A1 between Newcastle and Morpeth and the A69 between Newcastle and Hexham are now dual carriageway throughout. The construction of the £88 million Newcastle western bypass is well advanced. Improvement schemes are in various stages of preparation for the A1 north of Morpeth, the A69 west of Hexham, the A66 west of Bowes and the A19 at Peterlee.

Coal Imports

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library details of the volume and value of *(a)* anthracite coal, *(b)* bituminous coal and *(c)* other coal, imported through the port of Cardiff for each month since January 1986, separately distinguishing the countries of origin.

Mr. Portillo: The data readily available are as follows:

Imports of coal through the port of Cardiff

	Tonnes 000s	*Value £ million*
1986		
January to March	47·0	2·00
April to June	57·0	2·37
July to September	78·0	3·29
October to December	75·0	3·36
1987		
January to June	96·0	3·85
July to December	125·6	4·81
1988		
January to June	145·6	5·10
July to December	148·2	7·72
1989		
January to March	99·0	3·85

For more detailed information the hon. Member should contact a marketing agent of Customs and Excise data. A list of these agents is given in Business Monitor MM20 "Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom" or in "The Integrated Tariff of the United Kingdom", copies of which are in the Library.

Special Constables

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish in the *Official Report* in tabular

form a list of those harbours, docks and piers which employ persons sworn as special constables in accordance with the provisions of the Harbours, Docks and Piers Clauses Act 1847 together with the name of the undertakers who are the employers in each case and the number of specials employed in each location.

Mr. Portillo: The harbour undertakings in Great Britain where there are special constables sworn in under the provisions of the 1847 Act, incorporated into local legislation, are:

Harbour undertaking	*Number employed*
Port of Bristol Authority	45
Dover Harbour Board	86
A and P Appledore (Falmouth) Limited	9
Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company	34
Manchester Ship Canal Company	29
Milford Dock Company	5
Sealink Harbours Limited, Parkeston Quay[1]	27
Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority	21

[1] Employed by Protective Security Systems Limited on exclusive contract with Sealink.

There are also two in Northern Ireland:

Harbour undertaking	*Number employed*
Belfast Harbour Commissioners	37
Larne Harbour Limited	16

Two undertakings employ police under local legislation which is fuller than the 1847 Act provisions:

Harbour undertaking	*Number employed*
Port of London Authority	47
Mersey Docks and Harbour Company	102

Air Traffic Distribution Rules

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Eastwood on 8 May, *Official Report*, column *343*, when, and in what form, he intends to publish the new air traffic distribution rules for Scotland, and under what statutory authority.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The new rules ("Traffic Distribution Rules 1989 for Prestwick and Glasgow" and "Traffic Distribution Rules 1989 for Prestwick and Edinburgh") were made on 9 May under section 31 of the Airports Act 1986. Copies were sent to interested parties, and have been placed in the Library.

Lowland Airport Policy (Scotland)

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those organisations he consulted representing *(a)* Scottish industry and commerce and *(b)* the airline and travel industries who were (i) for and (ii) against a review of Scottish lowland airport policy as requested by BAA plc.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend initiated no such consultations, but he received a variety of representations, both for and against a review of Scottish lowland airports policy.

Road Schemes

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the test discount rate for road schemes.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In reply to a question on 5 April from the hon. Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell), my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a new required rate of return for nationalised industries of 8 per cent. As a result, British Rail intends to adopt a test discount rate of 8 per cent. for investment projects. In order to ensure that road and rail projects continue to be appraised on a comparable basis, the test discount rate for road projects will be increased from 7 to 8 per cent.

Road and Rail Statistics

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give figures for investment in British Rail for 1978-79 and 1989-90; investment in national roads in 1978-79 and 1989-90 and the figures for road deaths in 1978 and 1988.

Mr. Channon: The information is:

	1978-79 outturn £ million	*1989-90 plans £ million*
Cash		
Investment by British Rail in the railway	[1]208	740
Capital expenditure on national roads in England	327	1,190
Real terms (1987-88 prices)		
Investment by British Rail in the railway	[1]425	654
Capital expenditure on national roads in England	668	1,052

[1] Calendar year 1978.

Road deaths in Great Britain totalled 6,831 in 1978. The provisional figure for 1988 is 5,041.

Cash Limits

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what changes he proposes to make to the cash limits on his votes.

Mr. Channon: Subject to parliamentary approval of a revised Estimate, the cash limit on class VIII, vote 2 is to be reduced by £800,000 from £235,013,000 to £234,213,000 to reflect the transfer to the Ministry of Defence of responsibility for the costs of royal flights in civil aircraft.

NORTHERN IRELAND

South Africa (Arms Embargo)

8. **Mr. Wall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps is he taking to prevent Northern Ireland firms contributing inadvertently to the circumvention of the arms embargo on South Africa.

Mr. Tom King: Security arrangements are a primary responsibility of every company in Northern Ireland. Since the theft in October last year from a Short's factory there has been a review of security at all Short's establishments

and a number of additional measures have been, or are being, implemented. I maintain a close interest in such matters.

NHS Review

17. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations expressing support for the proposals contained in "Working For Patients" he has received from individuals or organisations in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: I have had representations both orally and in writing. Many have supported aspects of the proposals. I welcome the constructive nature of most of the representations.

Fair Employment

19. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what consideration he is giving to a strengthening of the fair employment laws.

Mr. Viggers: The Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Bill, which was introduced in this House in December last year, has now completed its Committee stage and will be brought before the House for further consideration at any early date. The Bill will strengthen significantly the existing law in Northern Ireland relating to fair employment.

Women (Pressure Groups)

20. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent meetings he has held with women's groups.

Mr. Viggers: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong).

Advertising

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much has been spent by his Department on advertisements on commercial television in each of the last five years, listed by each television company.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information on television advertisements in the form requested is commercially confidential.

HEALTH

Pain

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what provision exists for research into the alleviation of pain for cancer sufferers as distinct from the research into the causes and cure.

Mr. Jackson: I have been asked to reply.

The Medical Research Council, which receives its grant in aid from this Department, is the main agency through which the Government support medical research. The council supports a considerable amount of basic research into pain, some of which is of relevance to cancer sufferers. In 1987-88, the last financial year for which figures are available, the council's expenditure for research into pain was £398,000. The council is also conducting clinical cancer trials to evaluate the efficacy of new treatments not only in curing disease but in relieving symptoms, including pain.

In addition, university departments and medical schools support a range of basic research from public funds, some of which may be relevant to the relief of pain of sufferers from cancer and other diseases.

Agency Staff

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give for 1987-88, for each district health authority, regional health authority, and special health authority the total expenditure on agency staff, expressed at current prices, 1986-87 prices, and as a percentage of each health authority's budget.

Mr. Mellor: Information directly derived and revalued to 1986-87 prices from the 1987-88 annual accounts of district and regional health authorities in England and the special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals has been placed in the Library.

Computer and Management Consultants

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cost to his Department of employing *(a)* computer consultants and *(b)* management consultants, for each financial year from 1983 to date.

Mr. Mellor: Expenditure by the Department of Health and Social Security on computer and management consultancy in 1983-84 was £3·623 million. We cannot apportion this accurately between the two Departments or between computer and management consultancy.

The estimated expenditure on health-related computer and management consultancy in 1984-85 was £0·613 million. It is not possible to separately identify the cost of computer consultancy.

The estimated expenditure from 1985-86 onwards on fees and expenses for computer and management consultants on health matters is as follows:

	Computer consultants £ million	*Management consultants £ million*
1985-86	0·880	0·479
1986-87	2·067	2·103
1987-88	1·950	1·244
1988·89	1·792	1·584

The figures are approximate since expenditure up to and including the 1988-89 year was from a joint health and social security budget. In some cases expenditure has been apportioned where consultants have been engaged on both health and social security matters. The figures for management consultancy include social services consultancy and some computer consultancy where these cannot be identified separately.

NHS (Pay)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what have been the percentage increases in pay of administrative and clerical staff in the National Health Service in each of the past five years.

Mr. Mellor: Percentage settlements for administrative and clerical staff throughout Great Britain since 1984 are shown in the table. Pay increases have been effective from 1 April in each year.

Year	Percentage
1984	4·5
1985	4·7
1986	6·0
1987	5·0
1988	5·5

Community Care

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the contribution made to community care by the voluntary sector.

Mr. Mellor: The voluntary sector makes a very valuable contribution to the provision of health and personal social services, including community care. The Department encourages the complementary role of volunteers and voluntary organisations and has given practical assistance through central funding, including the "Helping the Community to Care" and "Opportunities for Volunteering" initiatives.

Treatment Costs

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the variations in cost of treatment between different health districts.

Mr. Freeman: There are often good reasons for variations in the cost of treatment between different health districts. It is for district and regional management to consider whether costs are reasonable and how performance could be improved.

The Department publishes Health Service indicators and other costing information each year to assist local management in that task, It is hoped to publish performance indicators for 1988-89 at the end of this year or early next year. The proposals in the White Paper "Working for Patients" are designed to increase efficiency and should therefore have an additional impact on unjustifiable cost variations.

Nurses

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about the number of nurses employed by the National Health Service.

Mr. Mellor: Provisional figures for September 1988 show the total number of nursing and midwifery staff (including agency) in the NHS in England as 404,000 whole-time equivalents, an increase of 45,000 (12·6 per cent.) since September 1979. The numbers of qualified nurses and midwives continue to increase and in 1988 the proportion was 60 per cent. of the total number of nursing and midwifery staff compared with 54 per cent. in 1979.

NHS Reform

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many representations he has received from general practitioners in favour of his proposals to reform the Health Service; and how many he has received against.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, South (Mr. Morris) on 5 May, at column *265*.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many letters he has received from the general public about his National Health Service reform proposals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We have received in excess of 4,000 letters from members of the public about the White Paper, "Working for Patients".

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the pay will be for a general practitioner with 2,000 patients who achieves all the targets contained in the new general practitioner contract.

Mr. Mellor: The levels of fees and allowances payable from April 1990 under the new GPs contract will be determined in the light of the recommendations to be made by the Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration in its next report. We have agreed with the general medical services committee's negotiators to submit joint evidence to the review body later this year.

Mental Health Act Commission

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether any decision has yet been taken on the centralisation of the administration of the Mental Health Act Commission.

Mr. Mellor: No. We shall be giving further consideration to this in the light of the recommendations made in the report of the commission on its review of its functions, organisations, staffing and finance, which is expected shortly.

Pharmacists

Mr. Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, further to his answer of 19 April, what proportion of the amounts due to pharmacists from 1978 to 1988 was in respect of profits; and how much was in respect of reimbursement of costs.

Mr. Mellor: The total amounts due, and the amounts due for costs and profit for England and Wales as shown in the balance sheets prepared with representatives of the profession, are:

£ million

	Total amounts due	Amounts due for costs	Amounts due for profit
1978	142·0	121·8	20·2
1979	170·9	148·1	22·8
1980	215·2	177·9	37·3
1981	238·9	189·1	49·8
1982	280·2	225·9	54·1
1983	324·8	269·3	55·5
1984	350·3	291·2	59·1
1985[1]	96·6	78·3	18·3
1985-86	383·7	313·5	70·2
1986-87	415·0	342·3	72·7
1987-88	485·8	407·2	78·6

[1] 1 January 1985 to 31 March 1985.

Hospitals (Self-Government)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospitals in the north-west have expressed interest in opting out; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: RHAs are currently considering expressions of interest in individual hospitals becoming self governing. They have been asked to send the expressions of interest to the Department, together with their comments, by 31 May.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if community health councils will be accorded the same rights in relation to proposals for the self-governing status of particular hospitals as they currently enjoy in relation to closure proposals.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consultation rights Central Manchester community health council will have in any decision of the Central Manchester district health authority to seek self-governing status for its hospitals.

Mr. Mellor: Community health councils will be consulted on local applications for self-governing status and my right hon. and learned Friend will consider their views when deciding on applications.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health managers whose hospitals opt for self-governing status will qualify for incentive payments under the arrangements for performance-related pay.

Mr. Mellor: This will be for individual hospital trusts to decide.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will bring forward proposals to enable the local public to determine through secret ballots whether particular hospitals should have self-governing status.

Mr. Mellor: No.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) by what means he expects regional health authorities to gauge the views of local communities on proposals for particular hospitals to have self-governing status;

(2) what advice he has given to regional health authorities in processing proposals for the self-governing status of particular hospitals when such proposals are strongly opposed by many of those deemed to have an interest in the hospitals concerned.

Mr. Mellor: Regional health authorities were given general advice in National Health Service review working paper No. 1—"Self-Governing Hospitals", published on 20 February 1989. Regional health authorities will determine precisely how they publicise applications and seek the views of those with an interest.

Private Patients (Bolton)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the revenue generated from private patients at hospitals in Bolton in 1988; and what were the comparable figures for each of the last five years.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold this information centrally. My hon. Friend may wish to pursue his inquiry with Mr. T. Taylor, chairman of Bolton health authority.

Immunisation

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children have been immunised with the new measles, mumps and rubella vaccine since its introduction in October 1988.

Mr. Mellor: Immunisation uptake figures for 1988-89 will not be available until later this year. However, from the launch of measles, mumps and rubella vaccine last October to the end of March, 1·4 million doses were distributed to health authorities. The number of children in the recommended priority groups (aged 15 months and four to five years) who became eligible for the vaccine in that period was 600,000.

Harts Hospital (Sale)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the proceeds of the sale of Harts hospital; and how much has been directly returned to Waltham Forest health authority.

Mr. Freeman: The net proceeds of the sale of Harts hospital were £29·3 million. Capital allocations are a matter for the regional health authority concerned.

Ethnic Monitoring

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether his Department has conducted monitoring exercises in compliance with the code of the Commission of Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunity Commission, respectively, separate from the Department of Social Security; whether his Department plans to do so; whether his Department plans to maintain records of the ethnic origins of its staff and officers separate from the Department of Social Security; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The action taken by the then Department of Health and Social Security in support of its equal opportunities policy will continue in the Department of Health and will follow the guidance in the codes of practice of the Commission for Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunity Commission. This action includes the monitoring of personnel policies and procedures.

Work is in hand to ensure that the staff records, including ethnic origin data, of the Department of Health and the Department of Social Security can be separately identified. I shall write to the hon. and learned Member when this is completed.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many and what percentage of officers in each of grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, respectively, in his Department are *(a)* women and *(b)* from ethnic minorities.

Mr. Mellor: We do not have the information in the form requested because records are held on combined basis with the Department of Social Security. I refer the hon. and learned Member to the information in the reply to him by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security on 22 March 1989 at column *679*.

Human Insulin

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the volume and value of human insulin imported into the United Kingdom in each year since 1983; what proportion this represents of the total human insulin used in the United Kingdom each year since 1983; and whether any checks are made as to whether this human insulin was purchased or donated voluntarily.

Mr. Mellor: All "human insulin" is manufactured, either by modification of porcine insulin or using biotechnology to produce in the laboratory a product which has the same chemical characteristics as insulin occurring naturally in humans. For this reason it is commonly referred to as "human insulin", though it is not, as might be assumed, derived from human sources. All such human insulin sold in the United Kingdom is now imported, although there was some manufacture up to 1987. Information on amounts sold was given in my reply to the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) on 21 December 1988, at column *325*.

Weil's Disease

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish a table showing the number of deaths, by occupational category, and by region, from Weil's disease in each of the past 20 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is not wholly available: details of the deceased's occupation were not coded in some of the past 20 years.

Number of deaths due to Weil's disease[1] by standard region of usual residence and occupation, 1968-87.

Year	Total	Region	Occupation[2]
1968	8	East Midlands	n/a
		Yorks and Humberside (2)	n/a
		South East (4)	n/a
		East Anglia	n/a
1969	6	Yorks and Humberside	n/a
		South East (2)	n/a
		Wales	n/a
		West Midlands	n/a
		South West	n/a
1970	3	Yorks and Humberside (2)	Agricultural machinery drivers aged under 15
		South West	Food processors (nec)
1971	3	South East (2)	Labourers, others (nec)
			Labourers, building and contracting
		Wales	Labourers, others (nec)
1972	9	East Anglia	Farmers, farm managers, market gardeners
		North	Proprietors and managers, sales
		South West (2)	Construction workers (nec)
			No occupation
		South East (4)	Agricultural workers (nec)
			Farmers, farm managers, market gardeners
			Construction workers (nec)
			Farmers, farm managers, market gardeners
		North West	Farmers, farm managers, market gardeners
1973	2	Wales	n/a
		Yorks and Humberside	n/a
1974	1	West Midlands	n/a
1975	5	South East	Construction workers (nec)
		South West (2)	Agricultural workers (nec)
			Farmers, farm managers, market gardeners
		East Midlands	Aged under 15
		North Western	No occupation
1976	2	South Western	n/a
		Yorks and Humberside	n/a
1977	2	East Midlands	n/a
		North Western	n/a
1978	3	Northern	n/a
		Yorks and Humberside	n/a
		South East	n/a
1979	3	South East (3)	Farmers, horticulturists, farm managers
			Labourers
			Teachers (nec)
1980	4	South East (2)	Farmers, horticulturists, farm managers
			Not stated including housewife
		South West	Chefs, cooks
		Wales	Sales representatives (property and service) other agents
1981	1	South West	Not stated including housewife
1982	2	South East	All other in farming and related
		Wales	Gardeners and groundsmen
1983	1	Wales	Labourer, coal mines
1984	—	—	—
1985	3	South West	Other proprietors and managers (sales)
		West Midlands	Butchers, meat cutters
		Yorks and Humberside	Man-made fibre makers
1986	1	East Midlands	Refuse collectors, dustman
1987	1	South East	Farm workers

[1] International Classification of Diseases (ICD) codes 100-0 Leptospirosis icterohaemorrhagica plus 100-9, Leptospirosis unspecified.

[2] Occupations are coded using the 1970 and 1980 OPCS Classification of Occupations.

n/a = Not available.

(nec) = Not elsewhere classified.

AIDS

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the projects undertaken by the Health Education Authority on AIDS since its inception; what the budget for each project was; whether each project was approved by his Department; and what projects suggested by the authority have not received departmental approval.

Mr. Mellor: Information is not available in exactly the form requested because the HEA's work on AIDS is not funded on a project by project basis. The procedure followed is that the HEA draws up an operational programme which is discussed with Ministers in the authority's annual accountability review. Once the operational programme and budget for AIDS have been agreed the Health Education Authority discusses with the Department (and for United Kingdomwide mass media work, with the other Health Departments also) detailed proposals for implementing the operational programme. These arrangements are intended to ensure that material which is distributed is consistent with overall Government policy on HIV prevention. The work on HIV/AIDS carried out the the HEA is set out in "AIDS Programme Paper 4: The First Annual Report: October 1987 to September 1988", a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the advice received from the Health Education Authority regarding policy towards AIDS; and what has been his response to the advice received.

Mr. Mellor: One of the functions of the Health Education Authority is to give advice to Government on health education issues, including those relating the HIV/AIDS. This can be given formally or informally, privately or publicly and at various levels and the Government take account of this in reaching decisions on aspects of policy on HIV infection and AIDS.

Kreutzfeldt-Jacob Dementia

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to be able to announce his decision as to whether to introduce reporting procedures in respect of Kreutzfeldt-Jacob dementia.

Mr. Freeman: We have no plans to do so. Following the recommendation of the Southwood committee on bovine spongiform encephalopathy consideration is being given, however, to the most effective way of ensuring cases of this disease are monitored.

Drugs (Quality)

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether his Department monitors the percentage of generic pharmaceutical supplies to hospitals which are rejected on the grounds of failing to meet quality standards.

Mr. Mellor: The Department does not carry out such monitoring centrally. It is for individual health authorities, as purchasers of medicines, to satisfy themselves as to the quality of those pharmaceuticals.

Clinical Waste

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he has taken to ensure that health authorities are handling and disposing of clinical waste safely.

Mr. Freeman: I have recently called for all health authorities to carry out a special review of their arrangements for handling and disposing of clinical waste. Their reports confirmed that the vast majority of health authorities conform to the guidance set out in the Health and Safety Commission document, "The Safe Disposal of Clinical Waste."

In the few exceptional cases where the guidance has not been fully implemented, the main principles of segregation in colour coded bags and incineration are followed. Where contractors are used, the contract is being closely monitored. The Department is taking action to ensure that the guidance is complied with in all respects.

Shropshire league of friends

Mr. Biffen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if, in view of the continuing widespread concern over health care in Shopshire, he will now see a delegation of the Shropshire league of friends following its correspondence with him on 17 March; and what response he has made to its claim that it is statutorily entitled to such consideration.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 17 May 1989]:* I have told the Shropshire hospitals league of friends that I see little to be gained by discussion of the decisions taken last year, which are now settled and behind us. I have left open the possibility of receiving a delegation from the league of friends and other interested groups if any further proposals concerning health care in Shropshire came to me for decision. Decisions about the financing of health care in Shropshire are of course for the West Midlands regional health authority and day-to-day management decisions are the responsibility of the Shropshire district health authority.

I am aware of no claim by the leagues of friends that they are statutorily entitled to send a delegation to see me.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Brain Offal

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on steps being taken by his Department to ban brain offal from the food chain.

Mr. Ryder: Following publication of the Southwood report on bovine spongiform encephalopathy, I announced that I intend, as a precautionary measure, to introduce legislation prohibiting the sale of baby foods contaning brains or other specified offal. I hope to circulate draft regulations for public consultation shortly.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what amount of the £155 million to be provided to United Kingdom farmers in consequence of the recent common agricultural policy price agreement will be provided by the EEC, Her Majesty's Government and the consumer respectively.

Mr. MacGregor: Approximately one half is expected to be financed by the Exchequer either directly, or indirectly from the European Community, with the remainder being borne by consumers. The total impact on the retail prices index (all items) is estimated to be very small, at most one twentieth of 1 per cent.

Product Labelling

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has had any discussions with food manufacturers regarding the labelling of products with full ingredients and additives; and what is the Government's policy on the use of additives in food.

Mr. Ryder: I and my colleagues frequently meet food manufacturing and other interests to discuss a wide range of topics, including food labelling. Government policy on food additives is to ensure that additives are approved only after rigorous examination for need and safety in use by independent committees. Ministers are advised on this by the Food Advisory Committee and the Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment.

Milk

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on green top milk.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have nothing to add to the reply my right hon. Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) on 23 February, at columns *712-13*.

Salmonella

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his reply of 10 May, *Official Report*, column *459*, whether he will make it his policy to ban the import of consignments of eggs which are found to be contaminated with salmonella.

Mr. Donald Thompson: For technical and legal reasons it is not feasible to detain consignments of imported eggs pending testing for salmonella, which takes a number of days. However, where any sample is found to be contaminated with invasive salmonella, the Commission is informed and follow-up action taken with the member state concerned, with a view to eradication of the problem at source.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on how many occasions in the latest 12 months for which figures are available consignments of imported eggs have been *(a)* checked for salmonella infection and *(b)* found to be infected with salmonella.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[pursuant to his reply, 10 May 1989, c. 459]:* Two of the samples taken from consignments of eggs in the last month have now been shown to be positive for salmonella.

In one of these cases, salmonella enteritidis PT4 was identified on the shells of eggs packed in the Netherlands. I have drawn this result to the attention of the Dutch Minister, so that measures can be taken to eradicate the problem at source.

An invasive type of salmonella was not identified in the other sample.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many man-years he estimates will be spent on salmonellosis in each of the field and veterinary investigation services, and at the central veterinary laboratory, in the next year.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information is as follows:

	Man years
Field service	28·5
Veterinary investigation service	85·0
Central veterinary laboratory	25·5

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the latest figure he has available for the number of cattle in Britain infected with bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Up to 12 May, 4,570 cases of BSE had been confirmed in Great Britain.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many man-years have been spent by his Department on bovine spongiform encephalopathy in the last year, by grade, and by service;

(2) how many man-years he expects to be spent on bovine spongiform encephalopathy by his Department in the next year, by grade, and by service.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information is as follows. Manpower forecasts are not subdivided by grade for 1989-90.

Service	*1988-89* [1] *Band A*	*Band B*	*Band C*	*Band D*	*Total*	*1989-90 Total*
State veterinary service	3	32	14	25	74	90
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food animal health group	[2]	1	1	3	5	5
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food regional administration	—	0·5	1	12	13	14

[1] Grade bands:
A—Grades 1 to 6.
B—SEO-7 and equivalents.
C—EO-HEO and equivalents.
D—Clerical and industrial grades.

[2] Less than 0·5.

Source: Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food MINIM.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy are being identified, on average, in each week by antemortem inspection; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: On average, 140 to 150 suspected cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy are being identified each week by antemortem inspection.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had in the European Council of Ministers on bovine spongiform encephalopathy and its transmission.

Mr. Donald Thompson: None.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Caerphilly, 4 May, *Official Report*, columns *195-96*, which animal species are involved in experiments on the transmission of bovine spongiform encephalopathy; what have been the results to date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Transmission experiments are taking place in hamsters, mice, calves, sheep, goats, marmosets and pigs. So far, only mice have been affected.

Dutch Elm Disease

Mr. Adley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the research programme into Dutch elm disease; and if there are any prospects for the elimination thereof.

Mr. Ryder: The Forestry Commission continues to commit significant resources to research on Dutch elm disease, which complements research being carried out in other countries. There is no prospect of eliminating the disease, and the commission's research programme is

mainly aimed at finding ways of reducing its incidence. In addition, work is being conducted on the potential role of disease-resistant elms.

Farm Diversification Scheme

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many applications his Department has received under the farm diversification scheme for each six-month period since its inception; how many have been successful in each period; and what has been the cost involved.

Mr. Ryder: The information is as follows:

Period	*Applications received*	*Applications approved*	*Grant commitment (£'000)*
1 January 1988 to 30 June 1988	682	528	2,635
1 July 1988 to 31 December 1988	405	288	1,572
1 January 1989 to 30 April 1989	308	136	660

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will provide a breakdown of the number of successful applications under the farm diversification scheme for each county in England and Wales.

Mr. Ryder: I regret that the information requested is only available by the divisional offices of Departments and not by counties. Approved applications for farm diversification capital grants for the period 1 January 1988 to 30 April 1989 were as follows:

Division	*Number approved*
Beverley	38
Carlisle	32
Newcastle	35
Northallerton	49
Nottingham	37
Worcester	39
Preston	20
Crewe	57
Chelmsford	34
Huntingdon	32
Norwich	43
Lincoln	23
Guildford	36
Maidstone	62
Oxford	36
Exeter	127
Gloucester	79
Taunton	87
Truro	87
Caernarvon	19
Carmarthen	70
Llandrindod	58
Ruthin	16

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will provide a breakdown of the number of successful applicants under the farm diversification scheme for each type of project eligible under the scheme.

Mr. Ryder: The number of enterprises in approved applications for farm diversification capital grants in England and Wales for the period 1 January 1988 to 30 April 1989 were as follows:

	Number of enterprises
Manufacture of craft items	12
Food processing:	
Dairy	77
Meats	25
Vegetables	8
Fish	9
Drinks	8
Other	12
Timber processing	8
Non-food agricultural produce	19
Repair of agricultural machinery	6
Farm shops:	
Food	98
Other	30
Pick-your-own sales	16
Accommodation:	
Serviced	151
Self catering	334
Caravanning	56
Camping sites	8
Camping and bunkhouse barns	4
Catering:	
Restaurant	22
Other	25
Recreation and education:	
Fishing	93
Sports	20
Play areas	21
Leisure parks	8
Farm visitors	46
Environmental facilities (eg nature trails)	23
Other	37
Horses:	
Livery	139
For hire	4
Letting of farm units	37

Meat and Bone Meal

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of Friday 5 May, *Official Report*, column *279*, what additional certification accompanying meat and bone meal exported from the United Kingdom is required by France, West Germany and Israel; what arangements have been agreed for use by exporters of meat and bone meal to France; what requirements have been stipulated by Israel; and what assurances have been sought by West Germany.

Mr. Donald Thompson: France and West Germany have requested confirmation of heat treatment in

accordance with their requirements. This certification can be provided. Germany and Israel have asked for clearance from BSE which can be supplied. Israel has also asked for freedom from scrapie and we are entering into discussions with the Israeli authorities on a form of assurances which would be acceptable.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Caerphilly, of 5 May, *Official Report*, column 279, whether he knows of any plans by the European Commission to introduce rules applying to the production of meat and bone meal.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Commission proposals for a Council regulation laying down veterinary rules for the disposal and processing of animal waste are currently being discussed in Brussels.

State Veterinary Service

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many veterinary officers he has employed in the state veterinary service, by grade, in each of the last 10 years;

(2) how many veterinary officers he has employed in the state veterinary investigation service, by grade, in each of the last 10 years;

(3) how many animal health officers he has employed in the state veterinary field service, by grade, in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information is as follows:

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	[1]*1989*
Chief veterinary officer	1·0	1·0	1·0	1·0	1·0	1·0	1·0	1·0	1·0	1·0
Grade 3	2·0	2·0	2·0	2·0	2·0	2·0	2·0	2·0	2·0	2·0
Grade 4	8·0	8·0	7·0	7·0	7·0	6·0	7·0	7·0	7·0	7·0
	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)
Grade 5	23·0	23·0	22·0	21·0	21·0	21·0	20·0	17·0	15·0	17·0
								(1)	(1)	(1)
Grade 6	15·0	14·0	14·0	14·0	15·0	13·0	11·0	11·0	11·0	12·0
Deputy regional veterinary officer	24·0	22·0	22·0	22·0	21·0	23·0	13·0	12·0	13·0	14·0
	(8)	(6)	(6)	(6)	(6)	(6)	(3)	(2)	(3)	(3)
Divisional veterinary officer	128·0	128·0	125·0	129·0	129·0	121·0	115·0	99·0	93·0	91·0
	(23)	(22)	(24)	(23)	(24)	(22)	(24)	(19)	(19)	(19)
Veterinary officer	298·0	286·0	287·0	285·5	282·0	274·0	274·0	257·0	244·0	247·5
	(58)	(58)	(61)	(62)	(61)	(57)	(58)	(53)	(52)	(49)
Senior research officer grade II	44·0	43·0	42·0	39·0	40·0	36·0	41·0	40·0	37·0	33·0
Veterinary research officer	35·5	36·5	35·0	28·5	23·5	30·5	22·5	18·5	21·5	14·5
Senior animal health officer	77·0	74·0	70·0	71·0	72·0	71·0	68·0	49·0	48·0	45·0
Animal health officer	162·0	150·0	139·0	129·0	128·0	127·0	126·0	120·0	123·5	122·5

Note.—Figures in brackets relate to the veterinary investigation service, which is part of the state veterinary service.

[1]The 1989 figures include staff of the professional unit of the veterinary medicines directorate, who prior to 3 April 1989 belonged to the state veterinary service.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what additional resources have been provided for the state veterinary service in order to accommodate the increased workload resulting from bovine spongiform encephalopathy and salmonella.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Seventy four additional posts have been approved to deal with salmonellosis; consideration is still being given to the additional requirements for dealing with BSE.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the annual budget of the state veterinary service for each of the last five years and for the financial year 1989-90, showing capital, pay and non-pay current cost votes.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information is as follows, in terms of initial allocations under decentralised budgetary control:

£'000

	1984-85	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
Pay	[1]—	[1]—	19,644	22,316	21,823	24,805
Non-pay	[1]—	[1]—	5,525	7,343	7,594	9,565
Capital	[1]—	[1]—	605	1,086	775	966

[1] DBC not applied: no separate data available.

Note:

Figures ar not comparable year by year because of changes in the coverage in the service's decentralised budget.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what are his estimates of the additional number of veterinary surgeons needed by his Department following the completion of the European Community internal market in 1992;

(2) what steps he is taking to ensure that the state veterinary service is adequately staffed to deal with emergencies and, in particular, to cope with additional workloads leading up to and following completion of the European Community internal market in 1992;

(3) which areas of work in the state veterinary service are not being carried out as a result of the additional workload relating to bovine spongiform encephalopathy and salmonella.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Priorities within the state veterinary service are continually reassessed to ensure that adequate resources are devoted to all essential tasks. Staffing requirements are also kept under review and recruitment drives are held regularly. It would however be premature to attempt an estimate of the manpower required as a result of the establishment of the single market as negotiations on the arrangements are still in progress.

Farm Incomes

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table showing the average farm income in the United Kingdom for each of the last five years for which figures are available and adjusted for inflation.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Indices of net farm income per farm at current prices and in real terms by type of farm in the United Kingdom for the years 1983-84 to 1988-89 are published in "Agriculture in the United Kingdom, 1988". A copy of this is available in the Library of the House.

County Council Farms

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy on the sale of county council farms.

Mr. Ryder: It is the Government's policy to leave decisions on the sale of smallholdings to the smallholdings authorities concerned.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many county council farms there are in respect of each county of England and Wales.

Mr. Ryder: The 38th annual report to Parliament on smallholdings in England (1 April 1987 to 31 March 1988) is now available in the Library of the House. Table 3 gives details of the number of smallholdings provided by county councils. A similar report for Wales is also available.

Blowfly

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether his Department has issued any advice on the technique of using pour-on products for the control of blowfly infestation in sheep.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Licences for such products require that the proper conditions of use are spelt out on the product labels and accompanying literature. My Department has not issued supplementary guidance.

Co-responsibility Levy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much was paid by British dairy farmers last year as co-responsibility levy; and what is his estimate of their liability in the current year.

Mr. Donald Thompson: United Kingdom dairy farmers paid some £53 million in milk co-responsibility levy in 1988-89. Following the reductions in the levy agreed in this year's farm price negotiations, it is currently estimated that their liability will be reduced to about £32 million in 1989-90.

Beef Premium

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures he intends to take to ensure that the beef special premium is paid to producers as an addition to, and not incorporated within, the market price of finished animals.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Payment of the beef special premium in Great Britain is made direct to the producer presenting the animals for slaughter or for sale for slaughter.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement indicating in full the documentary evidence required to be produced by claimants of the beef special premium; and which of these will be mandatory prerequisites.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The mandatory prerequisites for those applying for the beef special premium in Great Britain are that they shall have registered, prior to application and on the form provided, details of all their production units and that they complete an application form for each claim made. In addition, they must keep records sufficient to verify the claims for premium and to substantiate the means of production. Applicants are also required to keep records of the purchases and sales of animals which have been marked for premium as follows:

(1) The date of transaction.
(2) Numbers and descriptions of animals, and the weight of each animal.
(3) In the case of a purchase or sale by auction at an auction market, the name and address of the auctioneer, and in any other case the name and address of the other party to the transaction.
(4) Where applicable the dates by which any marked animals bought or sold are to be slaughtered.
(5) Where applicable, the dates of slaughter of marked animals in their possession at the time of slaughter.

Most of these requirements are in fact met by the scheme documentation.

Applicants are required to retain such records for a period of three years from the end of the calender year to which they relate and to produce them for inspection if so required by an authorised officer.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how he intends to enforce the headage limit of 90 in respect of the beef special premium.

Mr. Donald Thompson: On each application form claimants for premium are required to declare that they have not exceeded the headage limit. Claims will be monitored by the computer program processing claims for payment and verification will be made on holding of claim details.

Encephalopathies

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research his Department was sponsoring prior to 1987 on transmissible encephalopathies in animals.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The main centre for research on transmissible encephalopathies in animals has been the neuropathogenesis unit in Edinburgh, funded jointly by the Agricultural and Food Research Council and the Medical Research Council. My Department has been

maintaining a scrapie resistant flock of sheep for study at Redesdale experimental husbandry farm for many years and began an investigation of scrapies-associated fibrils in sheep in 1985-86. The central veterinary laboratory of MAFF studies new and emerging diseases continuously and identified bovine spongiform encephalopathy in cattle in November 1986 and has studied the pathology of cases ever since. The laboratory's main studies of bovine spongiform encephalopathy began in 1987.

Set-aside Scheme

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the estimated cost of the set-aside programme.

Mr. Ryder: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) on 4 April 1989, column *45*.

Meat Imports

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what provisions exist for the inspection of imported meat products which originate outside the European Economic Community; and what is his estimate of the percentage of such imports which are so inspected.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Port health authorities are responsible for the inspection of meat products imported from all countries under the Imported Food Regulations 1984. The authorities are diligent in ensuring that all consignments have the proper health certification and are inspected.

Humber Estuary

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what monitoring is currently being undertaken in and around the Humber estuary on *(a)* the decline in marine life and *(b)* the effects of water pollution on fish for human consumption.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 16 May 1989]:* Concentrations of contaminants in fish and shellfish around the coasts of England and Wales including the Humber area are regularly monitored by scientists from my Department's directorate of fisheries research. Reports of this work are published and the latest such report, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food "Aquatic Environment Monitoring Report No. 16", is available in the Library of the House.

Agricultural Research

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what agricultural research resources are currently being devoted to *(a)* organic farming and *(b)* bio-dynamic farming techniques.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 16 May 1989]:* This year my Department is spending £198,000 on research directly related to organic farming. Other research funded by my Department is also relevant to organic and so-called bio-dynamic farming techniques because it is directed at reducing the use of artificial fertilisers and pesticides or improving the use of organic wastes from animals and crops. Such work includes the integrated control of cereals pests using insect predators, parasitic fungi and behaviour-controlling chemicals and will cost £892,000 this year.

EMPLOYMENT

Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the estimated date for publication of the Manpower Services Commission studies into the funding of training in Britain; whether he will consider publishing the interim results of the study; and whether the studies include a breakdown by economic region of private industry's expenditure on training.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 15 May 1989]:* The studies will be published by the autumn. Interim results of the study were published a year ago and a copy is in the House of Commons Library, ("The Funding of Vocational Education and Training: Some Early Research Findings, Background Note 2, Training Commission, 1988). The studies do not include a breakdown by economic region of private industry's expenditure on training but will provide some indication of levels of training in different parts of the country.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he has taken to ensure that employment training scheme management agencies and employers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland do not continue to receive an allowance from his Department after trainees have left the scheme.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 17 May 1989]:* Claims for training fees submitted by training managers are subject to checks both within Training Agency area offices and at the training manager's premises.

The checks include the comparison of claims with individual trainee records and information notified to unemployment benefit offices.

Responsibility for Government programmes in Northern Ireland lies with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the managing and training agents operating in the North Tyneside travel-to-work area and the numbers of ET and YTS placements in each.

Mr. Cope: I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my letter in the Library.

Labour Statistics

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in the age group 16 to 19 inclusive were *(a)* full-time employees in employment, *(b)* part-time employees in employment, *(c)* self employed, *(d)* not included above and on YOP, YTS, CP, or JTS or *(e)* not included in the above and undertaking full-time education or training, from spring 1984 for each year to spring 1988.

Mr. Cope: Available estimates from labour force surveys are as shown in the following table:

Persons aged 16-19 either in employment or undertaking full-time education or training—Great Britain

Spring estimates, thousands

	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*[1]1988*
Full-time[1] employees	1,261	1,230	1,189	1,187	1,190
Part-time[1] employees	386	410	432	457	525
Self-employed	43	45	44	42	44
On Government employment and training programmes[2]	227	290	262	299	316
Undertaking full-time education or training and not in employment[3]	986	912	863	870	786

[1] Based on respondent's own assessment.

[2] Includes all on YTS, CI, CP, VPP and their predecessors, together with those in training courses under JTS, Training for Enterprise and Wider Opportunities Training Programme (successors of Training Opportunities programme or TOPS) who said they did some paid work in the survey reference week.

[3] Includes all still in continuous full-time education or (i) on a sandwich course, (ii) studying at university, polytechnic or college full-time, or (iii) training for a qualification in nursing, physiotherapy, or a similar medical subject.

[4] Preliminary estimates (1988 only).

Source: Labour Force Surveys.

YTS

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the numbers of fatal, major and minor accidents on YTS for the period January 1989 to March 1989; and how many YTS placements were closed or not accepted in the periods September to December 1988 and January 1989 to March 1989.

Mr. Cope: Table A provides YTS accident figures for the period 1 January—31 March 1989.

Table A

YTS accidents 1 January 1989 to 31 March 1989

Accident[1]	*Period 1 January 1989 to 31 March 1989*
Fatalities	1
Major Injuries[2]	150
Minor Injuries	716

[1] Training Agency accident figures include accidents to trainees in educational establishments and road traffic accidents which would not have been reportable to the Health and Safety Executive had the individuals been employed.

[2] Major injuries are classified according to the severity criteria laid down in the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985.

Table B provides the figures of YTS placements closed or not accepted for the quarters 1 October 1988 to 31 December 1988 and 1 January 1989 to 31 March 1989.

Table B

Closure and non acceptance of YTS placements 1 October 1988 to 31 December 1988 and 1 January 1989 to 31 March 1989

	1 October 1988 to 31 December 1988	*1 January 1989 to 31 March 1989*
Placements Closed	36	39
Placements not accepted	14	19

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many YTS trainees had contracts of employment by Training Agency region, by male and female, at the most recent date, and at one year previously.

Mr. Cope: The numbers of young people in training on YTS who were notified to the Training Agency as having contracts of employment as at 31 December 1987 and 31 December 1988 by region were as follows:

Region	31 December 1987		31 December 1988	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Scotland	1,451	4,478	1,759	5,594
Northern	981	2,055	1,217	2,672
North West	2,966	6,690	3,402	8,822
Yorkshire and Humberside	2,503	3,936	3,543	6,437
West Midlands	1,509	3,696	2,488	6,261
Wales	412	1,886	720	2,371
South West	1,202	4,055	1,560	5,569
South East	1,846	7,882	2,553	10,246
London	778	4,210	1,693	5,630
East Midlands and East Anglia	2,280	5,955	3,189	8,087
TOTAL	15,428	41,147	21,524	61,689

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list by male and female from the most recent YTS leavers survey those trainees leaving the scheme by destination classed as *(a)* full-time work with same employer, *(b)* full-time work with a different employer, *(c)* full-time education course, *(d)* another YTS, *(e)* other and *(f)* unemployment; and what is the percentage of early leavers.

Mr. Cope: The results of the YTS follow-up survey are available in the House of Commons Library.

SCOTLAND

Community Charge

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will introduce legislation to exempt from the poll tax seamen working and living on their vessels who have no other sole or main residence.

Mr. Lang: The question whether a person is solely or mainly resident in the area of a local authority and thus liable to pay the personal community charge is for community charge registration officers to decide in the light of the facts and circumstances relating to individual cases. There are no plans to make special arrangements for seafarers.

Roads

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the total percentages of the Scottish Development Department's road budget which were allocated to the following roads in each of the past five years: *(a)* A/M74, *(b)* A77, *(c)* A9, *(d)* A92 and *(e)* A96.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 16 May 1989]:* The information is given in the following table:

Expenditure as Percentage of Total Spend on Trunk Roads

Financial Year/Route	A/M74	A77	A9	A92	A96
1984-85	12·6	2·2	17·9	11·5	1·6
1985-86	19·2	1·9	18·3	7·1	1·4
1986-87	13·6	1·7	18·0	4·4	2·4
1987-88	13·6	2·4	15·1	5·0	7·3
1988-87[1]	9·9	2·0	9·9	12·9	4·8

[1] Estimate.

Family Law (Scotland) Act

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will introduce legislation to amend section 8(1)(a) of the Family Law (Scotland) Act 1985 in order to allow the court to make orders in an action for divorce, for the payment of a capital sum and for the transfer of property.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any intention of bringing forward amending legislation in the light of Lord Morton's statement in the Court of Session in the case of Walker v. Walker that the Family Law (Scotland) Act 1985 would require amendment to permit an award of both transfer of property and a capital sum.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A Court of Session judgment relating to this legislation was made on 9 May. The provision in question is in the terms suggested by the Scottish Law Commission. Until such time as the period during which an appeal may be made expires it would not be appropriate for me to comment.

Weil's Disease

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of deaths, by occupational category, and by region, from Weil's disease in each of the past 20 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Seven deaths from Weil's disease since 1968 have been recorded in Scotland. The information requested about these deaths is as follows:

Year	Number of deaths	Occupation	County or region
1970	1	Not known	Argyll
1975	1	Not known	Highland
1979	1	Drawing office assistant	Tayside
1980	2	Farm worker	Grampian
		Farmer	Central
1983	2	University academic staff	Tayside
		Farm worker	Central

Lowland Airports Policy

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library a copy of the survey

of Scottish opinion which his office conducted in relation to the request by BAA plc for a review of Scottish lowland airports policy.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No such survey of Scottish opinion has been carried out by the Scottish Office. In reaching his decision on BAA's request for a review of the Scottish lowlands airports policy, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport took into account the support for maintaining the present status of Prestwick airport which had been expressed by representatives of all political parties, as well as other considerations.

Direct Labour (Competition)

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has completed his consultations about the competition requirements relating to direct labour organisations; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The overall response rate to the consultation paper issued in October 1988 was low with only half of local authorities submitting comment. My right hon. and learned Friend was grateful to all those who did respond and has carefully considered the comments received. He has now decided that all building and maintenance work, other than highways and water and sewage work, should be subject to competition and that authorities should be prohibited from renewing maintenance contracts without first going out to tender. Emergency work will continue to be exempt but further consideration is being given to the scope for restricting the kinds of emergency work which can be carried out by direct labour organisations without competition.

In the light of the responses received, my right hon. and learned Friend has also decided to defer the implementation date by six months to 1 April 1990 and to increase the exemption for direct labour organisations proposed in the consultation paper from five to 15 employees.

Trunk Road Programme

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will increase resources for the trunk road programme in Scotland; and what proposals he has to alter his current policies and plans.

Mr. Rifkind: I refer to the statement made today by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, announcing major developments in his motorway and trunk road programme. I particularly welcome his decision to place the main immediate priority in England on widening the M6, M1 and M25 motorways. These roads are Scotland's essential links to the major markets in the south and Europe.

The road programme in Scotland will benefit substantially from the expanded programme announced today. As with England and Wales, of course detailed decisions about funding levels for particular years will be taken in the course of annual reviews of public expenditure. Under the normal formula arrangements the Scottish block will receive each year an equivalent share of the additional funds.

I place major emphasis on improving inter-urban roads in Scotland. I have already announced that I am making additional funds available for national trunk roads over the current year and some 25 per cent. more for new construction for the following two financial years. I now expect to be in a position to increase roads spending substantially further in future years reflecting the Government's commitment to improved roads infrastructure. Currently we have in preparation a formidable programme of schemes and studies.

The financing of roads is no longer a matter solely for the Government. There is also a role for private finance to play in road provision in the future in Scotland as in England, where my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has said in his White Paper that he will be putting forward proposals on this question shortly.

My right hon. Friend's White Paper also announced today new road traffic forecasts which are relevant to the standard of roads needed and to the estimates of their economic return. These new traffic forecasts will be applied similarly to planned Scottish road improvements.

I shall outline how we are currently proposing to spend the available resources. Our largest single project is the planned M74 Glasgow to Carlisle motorway which will link with the M6, M1 and M25 routes. This project was announced in 1987: it alone expanded the trunk road programme by around 40 per cent. My Department has been working to a highly ambitious timetable to prepare this 100km of motorway and I now expect that advance works will start next year and, if progress continues will, even main works.

To this end I am announcing today the first two schemes, one at either end of the A74 in Scotland. The northernmost scheme runs from Millbank to just north of Abington. The second scheme is the section from Gretna to Kirkpatrick Fleming. Development of these "fast-track" schemes will run ahead of the general development of the rest of the route. The consultants are finalising their reports for the whole length to be upgraded. Once these reports have been studied, we propose in the late summer or autumn to consult on a proposed preferred route for the whole road.

A key issue is whether M74 schemes should be dual-two lane or dual-three lane standard. My Department has carefully assessed the two schemes that I have announced today in the light of the additional costs of dual-three lane over dual-two lane, the new higher traffic levels expected and the implications for disruption of traffic during the construction period. Following this full assessment, it is proposed that these two schemes will be built to dual-three lane standard. The standard to which subsequent schemes will be built will similarly be considered on their particular merits.

A further motorway priority is completion of the central Scotland network. Some eight major motorway schemes are now being progressed rapidly. One is the M8 from Newbridge to the Edinburgh bypass. This is urgently required and I hope that firm proposals can be published this summer with a view to construction starting about two years thereafter.

On the M80, advance works are well under way on the Stepps bypass, which will mark the start of three major schemes that will complete the motorway from Stirling to Glasgow. There are four other major motorway proposals at an advanced stage of preparation on the periphery of Glasgow. On the A77 several schemes are planned to complete the dual carriageway between Glasgow and Ayr.

Important though the motorway network is to the economy of Scotland, the Government will continue to place equal priority on improving the whole 2,000 miles of

trunk road network throughout Scotland. In recent years this has meant, for example, the improvement of the A9 Perth-Inverness route, the Perth-Dundee-Aberdeen route, and the A75 Euro route to Stranraer.

The top priority now for trunk roads is to make significant enhancements on the A96 Aberdeen-Inverness route to reduce accidents and journey times and to improve driving conditions on the route generally. The Government announced a six-point plan in December which set out a programme of work, current and planned, which will cost at least £70 million.

One hundred miles of route cannot be re-engineered overnight. This programme therefore concentrates on addressing the priority problems first. It does so quickly and effectively. Where traffic flows are high, major schemes have been, are being or will be built. Where there are accidents occurring, remedial schemes are being implemented as a matter of urgency. Already, 30 sites for accident remedial treatment have been identified since the plan was announced and road markings are to be thoroughly overhauled. Where lack of overtaking opportunities are causing long queues of traffic, frustration and delays, we have instructed the regional council to plan to include regular safe overtaking stretches.

The precise extent of further new schemes to improve the A96 and the speed with which they can now be implemented will depend in part on the actual amounts of new money which will become available from year to year following today's statement. I am pleased today however to be able to announce that major and early progress can be achieved. A key part of the six-point plan was to accelerate preparation of the major schemes so that they could be built if money were to become available from slippage elsewhere in the programme. I can now say that funds will be available for these major A96 schemes as soon as they are prepared. Further, in the light of both the new resources likely to be available and of the new traffic forecasts announced today, I will now be considering further significant improvements to the A96 which might be appropriate.

The trunk road programme now contains major schemes to improve almost all roads in the trunk road network. Further schemes will be added as studies identifying requirements are completed. In particular, my Department is about to recdeive final assessments from the "Routes South of Edinburgh" study. Before I make a final decision on the way forward in the light of the study, it is my intention to issue a consultation paper detailing the options which have emerged and inviting comment from a wide range of interests. I hope to be able to issue the consultation paper during the summer.

I have also decided to instigate a further study to ensure that both trunk and other key principal roads, the vital links between major centres of Scotland, are in the best possible shape to meet the demands of the latter part of this century and into the next. No network wide general review of traffic flows, pressure points and potential to enhance development has been carried out for some time. If roads investment is to be substantially increased—and it is—it is critical to be sure that the money will be spent in the right places. It is particularly necessary, therefore, to review the situation now. The regional councils will have a role to play in this and my Department will be consulting them to discuss the way forward.

Publicity

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library details of each major publicity campaign mounted by his Department in 1985-86 and each successive year, including in each case the objectives of the campaign, the intended audience and the outcome of the monitoring of the achievement of the intended objectives, and national research conducted for him by the Central Office of Information together with a note of the intended objectives in the campaigns in 1989-90.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 2 May 1989]:* Details have been placed in the Library today.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 19 May 1989

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Lingua Programme

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what is the Government's policy towards the Lingua programme proposed by the European Commission;

(2) what is the budget contribution from the United Kingdom for five years from 1994, as part of the Lingua programme;

(3) what projects have been prepared for submission to the Lingua programme proposed by the European Community;

(4) how much has been spent on preparatory work on the Lingua programme proposed by the European Commission.

Mr. Jackson: Modern languages are a key part of the national curriculum and the Government attach great importance to improving our performance in this field. Provided an appropriate legal base can be agreed, the Government are prepared to support those parts of the proposed Lingua programme which relate to student mobility, in-service training for teachers, programmes of co-operation in language teaching between higher education institutions and language training for firms. It is not prepared to support proposals for Community action in areas of school education, which are matters for individual member states. Until the size and shape of the Lingua programme have been agreed, it is not possible to forecast the United Kingdom's budgetary contribution to it, or to invite the submission of projects within it. Preparatory work in this country has to date been limited to that required for negotiating the text of the decision establishing the programme.

Doctorates

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many doctoral research students at the Open university have been awarded doctorates in each year since 1979; and what has been the comparable average success in other United Kingdom universities.

Mr. Jackson: Numbers of training doctorates at the Open university are as follows:

	Number
1979	14
1980	13
1981	22
1982	31
1983	31
1984	48
1985	41
1986	54
1987	55
1988	39
1989	[1]5

[1] To date.

A large proportion of Open university students research for their doctorates on a part-time basis. Information on average completion rates at the OU and at other United Kingdom universities is not readily available.

Student Grants

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table on student grants updating his answer of 12 December 1988, *Official Report*, column 389, for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Jackson: The data requested are as follows:

Mandatory Awards (England and Wales) 1987-88 (Provisional)

	Student Numbers	[1]*Percentage of award holders*
Full maintenance	[2]153,000	37·7
Maintenance reduced by assessment:		
(i) Numbers of dependent students with parental contributions of:		
Under £200	22,800	5·6
£201 to £400	21,900	5·4
£401 to £600	17,100	4·2
£601 to £800	15,800	3·9
£801 to £1,000	14,500	3·6
£1,001 to £1,200	13,600	3·4
£1,201 to £1,400	11,800	2·9
£1,401 to £1,600	10,000	2·5
£1,601 to £1,800	7,700	1·9
£1,801 to £2,000	5,800	1·4
Over £2,001	5,300	1·3
(ii) Dependent students who contribute to grant from their own income	600	0·1
(iii) Independent students	5,900	1·4
Nil maintenance[3]	[2]100,000	24·7

[1] Percentages calculated on unrounded figures.
[2] Includes dependent and independent students.
[3] For these students only the course fees are paid.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the scales of parental contribution to the student grant, specifying what contribution parents should be making according to their income in the current year.

Mr. Jackson: The scales for the current academic year are as follows:

Residual income[1]	[2]*Scale 1*	[3]*Scale 2*
9,900	50	37
10,000	64	48
11,000	207	155
12,000	350	262
12,600	435	326
13,000	515	386
14,000	715	536
15,000	915	686
16,000	1,115	836
17,000	1,315	986
18,000	1,515	1,136
18,400	1,595	1,196
19,000	1,745	1,309
20,000	1,995	1,496
21,000	2,245	1,684
22,000	2,495	1,871

Residual income[1]	[2]Scale 1	[3]Scale 2
23,000	2,745	2,059
24,000	2,995	2,246
25,000	3,245	2,434
26,000	3,495	2,621
27,000	3,745	2,809
28,000	3,995	2,996
29,000	4,245	3,184
30,000	4,495	3,371
31,000	4,745	3,559
31,620	max 4,900	3,675
32,000		3,746
33,000		3,934
34,000		4,121
35,000		4,309
36,000		4,496
37,000		4,684
38,000		4,871
38,153		max 4,900

[1] The starting point in calculating the residual income is the gross income of the parents as computed for tax purposes in the financial year immediately preceding the academic year for which the grant is being assessed. From this gross figure some deductions are allowed—notably those made in parallel with the tax reliefs based on interest payments, including mortgage interest, life insurance premiums (on policies taken out before March 1984) and superannuation payments.

[2] Scale 1 is applied to those students whose courses began before 1 April 1988 and who had attained the age of 18 by 16 March 1988, or to those who had within two years of starting their present course attended another designated course. Scale 2 is applied to all other dependent students.

[3] The contribution payable may be less than the amounts shown on the scale, particularly at its top end and where the contribution is in respect of one award holder only. This will depend on the amount of grant against which the contribution has to be set and whether any of the assessed contribution is offset by allowances for other dependent children.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the figures, for his best available estimate, for the numbers of parents paying the parental contribution towards the student grant, specifying how many parents and how much they are paying in respect of each different level of contribution; and if he will also estimate what proportion of parents pay the full parental contribution at each different level.

Mr. Jackson: Although the parents of two out of three mandatory award holders are assessed for a contribution towards the maintenance element of the award, they are under no legal obligation to pay it. Evidence of payment or non-payment is indirect, from surveys of students' income and expenditure, and needs to be treated with caution. Such evidence suggests that the average student receives financial help from parents in excess of their assessed contribution, but that one student in three of those whose parents are assessed for an award may receive less.

National Curriculum

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science which modern foreign languages will be specified for inclusion in the national curriculum; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I have today jointly published an order, which comes into effect on 1 August 1989, under section 3(2)(b) of the Education Reform Act 1988. This specifies two groups of modern foreign languages which will qualify for the purposes of the national curriculum. The terms of the order reflect consultations on the draft order which we initiated on 3 March. We are grateful for all the comments received during the consultation period.

Initially this order will apply to the requirement that pupils in key stage 3—normally those aged 11 to 14—should study a modern foreign language for a reasonable time from autumn 1989 for pupils in England, and from autumn 1990 for those in Wales.

The first group of languages consists of the eight working languages of the European Community (Danish, Dutch, French, German, Modern Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish)—the schedule 1 languages. The second group contains 11 non-EC languages (Arabic, Bengali, Gujerati, Hindi, Japanese, Mandarin and Cantonese Chinese, Modern Hebrew, Panjabi, Russian, Turkish, Urdu)—the schedule 2 languages.

The order does not require all pupils to study a working language of the European Community. It requires schools to offer at least one such language as the first modern foreign language pupils study; but allows schools also to offer any of the other languages listed in schedule 2 so that pupils can choose to study one of these languages rather than the EC language offered. But the order does not give pupils a right to demand teaching of a non-EC language or an EC language other than that offered.

Circulars of guidance for England and Wales are also being published today. Copies of the order and circulars will be sent to all LEAs and schools and have been placed in the Library.

WALES

Wales Advisory Body for Local Authority Higher Education

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will reconsider the exclusion of the Welsh Joint Education Committee from the recently reconstituted Wales advisory body for local authority higher education.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The reconstituted Wales advisory body for local authority higher education consists of eight county councillors chaired by myself. The Welsh Joint Education committee nominates four of the eight councillors.

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will consider appointing a representative of professional public sector higher education drawn from within the Principality to the newly constituted Wales advisory body for local authority higher education.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The former board of the Wales advisory body for local authority higher education has been reconstituted as the standing working group for the new single-tier Wales advisory body. Members appointed to the standing working group by my right hon. Friend are drawn from a variety of institutions. The only representative members are those appointed by the Welsh Counties committee and the Welsh joint education committee.

TRANSPORT

Settle-Carlisle Railway

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information has been received to date from British Rail on the progress of consultation on private sector involvement in the Settle-Carlisle railway line.

Mr. Portillo: I understand that British Rail is considering, with the relevant local authorities, the precise scope of private sector involvement.

European Community Infrastructure Grant

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will give a breakdown by region of the monies received from the European Community for transport or infrastructure investment for each year since 1980;

(2) what monies have been or will be received from the European Community for infrastructure investment connected with the Channel tunnel; and if he will give a breakdown by standard region;

(3) what information he has about what moneys are available from the European Community for infrastructure investment connected with the Channel tunnel for which Her Majesty's Government do not intend to apply; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: European Community transport infrastructure grant to the United Kingdom since 1985 by regions and year has been as follows:

	1985 *£ million*	*1986* *£ million*	*1987* *£ million*	*1988* *£ million*
South East	11·2	6·6	2·1	7·0
Eastern	1·5	2·6	—	—
Wales	—	—	1·4	—
Northern Ireland	0·4	—	—	—

EC transport infrastructure grant so far awarded for investment connected with the Channel tunnel amounts to £15·6 million and a further £3·25 million is expected this year. All the projects concerned are in the south-east.

The United Kingdom has also received support for transport infrastructure from the European regional development fund. Since 1980 this has been by region:

	£ million
Northern	142·6
East Midland	8·5
North-West	128·1
South-West	49·9
West Midland	78·3
Yorkshire and Humberside	94·9

Figures for transport infrastructure grant earlier than 1985 or for a separation into years of the European regional development figures could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

We are therefore receiving funds from both available sources. We have no information of any other monies available from the EC for infrastructure investments connected with the Channel tunnel.

ENERGY

Standing Charges

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if, when he next meets the chairmen of electricity boards, he will urge them to abolish standing charges on electricity bills for pensioner customers.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Standing charges are a matter for the electricity industry. They cover the cost of providing a connection to the distribution network, as well as all aspects of customer services, including those of meter reading, accounting and billing. These costs arise no matter how much or how little electricity is used. They reflect the fixed costs which the electricity supply industry incurs in maintaining a constant and safe supply to each customer's home. Abolition of standing charges would increase the unit rate.

I do not, therefore, believe that the abolition of standing charges on electricity bills for pensioner customers would be in the interests of customers as a whole.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if, when he next meets the Director-General of Gas Supply, he will seek the abolition of standing charges on gas bills for pensioner customers.

Mr. Peter Morrison: No. Standing charges for gas are subject to the conditions of British Gas's authorisation as a public gas supplier.

Uranium

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many tonnes of uranium have been imported into the United Kingdom annually since 1979; whether the safeguards designation for each consignment was N or P; which authorities made the safeguards designation; from which countries the uranium originated; and was any subsequently re-exported.

Mr. Michael Spicer *[holding answer 11 May 1989]:* The Euratom authorities assign appropriate safeguards coding, according to the conditions imposed by the government of the supplying country, at the time contracts are signed. Since 1979 over 10,000 tonnes of uranium as ore concentrate has been imported for use in the United Kingdom civil programme; all of it is subject to peaceful end-use restrictions imposed by the supplier country, with the exception of that from Namibia which was subject to obligation code "N". The ore concentrate was imported from Canada, United States of America and Namibia. No uranium ore concentrate has been imported from Namibia since 1984.

In addition to uranium imported for use in the United Kingdom, over 30,000 tonnes of uranium, as ore concentrate, has been processed by British Nuclear Fuels Limited since 1979, on behalf of overseas customers for subsequent re-export. The origin of such material is a matter for these customers to determine.

All uranium imported either for the United Kingdom civil programme or for re-export is subject to Euratom safeguards and the terms of the United Kingdom-Euratom-International Atomic Energy Authority safeguards agreement and to any end use obligations imposed by the supplier country.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Polyester Silk Plants

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list by year for the last 10 years the value in current prices of polyester silk plants imported into the United Kingdom; and if he will show in his answer the country of origin.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is not available.

Knitted Goods

Sir John Farr: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list United Kingdom exports to Turkey of knitted goods in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is given in the table:

United Kingdom exports of knitted or crocheted goods to Turkey (£'000)

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	[1]1988
Outerwear (group 845·0)	72·3	93·9	159·4	150·4	73·6	500·8	968·0	1,088·1	435·4	—
Underwear (group 846·0)	9·6	0·7	42·3	160·9	68·0	37·8	72·9	171·5	126·6	—
Accessories (sub-group 847·2)	—	—	0·6	1·3	1·8	44·0	14·2	22·4	1·4	—
Headgear (item 848·43)	3·6	—	1·3	—	113·7	1·5	4·7	—	3·4	—
Total	85·5	94·6	203·6	312·6	257·1	583·5	1,059·8	1,282·0	566·8	417·4

[1] Provisional.

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics.

Notes

1. Descriptions and group, sub-group and item references based on Standard International Trade Classification Revision 2 (SITC R2).
2. Due to the changes in the classification with the introduction of the SITC Revision 3 (SITC R3) in 1988 direct comparisons with earlier years not available.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Premium Savings Bond

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to review the premium savings bond either by replacing it, or supplementing it with another scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley The terms of premium bonds, like all National Savings products, are kept under constant review. There are no plans to replace or restructure the scheme.

Capital Expenditure

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the total amount of capital expenditure by construction, distribution and financial industries at constant factor prices in each of the standard regions, Scotland and Wales and for each of the years 1979 to 1988, inclusive.

Mr. Major: Capital expenditure by the construction, distribution and financial industries is not estimated for Scotland, Wales or the regions of England at either current or constant prices.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the total amount of capital expenditure by manufacturing industry at constant factor prices for each standard region, Scotland and Wales and for each of the years 1979 to 1988, inclusive.

Mr. Major: Capital expenditure is not estimated at constant prices in the regional accounts for Scotland, Wales or the regions of England, because there are no regional price indices. Current price estimates for 1983-86 were published in *Economic Trends* No. 421, November 1988, on page 97. Estimates for 1987 will be published in *Economic Trends* No. 433.

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the gross domestic product at constant factor prices for each standard region, Scotland and Wales and for each of the years 1979 to 1988, inclusive.

Mr. Major: Gross domestic product (output-based) at constant prices for Scotland from 1963-1987 was published by the Scottish Office on 3 May; comparable estimates are not made for Wales or the regions of England. Current price estimates (income based) for Scotland, Wales and the English regions for 1977-87 were published in *Economic Trends* No. 421, November 1988, on page 90. Provisional estimates for 1988 will be published in *Economic Trends* No. 433. Constant price income based estimates are not made because there are no regional price indices.

HOME DEPARTMENT

London Underground (Equal Opportunities)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the managing director of London Underground Ltd. as to the proportion of its senior managers who are *(a)* black and *(b)* women; and what action he proposes to take to promote equal opportunities.

Mr. Portillo: I have been asked to reply.

This is a matter for London Underground Ltd. as employers.

Asylum

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for asylum in the United Kingdom were made at ports of entry when the applicant did not have prior entrance clearance to the United Kingdom; and how many such applicants were

granted (i) asylum and (ii) exceptional leave to remain in the United Kingdom, in each of the years 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Renton: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were refused entry to the United Kingdom at ports of entry; and how many of those refused entry subsequently applied for asylum in the United Kingdom, in the years 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Renton: The total number of passengers refused leave to enter and removed from the United Kingdom in 1985, 1986 and 1987 is published in table 4.2 of the Home Office publication "Immigration Nationality and Passports, October 1988", a copy of which is in the Library. The total in 1988 was 20,871. Information on the numbers of these passengers who subsequently applied for refugee status in the United Kingdom is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average Home Office decision time for asylum applications made at ports of entry in 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1988 and at the current time.

Mr. Renton: The available information is given in the table. Information for 1988 is not yet available.

Estimated average length of time[1] taken to reach a decision on an application[2] made at a port, for refugee status in the United Kingdom, for cases decided during the year.

	Average time in months
1985	[3]8
1986	16
1987	11

[1] Excluding the time accounted for by an appeal where practicable, although this cannot be done in all cases.
[2] Excluding dependants.
[3] The 1985 figure may be an underestimate.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with other EC Governments regarding harmonisation of asylum procedures in preparation for the implementation of the Single European Act in 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Asylum procedures have been discussed in regular meetings of Ministers responsible for immigration, held on six occasions since December 1986. For details of the two most recent meetings, I refer the hon. Member to the replies my right hon. Friend gave to my hon. Friends the Members for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) on 14 December 1988 at columns *576-7* and for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin) on 17 May 1989 at column *208*.

My right hon. Friend and I have also discussed asylum matters in various bilaterial contacts with Ministers from other member states.

Broadcasting (Ownership)

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the proposals in the White Paper on broadcasting ownership.

Mr. Hurd: The White Paper made clear our determination that ownership in the independent broadcasting sector should remain widely spread, and that unhealthy concentrations of ownership and excessive cross-media ownership should be prevented. We are grateful to those who responded to the invitation to comment on the scope and formulation of the rules needed to achieve this objective.

The White Paper envisaged (paragraph 6.51) that the same group would be permitted to hold two, but not more than two, regional Channel 3 licences. Many of those commenting thought it would be undesirable if the same group could control two large or contiguous Channel 3 regions. It has also been argued that some flexibility is needed to take account of the ways in which independent terrestrial television might develop.

In the light of these responses we propose to strengthen the rules envisaged in the White Paper in the following way. Power would be taken to prescribe in subordinate legislation limits on the number of Independent Television Commission or Radio Authority licences within each main licence category which any one body or group would be permitted to hold or control. In the case of regional Channel 3 licences the initial limit would be set at two, as envisaged in the White Paper. But these limits would be capable of further restriction by reference to audience share and contiguity of licence area. The Government do not envisage that the same group should be allowed to own two large franchises or two franchises for contiguous areas.

Paragraph 6.53 of the White Paper proposed clear reciprocal limits on broadcasting and newspaper cross-holdings. Taking account of comments on the White Paper, we propose that no proprietor of a national newspaper should be allowed to have an interest exceeding 20 per cent. in any DBS, UHF TV (including regional Channel 3) or national radio franchise. We also see a strong case for debarring national newspaper proprietors from having a significant financial interest in more than one such franchise. These limits also apply reciprocally to the holders of such franchises investing in groups controlling national newspapers. No regional or local newspaper would be allowed to have more than a 20 per cent. interest in any regional or local Independent Television Commission or Radio Authority licensee with whose area it substantially overlapped, and vice versa.

Paragraph 6.53 of the White Paper proposed, folowing a recommendation by the Home Affairs Committee, that ownership of satellite channels not using United Kingdom broadcasting frequencies but receivable in the United Kingdom (whether based here or abroad) should be capable of being taken into account by the Independent Television Commission and the Radio Authority in operating their controls. We propose that no operator of such a service should be permitted to have more than a 20 per cent. interest in a DBS, UHF TV (including regional Channel 3) or national radio licensee, and that cross-interests exceeding 20 per cent. between DBS, UHF TV and national radio licensees should not be permitted. Similarly, cross-interests exceeding 20 per cent. would not be permitted between regional Channel 3, local delivery operator and local radio licensees whose areas substantially overlapped. These limits would be expressed in subordinate legislation and would be capable of variation. We envisage that legislation would also leave open the possibility of limiting other forms of cross-holding.

In line with paragraph 6.49 of the White Paper, local authorities and bodies whose objectives are wholly or mainly of a political or religious nature (and also bodies which are affiliated to or controlled by such bodies) would be disqualified from holding any ITC licence. Local authorities and political bodies would similarly be disqualified from holding any Radio Authority licence: as envisaged in paragraph 7.10 of the radio Green Paper, religious bodies would be allowed to have a financial interest in radio stations provided this did not lead to bias or editorialising on religious or controversial matters.

We propose that no ITC or Radio Authority licence may be held or controlled by a non-EC company or individual not ordinarily resident in the EC, with the exception of local delivery licences and any operators licensed under the Cable and Broadcasting Act 1984. In the case of these exceptions, concerns about editorial and cultural influence, which are less applicable to local service delivery, are outweighed by the advantages for investment which the possibility of non-EC control would bring about.

While the Government do not envisage that the ITC or Radio Authority would have a wide discretion in dealing with ownership questions, they do propose that they should be given the enforcement powers needed to police the rules effectively. These would include the ability to include licence conditions requiring licensees to give advance notice of, and seek prior consent for, changes in shareholdings. The ITC and Radio Authority would also be able, for the purposes of enforcing the ownership rules, to require changes in a company or group as a condition of its being awarded, or retaining, a licence, and to withdraw licences if declarations to them proved false.

Transitional account will be taken, in framing the rules, of the position of shareholders in franchises awarded under existing legislation.

Magistrates Clerks

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many magistrates courts' days have been lost or shortened because of the inadequacy in numbers of available clerks.

Mr. John Patten: This information, not available at present, is now being obtained from magistrates courts committees on a quarterly basis. I shall write to the right hon. Member as soon as the first set of returns has been collated.

Drugs

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total value of goods seized under the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986.

Mr. John Patten: The best available information relates to confiscation orders. For the value of such orders to date, I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend gave to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) on 11 May at column 986.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information his Department has with regard to the proportion of burglaries committed by drug addicts *(a)* in the Wirral, *(b)* in Merseyside and *(c)* nationally.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested is not available nationally. However, a Home Office research study "opioid use and burglary", published in 1986 estimated that in 1983, 1 per cent. of adult males convicted of burglary in a dwelling at Liverpool magistrates court, and 15 per cent. convicted at Wirral magistrates court were drug addicts notified to the Home Office. Other research has suggested that in 1985 at least half of the adult males convicted of burglary in the Wirral may have been drug misusers.

Lone Occupants (Names and Addresses)

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to limit publication of names and addresses of lone occupants of houses.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have no plans to do so. The only published official source in England and Wales from which such information might be inferred, so far as I am aware, is the electoral register. It is not, however, a comprehensive guide as to who lives at a particular address or whether a person on it is a lone occupant. We have no evidence of widespread misuse of the register for criminal or other illegitimate purposes. If my hon. Friend is aware of a particular problem, perhaps he would write to me about it.

Segregated Prisoners

Mr. Irving: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* male and *(b)* female prisoners on the most recent convenient date were segregated under rule 43 of the prison rules (i) for their own protection and (ii) for reasons of good order and discipline.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The numbers of prisoners (sentenced and unsentenced) so segregated on 31 March 1989 was as follows:

	Own protection	*Good order or discipline*
Male	2,193	227
Female	21	8

Immigration

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the answer of 20 December 1988, *Official Report*, column *178*, what representation he has received about the legal validity of the powers used by immigration officers to sign notices of intention to deport under the Immigration Act 1971; what response he has made; if he will review these powers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton *[holding answer 17 May 1989]:* This issue has been raised in a number of appeals before the independent appellate authorities. The immigration appeal tribunal has now endorsed the view that the service of notices of intention to deport authorised by members of the immigration service not below the rank of inspector is valid.

We have also received two other letters about the delegation of the powers of the Secretary of State. A reply was sent to the first letter in November 1988 in similar

terms to the answer given to the hon. Member on 20 December 1988 at column *178*. The second letter was received recently and a reply will be sent shortly.

Motor Vehicle Keys

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek power to prohibit the sale to the public by open mail order of skeleton key sets suitable to open the locked doors of motor vehicles without the knowledge or permission of the owners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 17 May 1989]:* There is no existing legislation prohibiting the sale of skeleton key sets, but it is an offence to carry such an article for use in the course of or in connection with theft. There are legitimate uses of skeleton key sets—eg by locksmiths—and any proposals for controls on sales would need to take this into account. Inquiries made of the police by the Home Office crime prevention centre at Stafford have not revealed evidence of significant use of skeleton key sets in criminal offences.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Asylum

Mr. Darling: To ask the Attorney-General how many appeals against refusal of asylum in the United Kingdom were heard by the immigration appellate authorities in each of the years 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1988.

The Attorney-General: In 1987, 407 such appeals were heard before adjudicators and 42 before the immmigration appeal tribunal. In 1988, 525 appeals were heard before adjudicators and 80 before the tribunal. Figures for 1985 and 1986 are not available.

Police Computers (Disclosure of Information)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Attorney-General, what is his policy towards the prosecution of perpetrators of unauthorised disclosures of information from police computers under the Official Secrets Act; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The institution or continuance of criminal proceedings in these cases, as with all other cases, is considered in accordance with the guidelines set out in the code for crown prosecutors issued under section 10 of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985. Proceedings will be instituted or continued only where the evidence is sufficient to conclude that there is a realistic prospect of conviction and a prosecution is required by the public interest.

ENVIRONMENT

Seal Products

Mr. Burt: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether Her Majesty's Government will support an indefinite extension of European Community Directive 83/129/EEC which bans the importation of harp and hooded seal pup skins and products; and if he will make a statement on the health of seals in United Kingdom waters.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The killing of harp and hooded seals for trade has aroused strong public concern in many countries. We have considered carefully the conservation case for trade controls on these species and have consulted the sea mammal research unit of the Natural Environment Research Council, which is internationally acknowledged for its expertise in this area.

Our view is that a permanent extension of the current temporary European Community directive (83/129 EEC) controlling this trade, which is due to expire on 1 October 1989, is required to ensure the conservation of the seal populations in question.

The Government have also taken additional conservation measures to help reduce the threat to the United Kingdom seal population. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department announced last October the introduction of new orders under the Conservation of Seals Act 1970 which extend throughout the year the general protection given under the Act. These measures apply to common and grey seals in England and common seals in Scotland.

The seal population in the North sea and Irish sea have been affected by a virus. Research is continuing into the epidemic at the sea mammal research unit as part of this Department's North sea research programme. A total of around 2,750 seals were reported dead from a population of 95,000 grey seals and 25,000 common seals.

Community Charge

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the factual errors in his Department's leaflet "The Community Charge—How It Will Work for You".

Mr. Gummer: There is none.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will explain the provisions for exemption of prisoners as set out in his Department's leaflet "The Community Charge—How It Will Work for You."

Mr. Gummer: The Department's leaflet gives an accurate summary of the circumstances in which persons in detention are exempt from liability to the community charge, the full provisions of which are set out in paragraph 1 of schedule 1 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the cost of *(a)* production and *(b)* distribution of his Department's leaflet "The Community Charge—How It Will Work for You."

Mr. Gummer: My Department has produced 23 million copies of the leaflet "The Community Charge—How It Will Work for You" at a total cost of £367,887.

The estimated cost for distributing this leaflet to all households in England is under £600,000.

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of widows he estimates will gain under the community charge.

Mr. Gummer: I have no estimate of the proportion of widows who would pay less under the community charge than with rates. I would expect many to be gainers since 83 per cent. of single pensioner households and 75 per cent. of other single adult households are expected to gain.

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is yet able to publish the community charge payable this year *(a)* on average in England and Wales and *(b)* in Derbyshire.

Mr. Gummer: Illustrative 1989-90 community charges will be published once data needed from local authorities has been received and analysed.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he now expects to publish illustrative poll tax figures for English local authorities based on 1989-90 budgets.

Mr. Gummer: The Government have no plans to introduce a poll tax. Illustrative 1989-90 community charges will be published once data needed from local authorities has been received and analysed.

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of single-parent families he estimates will gain under the community charge.

Mr. Gummer: I expect nearly 80 per cent. of single families to pay less with the community charge than they would with rates.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the wealth distribution effects on lower income groups of the changeover from domestic rates to community charge.

Mr. Gummer: Figures placed in the Library on 15 December 1988 confirm that many of the poorest households would be better off under the community charge than under the rates. Community charges on average would be less than domestic rates for all income bands up to £200 per week; and households with a net weekly income of under £50 would, on average, pay over 20 per cent. less with community charge than with domestic rates.

Sea Pollution

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions Her Majesty's Government have held during this Parliament with representatives of the Irish Government concerning pollution levels in the Irish sea.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Regular formal and informal contact takes place between representatives of the United Kingdom and Irish Governments on particular aspects of the marine environment such as the falling discharge of radioactive substances or factors relevant to the management of fisheries. More wide-ranging discussions on the marine environment take place from time to time. The next such meeting of officials is scheduled for 24-25 May.

Local Authority Estates

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information his Department holds on the estate management board partnership arrangements between local authority tenants and some local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The Department's consultants, the Priority Estates Project (PEP) Ltd., are currently working with local authorities and tenants on eight council estates to set up estate management boards (EMBs). They are:

Local authority	*Estate*
Birmingham	Bloomsbury
Blackburn	Shadsworth
Bristol	Halston Drive
Burnley	Stoops/Hargher Clough
Rochdale	Freehold
Rossendale	Bacup
Stoke	Chell Heath
West Lancashire	Digmoor

Tenants on the Belle Isle North estate in Leeds are also developing an EMB with the support of the city council.

My Department welcomes the development of EMBs as an important new way of giving council tenants much more say in how their estates are managed.

I am placing in the Library copies of the Priority Estates Project's guide to setting up EMBs.

I hope that other local authorities will want to consider EMBs as one possible way of improving delivery of housing services for their tenants.

Leasehold Reform Act 1967

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire, on 17 January, *Official Report*, column *148*, if he is yet in a position to announce his conclusions to the consultation paper on disputes between valuations under the Leasehold Reform Act 1967.

Mr. Trippier: We are still considering the responses to our consultation paper in conjunction with the Welsh Office and hope to announce our joint conclusions later this summer.

Rose Theatre

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider scheduling the recently discovered site of the Rose theatre in Southwark in view of the imminent threat from developers.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 12 May 1989]:* The question of scheduling will be kept under review. Given the developers' strong commitment to preserve the remains the priority is for all parties concerned urgently to explore the best means of safeguarding them physically and the scope for providing public access in the future.

HEALTH

Health Service Income

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give for each district health authority, regional health authority and special health authority and for England as a total, the amount of income to the National Health Service from *(a)* charitable appeals, *(b)* subscriptions, *(c)* donations and grants, *(d)* legacies, *(e)* dividends and interest and *(f)* the total trust fund income for the latest available year.

Mr. Freeman: Information for 1987-88 (the latest year available) as shown in the annual accounts of health authorities and special trustees in England has been placed in the Library.

PRIME MINISTER

Pollution (Bristol Channel)

Mr. Speller: To ask the Prime Minister if she will seek to reduce the pollution of the Bristol channel by co-ordinating those departments which authorise or control dumping of sewerage, chemical, agricultural, nuclear and industrial waste into the Bristol channel, together with control of dumping ships' refuse or the pumping out of tanks by ships in passage.

The Prime Minister: Departments with responsibilities in this field already co-ordinate their activities, and at national level policies to protect the marine environment are co-ordinated by the Department of the Environment. The Bristol channel, and all other United Kingdom coastal waters will benefit from the range of new initiatives adopted at the second North sea conference hosted by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment in November 1987. These are set out in the guidance note on the ministerial declaration published in February 1988, a copy of which is in the Library.

European Regional Development Fund

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Prime Minister whether the answer to the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) on Tuesday 16 May, *Official Report*, column *165*, concerning EC funds includes bids made by local authorities for the European regional development fund; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Yes, all bids from local authorities and from other bodies are put forward in the name of the member state, and grants paid to local authorities count as part of the member state's receipts.

DEFENCE

Clyde Submarine Base

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many workers at the Clyde submarine base have been retired on medical grounds in each of the years since 1974.

Mr. Sainsbury: The information requested is as follows:

Retirements on medical grounds

Year	*Numbers*
[1]1975	8
[1]1976	8
[1]1977	4
[1]1978	13
[1]1979	12
1980	9
1981	6
1982	11
1983	9
1984	15
1985	16
1986	37
1987	20
1988	17

[1] Figures for these years relate to industrial staff only.

Absent Without Leave

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many soldiers in the Queen's Own Hussars went absent without leave in 1987.

Mr. Neubert: Six.

Nuclear Test Veterans

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will request the National Radiological Protection Board to produce an update of its report on the mortality of nuclear test veterans;

(2) if he will detail the nature of the work that is proceeding with the study by the National Radiological Protection Board of the mortality of nuclear test veterans.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 15 May 1989]:* Details of deaths of nuclear test veterans are currently flagged at the National Health Service central register and are passed to the NRPB. This information is then added to NRPB's database which maintains a record of all deaths and personnel present during the test programme together with the control group. The NRPB is examining the position this year (five years from the previous cut off date) and will advise whether the major effort of a full scale statistical analysis would be justified.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many and what percentage of officers in each of grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 respectively, in his Department are *(a)* women and *(b)* from ethnic minorities.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information is not available in the form requested because records are held on a combined basis with the Department of Health. I refer the right hon. Member to my reply to him on 22 March at column *679*.

Ethnic Monitoring

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether his Department has conducted monitoring exercises in compliance with the code for the Commission on Racial Equality and Equal Opportunity Commission, respectively, separate from the Department of Health; whether his Department plans to do so; whether his Department plans to maintain records of the ethnic origins of its staff and officers separate from the Department of Health; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Department will continue to pursue the equal opportunities policies and practices of the former Department of Health and Social Security. These follow the guidance in the codes of practice of the Commission for Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunities Commission and include the monitoring of personnel policies and procedures as set out in the codes of practice. Work is in hand to enable staff records, including ethnic origin data, to be separately identified from those for staff of the Department of Health.

Pension Schemes

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many full-time workers are not in occupational or personal pension schemes; and what was the equivalent number in 1979.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In 1979, 11·8 million employees were not members of occupational pension schemes. Of these, 7·65 million were full-time employees.

Provisional figures for 1987 show that 11·4 million employees were not members of occupational pension schemes. This was of course before the Government's pension reforms took effect; since the introduction of personal pensions in July 1988, over 2 million people have opted to join a personal pension scheme. The number of full-time employees is not yet known.

Vaccine Damage

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many vaccine damage payments were made in 1985; and if he will categorise these according to the age of the child when the vaccination took place, the year of vaccination, and the nature of the vaccination.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Twenty-six payments were awarded in 1985 under the provisions of the Vaccine Damage Payments Act 1979. Details are in the table.

Vaccine Damage Payments Scheme
Awards made in 1985 by age of child at date of vaccination; year of vaccination and type of vaccination

	Age at date of vaccination (months)	*Year vaccination was given*	*Type of vaccination cited on the claim form*
1.	9 to 12	1962	Triple
2.	0 to 3	1969	Pertussis
3.	6 to 9	1978	Pertussis
4.	3 to 6	1979	Triple
5.	3 to 6	1963	Triple
6.	3 to 6	1973	Triple
7.	6 to 9	1983	Pertussis
8.	3 to 6	1967	Triple
9.	3 to 6	1969	Triple
10.	0 to 3	1959	Polio
11.	6 to 9	1971	Triple/Pertussis
12.	3 to 6	1962	Triple
13.	3 to 6	1957	Triple
14.	6 to 9	1974	Triple
15.	0 to 3	1983	Polio
16.	15 to 18	1963	Pertussis
17.	3 to 6	1957	Diptheria/Pertussis
18.	3 to 6	1962	Pertussis
19.	3 to 6	1981	Diptheria/Tetanus/Polio
20.	3 to 6	1976	Pertussis
21.	3 to 6	1969	Pertussis
22.	3 to 6	1967	Pertussis
23.	3 to 6	1983	Triple/Polio
24.	0 to 3	1971	Pertussis
25.	3 to 6	1982	Triple/Polio
26.	5 years	1969	Pertussis/Polio

Claims Statistics

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list for the Greenock and Port Glasgow offices of his Department the statistical information he has to date regarding the different reasons given by social fund officers for refusals to claimants for (i) budgeting loans, (ii) crisis loans and (iii) community care grants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 15 May 1989]:* Provisional figures for the period 11 April 1988 to 31 March 1989 are set out in the table.

The table gives the number of times that a reason for decision is used by social fund officers for determining a nil award for community care grants, budgeting, and crisis loans.

An application can be refused for more than one reason. The total number of reasons for decision used will be equal to or greater than the number of applications refused. Information on the numbers of applications processed and awarded is available in the Library.

Office: Port Glasgow ILO 1988-89
Number of times a reason for refusal used

	Grants	*Budgeting loans*	*Crisis loans*
Savings over £500 meet the full cost	1	0	0
Not in receipt of IS	n/a	137	0
Not in receipt of IS for 26 weeks	n/a	180	0
Not in receipt of IS and unlikey to qualify	45	n/a	0
Item(s) excluded by Direction	27	69	1
Applicant excluded	113	5	0
Applied for less than £30	6	19	0
Adjusted amount less than £30	2	6	0
Total debt exceeds £1,000	n/a	0	0
Previous application and decision for the item	27	66	2
No serious risk to health or safety	n/a	n/a	7
Inability to repay	n/a	58	3
Help available from another source	5	7	3
Priority too low to meet from the budget	18	333	6
Alternative available to the whole application	10	6	7
Loan refused because CCG awarded	n/a	43	1
Others not covered above	72	17	18

n/a—Not available.

Community Charge

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list by each charging authority in England and Wales the income level at which *(a)* a single person aged under 25 years, *(b)* a single person aged over 25 years, *(c)* a single pensioner, *(d)* a pensioner couple and *(e)* a couple with two children all with no savings would lose entitlement to a community charge rebate, assuming the Department of the Environment's latest community charge figures.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 27 April 1989]:* The information requested has been placed in the Library.

Pensioners

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to amend the rule whereby the retirement pension is paid not from the day of retirement but from the first day of the week following retirement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have no plans to do so. The majority of new claims for retirement pension are paid from the Monday following retirement.

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the composition of *(a)* the pensioners prices index and *(b)* the retail prices index.

Mr. Lee: I have been asked to reply.

The price indices for one—and two—person pensioner households whose incomes are mainly comprised of state benefits are based on the expenditure patterns of such households and changes in prices across the full range of goods and services, with the exception of housing.

The general index of retail prices is based on expenditure patterns of all households, excluding the pensioner households above and the 3-4 per cent. of households with the highest income, and changes in prices across the full range of goods and services including housing.

More details can be found in "A short guide to the Retail Price Index", *Employment Gazette*, August 1987, pp 393-406.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEATH AFFAIRS

CSCE Human Rights Conference

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the forthcoming CSCE human rights conference in Paris.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Paris meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension (CDH) opens on 30 May and will last four weeks. Its main tasks will be to review human rights cases and situations in CSCE participating states as well as the working of the human rights monitoring mechanism agreed at the Vienna CSCE meeting.

CSCE Information Forum

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the recent CSCE information forum in London.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Information Forum, held at the Government's invitation in London from 18 April to 12 May 1989, was the first of the series of regular meetings in the Helsinki process following the third main CSCE follow-up meeting held in Vienna from November 1986 to January 1989. The forum was opened by the Prime Minister, and was attended by some 650 delegates from the 35 CSCE participating states. For the first time in CSCE meetings, all working sessions were open to the press and public.

Many personalities in the field of information participated in the forum. The British delegation was led by Lord Rees-Mogg, and included journalists, telecommunications experts, cultural personalities and academics, as well as a small number of Government officials. The forum was a success: it stimulated numerous direct personal contacts between media experts from East and West; generated worthwhile ideas for future contact and co-operation; and welcomed the progress made towards greater freedom of expression in the Soviet Union and eastern Europe whilst exposing the Governments of those countries to demands for closer compliance with their commitments in the information field. Some 67 proposals for follow-up action (largely on improving working conditions for journalists) were tabled: they will go forward to the CSCE follow-up conference at Helsinki in 1992, and will meanwhile be studied by Governments.

Immigration

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when Mr. Nasim Ahmed, who was born on 2 July 1965, and whose reference is IMM/84536 and A.421238, first applied to the British post in Islambad to enter the United Kingdom; when Mr. Ahmed successfully appealed against refusal to grant him entry; and when the British post in Islambad was instructed to issue Mr. Ahmed with a visa to enter the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar *[pursuant to the reply, 16 May 1989, col. 135]:* In accordance with the recent guidelines on the handling of representations by Members of Parliament in immigration cases, issued to Members on 14 December 1988, I have referred the question to the correspondence unit of the migration and visa department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The hon. Member will receive a reply from the unit in due course.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the number of people on work-related Government employment and training programmes by sex, in each of the standard regions and Wales, for each of the years 1983 to 1988.

Mr. Lee: The estimates of participants in work-related Government training programmes as included in the work force in employment statistics published in the monthly labour market press notice and *Employment Gazette* are given in the following table. They include those participants who in the course of their participation receive training in the context of a workplace but are not employees, self-employed or in Her Majesty's forces. The latest available figures are for December 1988.

Participants in work related Government training programmes in Great Britain[1]
December each year

Thousand

	1983			1984			1985			1986			1987			1988		
	Males	*Females*	*All*	*Males*	*Females*	*All*	*Males*	*Females*	*All*	*Males*	*Females*	*All*	*Males*	*Females*	*All*	*Males*	*Females*	*All*
South East	19	17	36	22	18	40	22	16	38	23	19	42	34	24	58	36	24	60
Greater London (included in South East)	6	5	11	7	5	12	6	5	12	7	6	14	10	8	19	13	10	23
East Anglia	3	1	15	4	1	5	4	3	7	5	4	8	7	5	12	8	4	12
South West	8	7	5	9	7	16	10	8	18	11	9	20	17	12	29	18	12	30
West Midlands	11	10	20	12	11	23	13	11	24	21	17	38	26	20	46	28	19	47
East Midlands	10	8	18	11	9	20	11	9	21	11	9	20	17	11	28	18	11	29
Yorkshire and Humberside	10	9	20	12	10	22	13	11	23	16	13	29	25	17	42	32	18	50
North West	13	11	24	14	13	27	15	13	28	22	18	39	30	22	52	36	23	59
North	7	7	14	7	7	15	9	8	17	13	11	24	18	13	31	25	15	40
Wales	6	5	11	7	5	12	7	6	12	11	8	18	13	9	22	17	9	26
Scotland	8	7	16	11	9	19	12	9	21	15	12	27	22	15	37	29	18	48

[1] Participants in the YTS who receive work experience except those who have contracts of employment (those who have contracts of employment are counted as employees in employment) plus participants in new JTS (up to September 1988) and ET participants who receive work experience (from December 1988).

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total number of planned employment training places in September 1988 for each of the standard regions and Wales.

Mr. Nicholls: Information on the planned level of filled employment training places is for internal management information purposes only.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total number of places by local authorities, private employees, voluntary sector and other public sector sponsors on the latest date for which information is available for each of the standard regions and Wales.

Mr. Nicholls: Information on the number of filled employment training places by type of training manager is not held.

Labour Statistics

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of employees in employment in manufacturing in each of the standard regions and Wales, for each of the years 1983 to 1988, inclusive.

Mr. Lee: The information is as follows:

Employees in employment in manufacturing industries

Thousand

	December each year					
	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
South East	1,505	1,481	1,447	1,386	1,388	1,355
Greater London (included in South East	585	567	548	515	519	491
East Anglia	184	192	199	207	217	232
South West	368	376	373	369	371	378
West Midlands	709	707	709	698	710	732
East Midlands	487	486	495	492	504	509
Yorkshire and Humberside	495	482	477	456	456	456
North West	682	661	650	623	618	618
North	281	280	276	265	266	271
Wales	212	211	209	205	215	224
Scotland	437	433	423	404	395	402

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of employees in employment in manufacturing industry in each of the years March 1979 to March 1989, for each of the standard regions and Wales.

Mr. Lee: The information is as follows:

Employees in employment in manufacturing industries
March each year

Thousand

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*
South East	1,870	1,838	1,719	1,621	1,541	1,489	1,464	1,427	1,363	1,384	1,333
Greater London (included in South East	[1]	[1]	[1]	657	615	577	560	539	498	517	474
East Anglia	204	203	187	181	179	181	192	198	206	218	231
South West	440	433	402	387	369	368	374	369	365	371	375
West Midlands	987	962	828	770	719	704	701	702	690	706	729
East Midlands	602	593	541	521	486	477	483	491	486	500	506
Yorkshire and Humberside	707	682	603	554	510	486	473	467	446	454	451
North West	976	936	832	767	702	672	653	636	614	615	610

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
North	408	393	348	329	296	279	279	269	260	267	267
Wales	314	305	248	229	214	211	210	206	205	215	221
Scotland	604	578	519	486	450	432	430	415	396	396	401

[1] Not available.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of self-employed in each of the standard regions and Wales, for each of the years 1983 to 1988.

Mr. Lee: The information is as follows. The latest available figures are for December 1988.

Self-employed in Great Britain
December each year

Thousand

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
South East	794	881	904	968	1,044	1,080
Greater London (included in South East)	304	345	353	372	396	402
East Anglia	102	112	110	116	131	138
South West	223	242	254	267	288	302
West Midlands	182	186	186	198	226	248
East Midlands	162	162	162	178	195	205
Yorkshire and Humberside	186	213	219	226	234	237
North West	241	263	267	273	284	293
North	92	98	105	107	111	115
Wales	135	145	150	151	147	149
Scotland	182	193	203	200	204	220

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total number of manufacturing and non-manufacturing employees in employment for each of the standard regions and Wales for each 12-month period from June 1979 to June 1988.

Mr. Lee: The information is as follows:

Employees in employment in Great Britain
Table 1 Manufacturing industries (Divisions 2-4 of the 1980 Standard Industrial Classification)

Thousand

	June each year									
	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
South East	1,871	1,820	1,684	1,604	1,533	1,483	1,454	1,406	1,365	1,357
Greater London (included in South East)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	649	609	573	548	528	500	490
East Anglia	206	203	185	180	178	185	193	200	207	224
South West	439	427	397	385	366	373	376	369	369	375
West Midlands	985	933	817	757	713	706	703	696	699	717
East Midlands	606	582	532	514	485	482	489	494	493	508
Yorkshire and Humberside	708	669	583	542	500	481	474	462	449	455
North West	971	931	810	744	694	669	653	626	614	617
North	410	387	339	321	291	277	276	268	264	269
Wales	315	290	240	226	213	212	209	203	207	219
Scotland	604	564	510	477	444	434	430	410	397	396

n.a. Not available.

Table 2 Non-manufacturing industries (Divisions 0, 1, 5-9 of the 1980 Standard Industrial Classification)

Thousand

	June each year									
	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
South East	5,602	5,670	5,579	5,542	5,549	5,699	5,837	5,947	6,110	6,380
Greater London (included in South East)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	2,857	2,845	2,886	2,914	2,941	2,987	3,091
East Anglia	496	507	496	499	510	519	542	562	592	627
South West	1,159	1,169	1,144	1,143	1,149	1,169	1,187	1,197	1,231	1,257
West Midlands	1,256	1,273	1,234	1,225	1,229	1,259	1,295	1,320	1,360	1,425
East Midlands	949	958	935	938	941	961	1,021	1,023	1,041	1,084
Yorkshire and Humberside	1,303	1,308	1,269	1,265	1,272	1,287	1,305	1,324	1,360	1,402
North West	1,705	1,713	1,656	1,627	1,608	1,620	1,632	1,636	1,657	1,695
North	838	822	783	772	766	782	788	810	830	859
Wales	718	715	699	680	675	674	668	658	659	672
Scotland	1,498	1,518	1,492	1,473	1,455	1,467	1,474	1,477	1,495	1,532

n.a. Not available.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will give the total number of registered vacancies as a percentage of the unemployment figure in each standard region and Wales for each of the years 1979 to April 1989, inclusive;

(2) what is the average number of vacancies in each of the years 1979 to 1988, inclusive, and for each of the standard regions, Scotland and Wales.

Mr. Lee: The following is available from the Library. The tables show for each year from 1980 to 1988 and for each English region and for Wales and Scotland separately the average number of unfilled vacancies at jobcentres, and the average level of unemployment. Also given are the corresponding figures for April 1989. Data for 1979 have not been given because vacancy figures for that year are not available on a comparable basis. All figures are seasonally adjusted, and the unemployment figures allow for changes in coverage.

It is not valid to compare ratios of unfilled vacancies to unemployment, since roughly only a third of vacancies in the economy are reported to jobcentres, and this proportion will tend to vary over time and between regions.

Unfilled vacancies at jobcentres, seasonally adjusted

Thousand

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*April 1989*
South East	58·6	34·0	42·3	50·8	59·4	62·3	70·8	90·7	95·1	75·7
East Anglia	4·8	3·5	4·4	5·1	5·4	5·8	6·2	8·0	9·7	8·6
South West	10·3	7·7	10·7	12·7	13·6	16·1	18·1	19·7	20·4	18·5
West Midlands	7·5	5·9	7·2	9·6	10·7	12·2	15·4	21·1	24·1	21·9
East Midlands	7·3	5·4	7·2	8·0	8·1	9·0	10·3	12·2	13·8	21·7
Yorkshire and Humberside	7·7	5·3	7·2	8·7	8·2	8·7	11·3	15·6	15·5	13·4
North West	10·4	7·9	10·0	13·2	14·5	16·0	19·0	24·2	23·9	23·5
North	5·6	4·0	5·1	5·9	6·6	7·8	9·8	12·0	11·4	10·7
Wales	5·8	4·9	6·0	6·8	7·3	8·0	9·5	11·1	12·1	13·3
Scotland	15·3	11·6	13·1	15·3	14·8	14·6	16·3	18·8	20·0	20·3

Unemployment, seasonally adjusted

Thousand

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*April 1989*
South East	267·2	469·2	577·2	645·7	691·0	728·5	750·2	657·9	496·1	374·3
East Anglia	32·0	52·5	62·7	69·3	71·3	75·3	78·8	69·4	50·4	35·5
South West	85·3	130·9	151·7	167·6	179·1	190·5	195·8	172·3	133·7	101·6
West Midlands	139·6	253·0	297·8	321·3	322·2	326·9	327·7	292·1	230·1	174·1
East Midlands	79·5	132·3	151·5	169·6	180·8	188·2	191·3	175·8	143·2	112·9
Yorkshire and Humberside	122·6	201·3	234·2	256·5	268·4	281·5	294·3	270·5	226·0	183·8
North West	203·3	312·9	365·4	398·6	412·1	420·8	423·1	385·2	322·1	272·0
North	115·6	165·4	187·2	202·6	214·5	221·1	221·5	203·9	174·0	149·2
Wales	84·5	126·4	144·5	153·9	161·1	168·4	169·3	149·9	125·7	101·2
Scotland	172·8	243·8	277·5	298·6	309·8	322·0	332·8	323·4	280·1	243·4

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total number of confirmed redundancies in each standard region and Wales for each of the years 1979 to 1989.

Mr. Lee: The readily available information is given in the table. The table shows for Wales and each of the standard regions in England, the number of confirmed redundancies for each calendar year from 1979 to 1988. Data for 1989 are not yet available.

Confirmed redundancies[1] in Great Britain—Annual totals by standard region

Region	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
South East	26,798	70,015	105,878	80,300	58,345	42,501	34,926	39,284	19,850	13,007
(of which: Greater London)	*15,179*	*33,951*	*54,998*	*49,396*	*34,078*	*24,239*	*23,601*	*24,737*	*12,246*	*7,191*
East Anglia	2,981	7,554	11,463	6,471	4,165	2,356	3,585	5,001	2,168	1,637
South West	11,031	26,598	30,998	24,898	23,777	15,054	13,615	16,509	13,553	9,471
West Midlands	19,320	69,436	59,556	40,229	40,413	29,678	29,803	22,645	12,648	5,032
East Midlands	8,449	40,957	33,720	29,429	23,259	24,017	17,660	21,283	14,974	10,521
Yorkshire and Humberside	17,838	50,879	63,102	45,957	37,807	26,570	33,319	27,151	15,866	14,751
North West	40,705	92,596	91,739	67,117	51,019	37,935	35,784	40,132	23,244	18,436
North	14,985	33,276	40,103	32,424	30,274	25,727	24,834	22,679	13,910	10,907
Wales	11,663	45,215	36,432	24,647	16,041	11,441	15,027	11,359	5,089	5,817

[1] Figures are based on follow-up reports to advanced notifications of redundancies under Section 100 of the Employment Protection Act 1975 and are not comprehensive as employers are required to make advance notifications only where 10 or more redundancies are expected. Comparisons of trends over a long period of time should be treated with care.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list any reports commissioned by his Department which estimate (i) the projected size of the civilian work force in the 1990s, (ii) the projected size of the working population in the 1990s and (iii) the level of skills shortages in the 1990s.

Mr. Lee: The following publications are relevant:

(i) and (ii): "Labour force outlook to the year 2000", in *Employment Gazette*, April 1989.

(iii) "Review of the Economy and Employment 1988-89 —Volume 1: Occupational Assessment" and "Review of

the Economy and Employment 1988-89—volume 2: Occupational studies", both produced by Institute for Employment Research, February 1989.

Skill Shortages

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will give a detailed breakdown of skill shortages for each of the economic regions, Scotland and Wales for the years June 1979 to June 1988, inclusive;

(2) if he will identify by standard economic region and for Scotland and Wales, areas of skill shortages with reference to an occupational analysis of people in employment.

Mr. Cope: The detailed information is not available as requested.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give details of reports commissioned by his Department on (i) skill shortages and (ii) skill shortages and the anticipated impact of 1992 on sections of British industry.

Mr. Cope: My Department has commissioned the following surveys on skill shortages:

A survey on skill shortages in manufacturing conducted by the Confederation of British Industry to give information on skill shortages by industry category and occupation (annually 1984-1988, 1988 report due June 1989);

A study to be conducted by the Institute of Manpower Studies to monitor supply and demand for professional information technology skills (final report due summer 1989);

A survey of local government conducted by the Local Government Training Board to identify skill shortages in local government (report January 1988);

A survey of Bus and Coach industry conducted by Bus and Coach Training Ltd to identify training activity, skill shortages and training needs.

My Department has commissioned the following survey on skill shortages and the anticipated impact of 1992:

A study of employers conducted by IMS to look at employers' recruitment practices, skill shortages and the impact of 1992 (report due summer 1989).

In view of the importance of addressing local skill needs, as well as national ones my Department has also commissioned several pieces of research into skills issues and the impact of 1992 in areas such as Kettering, Tayside and Cambridgeshire.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

National Sheep Association

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met representatives of the National Sheep Association; and what issues were discussed.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I last met the National Sheep Association on 20 July last year to discuss the review of the sheepmeat regime. My officials keep in regular touch with the National Sheep Association on matters relating to the sheep sector.

Departmental Restructuring

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has any plans to restructure his Department.

Mr. MacGregor: I have already announced that the central veterinary laboratory and the veterinary medicines directorate are candidates for agency status. We are continuing to consider the application of the "Next Steps" report to other areas of the Ministry's work.

Public Houses

Mr. Allen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has made recently on the question of the tennants' rights of public house landlords.

Mr. Ryder: The National Licensed Victualler's Association has discussed with me the recommendations in the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the supply of beer, and I have ensured that my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is aware of their views.

Set-aside Scheme

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what area has been removed from agricultural production under set-aside arrangements within each grade of agricultural land.

Mr. Ryder: Information is not collected on the breakdown of set-aside areas by grade of land.

SCOTLAND

Clyde River Purification Board

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the members of the Clyde River purification board, the duration of appointment, and the body by which nominated.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Secretary of State is responsible for appointing only one-third of the members of each river purification board, which he does, after consulting such bodies as he thinks fit, to represent the interests of agriculture, fisheries, industry etc. in the board's area. Of the rest, one-third are appointed by the regional councils wholly or partly within the board's area from among their own members, and the remaining third similarly by the district councils. Those appointed by the Secretary of State generally serve for a term of four years, but may be reappointed.

A list of the members of the Clyde River purification board appointed by the Secretary of State, showing the expiry date for each member's term of office and the body or bodies responsible for each nomination, is inserted in the table. The names and appointing authorities of the regional and district council members will be found on page 4 of the Clyde River purification board's annual report for 1988, a copy of which is being placed in the Library of the House.

Member	Expiry date	Nominating body
Mr. D. A. Biggart	15 May 1990	Scottish Anglers National Association
		Salmon and Trout Association
		Anglers Co-operative Association
Mr. J. Dalziel	15 May 1990	Scottish Trades Union Congress
Hon. D. Galbraith	15 May 1990	Scottish Anglers National Association
Mr. A. Lowdon	15 May 1990	Scottish Anglers National Association
Mr. L. Szary	15 May 1990	British Coal
Mrs. J. Mitchell	15 May 1990	[1]
Mr. J. Reid	15 May 1990	Scottish Anglers National Association
Mr. A. M. Milroy	15 May 1990	Confederation of British Industry
Mr. J. Lyon	15 May 1990	National Farmers Union of Scotland
Captain D. B. McMurray	15 May 1992	British Ports Authority
Mr. J. McAloon	15 May 1992	Scottish Anglers National Association
		Anglers Co-operative Association
Dr. D. Curtis	15 May 1992	Scottish Wildlife Trust
Mr. I. G. B. Raby-Jolley	15 May 1992	Chambers of Commerce
		Scottish Wildlife Trust
		Scottish Anglers National Association
Dr. F. P. Gardner	15 May 1992	Confederation of British Industry
Mr. A. McCosh	15 May 1992	Scottish Landowners Federation
Mr. W. Gentles	15 May 1992	Scottish Anglers National Association
Mr. G. B. Hill	15 May 1992	National Farmers Union of Scotland

[1] Appointed by the Secretary of State following previous service on the Board as a member appointed by a local authority.

Police (Death on Duty)

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many police officers in Scotland have lost their lives in the course of their duty during each of the past five years for which figures are available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Between 1 January 1984 and 31 December 1988 four police officers died in the execution of their duty—two in 1985 and two in 1987. One of the deaths resulted from an accident during a mountain rescue and the other three from road accidents.

Items in Lieu of Tax

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if any items have been accepted in lieu of tax since he last made an announcement to Parliament.

Mr. Rifkind: Further to my statement of 20 April at column *254*, I am pleased to announce that the following items have been accepted in lieu of tax:

Sir William Beechey, RA—Portrait of Rear Admiral Sir George Campbell.
Francis Cotes, RA—Portrait of Pryse Campbell.
Francis Cotes, RA—Portrait of Sarah Campbell.
Francis Cotes, RA—Portrait of Elizabeth Adams.
Francis Cots, RA—Portrait of John Campbell Hooke.
Francis Cotes, RA—Portrait of Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Campbell.
Sir Thomas Lawrence, PRA—Portrait of John Frederick, 1st Earl of Cawdor.
Sir Thomas Lawrence, PRA—Portrait of Elizabeth Cawdor.
Sir William Beechey, RA—Portrait of Lady Caroline Cawdor.

The portraits have been formally allocated to the national galleries of Scotland but, in accordance with the condition upon which they were offered, the paintings will remain on public display in situ at Cawdor castle, near Nairn.

Total amount of tax satisfied—£260,717.

Locate in Scotland

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total number of enquiries dealt with by Locate in Scotland, and the number of companies which subsequently located in Scotland for each of the years since its inception.

Mr. Lang: Comprehensive information is not available in the form requested.

Scottish Development Agency

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total expenditure of the Scottish Development Agency to each of the parliamentary constituencies between 1979 and 1988, inclusive.

Mr. Lang: The information, which is available only from 1983-84, is as follows:

Analysis of Scottish Development Agency expenditure by parliamentary constituency for the period 1983-84 to 1987-88

£ thousands

Constituency	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88
Aberdeen North	53	277	248	120	46
Aberdeen South	478	2,190	6,199	2,758	2,221
Angus East	840	768	268	1,202	2,674
Argyll and Bute	282	342	286	141	505
Ayr	766	545	412	1,064	358
Banff and Buchan	374	442	316	249	475
Caithness and Sutherland	6	39	77	647	353
Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley	796	942	490	1,078	887
Clackmannan	367	519	568	576	710
Clydebank and Milngavie	4,101	3,038	2,907	4,091	2,471
Clydesdale	305	804	567	584	1,509
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	665	319	250	126	205
Cunninghame North	4,871	2,319	1,508	1,328	1,644

Constituency	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88
Cunninghame South	774	121	413	4,362	1,509
Dumbarton	663	294	332	190	354
Dumfries	618	691	1,874	278	1,792
Dundee East	1,110	1,371	1,103	744	722
Dundee West	4,646	3,016	4,313	4,454	4,891
Dunfermline East	1,042	595	1,938	2,877	495
Dunfermline West	376	114	183	243	324
East Kilbride	217	240	229	370	1,157
East Lothian	515	281	232	859	450
Eastwood	67	82	27	281	45
Edinburgh Central	111	191	427	242	1,115
Edinburgh East	540	166	622	54	785
Edinburgh Leith	2,940	3,009	2,145	1,713	1,444
Edinburgh Pentlands	41	197	711	51	174
Edinburgh South	18	226	76	23	128
Edinburgh West	534	144	549	197	101
Falkirk East	539	107	276	254	162
Falkirk West	584	1,307	1,518	957	505
Fife Central	506	283	260	483	1,098
Fife North East	241	329	262	169	417
Galloway and Upper Nithsdale	185	1,007	346	239	156
Glasgow Cathcart	54	102	663	358	324
Glasgow Central	4,506	4,743	9,180	10,348	5,701
Glasgow Garscadden	993	460	82	237	147
Glasgow Govan	1,618	871	1,721	11,194	23,807
Glasgow Hillhead	278	478	1,084	2,030	1,506
Glasgow Maryhill	2,606	1,051	2,330	1,904	1,474
Glasgow Pollock	243	122	339	80	154
Glasgow Provan	5,632	9,228	3,524	628	1,568
Glasgow Rutherglen	1,976	1,149	887	998	1,858
Glasgow Shettleston	4,577	4,783	3,072	2,737	353
Glasgow Springburn	378	899	921	1,087	345
Gordon	76	1,359	440	164	629
Greenock and Port Glasgow	1,000	1,359	3,327	2,318	2,554
Hamilton	2,116	1,067	979	797	1,400
Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber	929	195	134	522	1,293
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	1,566	1,212	996	767	1,071
Kincardine and Deeside	50	30	72	152	116
Kirkcaldy	578	338	1,375	136	1,021
Linlithgow	1,552	1,954	3,537	4,277	1,692
Livingston	990	202	1,848	1,707	1,683
Midlothian	649	973	480	481	253
Monklands East	3,033	3,322	4,075	1,908	1,735
Monklands West	941	1,727	1,338	551	297
Moray	196	215	119	83	162
Motherwell North	4,102	3,826	2,519	3,028	2,156
Motherwell South	2,372	1,517	2,817	2,206	1,442
North Tayside	89	184	152	97	307
Orkney and Shetland	32	138	681	91	83
Paisley North	2,117	1,363	620	1,000	1,067
Paisley South	12	251	355	86	224
Perth and Kinross	503	131	536	318	324
Renfrew West and Inverclyde	1,226	2,453	1,451	1,318	787
Ross, Cromarty and Skye	622	316	132	1,231	25
Roxburgh and Berwickshire	572	228	177	254	495
Stirling	4,263	937	640	422	1,285
Strathkelvin and Bearsden	660	172	76	133	375
Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale	2,051	731	433	1,163	422
Western Isles	15	26	43	2	12

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total expenditure of the Scottish Development Agency at constant factor prices for each of the years 1979 to 1988 inclusive.

Mr. Lang: The information at 1988-89 prices is set out in the table:

	£ million
1979-80	151·6
1980-81	154·8
1981-82	140·9
1982-83	165·4
1983-84	149·4
1984-85	144·7
1985-86	152·6
1986-87	147·4
1987-88	145·2
1988-89	[1]142·7

[1] Provisional.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total expenditure at constant

factor prices on each of the functional divisions of the Scottish Development Agency in each of the years 1979 to 1988, inclusive.

Mr. Lang: Because of changes in agency structure over the years, it is not possible to provide information on expenditure by each functional division of the agency on a consistent basis.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give an estimate of the total amount of industrial factory space owned by the Scottish Development Agency on the latest date for which the information is available.

Mr. Lang: It is estimated that at 31 March 1989 the Scottish Development Agency owned 1·62 million square metres of property.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give an estimate of the total amount of industrial space owned by the Scottish Development Agency which is occupied on the latest date for which information is available.

Mr. Lang: It is estimated that at 31 March 1989, 1·313 million square metres of property owned by the Scottish Development Agency was occupied.

Highlands and Islands Development Board

Mr. Henry McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total expenditure of the Highlands and Islands Development Board in each of the years 1979 to 1988, inclusive.

Mr. Lang: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) on 9 May at column *408*.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list his official engagements on Sunday 14 May.

Mr. Rifkind: I had no official engagements on 14 May.

Rent/Mortgage Scheme

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his plans to introduce a rent/mortgage scheme to certain tenants in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Yes, and I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to my right hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) on 11 May at column *496*.

Drinking in Public Places

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is in a position to state his intentions in regard to possible amendments to the Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976, including any steps he may contemplate in relation to drinking in inappropriate public places.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The recent review of the 1976 Act has revealed a large measure of support for a number of the reforms canvassed in the consultation paper issued in 1986. Some of these are designed to enhance the more civilised regime which has developed since enactment of the 1976 Act, for instance to assist families—particularly in tourist and holiday areas—by introducing special children's certificates which will enable families to enjoy a pub lunch in suitable premises. We propose to legislate accordingly. Other provisions in the proposed legislation will be aimed at reducing unnecessary bureaucracy in the processing of licence applications, for example by enabling applicants to cover the issue of afternoon and Sunday opening in their initial applications. This again will be subject to suitable safeguards against abuse; and, in particular, we accept the clear majority view against any increase in Sunday hours for public houses.

Other provisions in this package will, however, remove the present prohibition on the operation of off-sales licences in Scotland on Sundays and will allow "tastings" on off-sales premises. We have also received many representations about the proliferation of regular late night extensions; and we propose a much tighter control in that regard, for example, by requiring that applicants shall show good reason why the particular locality needs or would benefit from such extension. We also propose a stricter regime by banning repeated applications within two years of any unsuccessful application; and there will be a number of amendments of a clarificatory or procedural nature. These provisions will be introduced when an appropriate legislative opportunity presents; and we shall, meantime, be very happy to consider any further representations about them.

Another area of concern has been the problem of drinking in public places. Following consultation with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and chief constables, the Government have decided to allow an experiment by up to three local authorities in the use of byelaws to prohibit drinking in certain designated localities. The aim of the experiment, which will be carefully monitored by Scottish Office researchers over a two year period, is to see whether such a byelaw can usefully add to the powers already available to the police to deal with the nuisance and distress which can be caused by the anti-social and loutish behaviour of groups of people who over indulge in alcohol in certain public places. Consultation about the appropriate locations, are well advanced and a further announcement in that regard will be made in early course. We expect to be able to confirm bye-laws for the selected areas by the autumn of this year.

Health Authorities (Land)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each health board *(a)* the square footage of unused properties and *(b)* the square footage or acreage of unused land and the estimated value of each category as a percentage of total land and property and as a percentage of the total land and property value of each board; and if he will make a statement as to his Department's policy on the sale of unused land and property.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 3 February 1989]:* The information requested is not collected routinely and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. There were some 1,497 acres of surplus National Health Service property in Scotland—about 15 per cent. of the National Health Service estate. The information by health board is

listed in the following table. My Department's policy is that surplus land should be sold as expeditiously as possible having regard to the state of the market and good market practice and normally on the open market for the best price or consideration obtainable. To encourage boards to identify and dispose of their unused property, I have arranged for them to retain all the income from such disposals between now and 31 March 1991 for use within their own area.

Board	*Total estate Acres*	*Surplus Acres*	*Estate Per cent.*
Argyll and Clyde	972	94	12
Ayrshire and Arran	506	50	10
Borders	190	26	14
Dumfries and Galloway	383	20	5
Fife	420	21	5
Forth Valley	551	144	26
Grampian	730	5	1
Greater Glasgow	2,500	624	25
Highland	707	98	14
Lothian	1,222	196	16
Orkney	12	4	33
Shetland	5	—	—
Tayside	970	56	6
Western Isles	40	—	—
TOTAL	9,741	1,497	15

Lowland Airports Policy

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what analysis he has made of the consequences for the Scottish economy of *(a)* continuation of the present Scottish lowland airports policy and *(b)* a policy of allowing airlines to choose airports for use for long haul flights.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 18 May 1989]:* In commenting to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport on BAA's request for a review of the Scottish lowland airports policy, my right hon. and learned Friend took into account the effects on the economy as well as the environmental effects and other factors.

Female Police Officers (Firearms)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list, by year, for the last 10 years *(a)* in how many operations firearms were issued to female police officers and *(b)* in how many of these operations shots were fired by female police officers; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 18 May 1989]:* This information is not held centrally.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 22 May 1989

WALES

National Museum of Wales

51. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met the chairman of the National Museum of Wales to discuss its maintenance budget and acquisition budget.

52. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met the director of the National Museum of Wales to discuss its staffing costs and acquisition budget.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales last met the president of the National Museum of Wales on 14 November 1988, when a range of issues including budgetary and financial matters was discussed. The director of the National Museum of Wales also attended this meeting.

Cottage Hospital (Caernarfon)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing for each of 1986, 1987 and 1988 *(a)* the percentage occupancy of beds and *(b)* the total number of casualty cases treated at the Cottage hospital, Caernarfon.

Mr. Grist: The information is given in the following table:

	1986	*1987*	*1988*
Percentage occupancy of beds in all specialties	67	66	79
New minor casualty patients	1,262	1,047	1,526
Total attendances by minor casualty patients	1,869	1,824	2,738

Naval Nuclear Weapons (Accidents)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what contingency plans his Department has for dealing with an accident involving any naval nuclear weapon in the course of non-operational activities including courtesy calls; and what specific arrangements apply to the port of Cardiff.

Mr. Peter Walker: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces on 10 May, at column *476*.

Schools (Shotton)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will visit Shotton county infants school to meet the parents and staff to receive a petition concerning the need for additional capitation allowances to enable the school to purchase essential materials for classroom activities.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend has no present intention of visiting Shotton county infants school. It would be more appropriate for the parents and staff of that school to express their views to the local education authority.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will visit Venerable Edward Morgan VP School, Shotton, to meet the parents and staff to discuss the impact of local management of schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No. Our officials have received copies of the local education authority's draft scheme for local management of schools and have discussed it with the authority's officials. I expect the authority's formal scheme to be submitted for my right hon. Friend's consideration in the next few months.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will visit St. Ethelwolds VP School, Shotton, to meet the parents and staff concerning the need for St. Ethelwolds to have a school hall and other extensions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend has no plans to visit St. Ethelwold's Church in Wales school, Shotton in the near future. A proposal for an extension of the schools, including a hall, is included in Clwyd education authority's bids for expenditure on building works at voluntary-aided schools in 1989-90. A decision on the voluntary-aided schools' building programme for 1989-90 will be made shortly.

Clwyd Local Education Authority

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, if he will make additional moneys available to Clwyd local education authority to enable the local eduation authority to increase its capitation allowances in its primary and infants schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The setting of capitation allowances for Clwyd schools is a matter for the education authority within its perceived assessment of the requirements of the different elements of the education service.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what new moneys he will allocate to the Clwyd local education authority to enable the local education authority to increase the number of its full-time staff in high schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The responsibility for the number of staff employed in secondary schools in Clwyd lies entirely with the education authority which sets staffing levels in line with its assessment of priorities within the education service.

Health Authorities (Building Programmes)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) when he proposes to meet the chairman of the health authorities of Wales to discuss their authorities need for more cash to meet their building programme deadlines; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make additional allocations to the health authorities of Wales to enable them to begin their hospital building programmes on schedule;

(3) if he proposes to make additional payments to health authorities to enable them to meet the increased costs in building projects as a result of inflation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend met chairmen of district health authorities on 15 May when a range of matters concerning the White Paper "Working for Patients" was discussed. A date for the next meeting has yet to be agreed. My right hon. Friend has no plans to increase DHAs' capital allocations, other than for specific purposes to be announced in the course of the year. Welsh health authorities' discretionary capital allocations this year total £39 million, an increase of nearly 32 per cent. over last year; and we expect them to plan flexibly within the resources available for contingencies such as fluctuations in construction costs.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of the hospital building projects to be started in this financial year in Wales in each of the health authority areas, with likely starting dates and estimated costs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The details requested, which are drawn from capital programmes produced by health authorities, are set out in the following table. They demonstrate a continuing commitment on the part of health authorities in Wales to enhancing and improving health care provision within their respective districts. They do not take into account capital investments on maintenance and upgrading work. Therefore, they represent only a small proportion of the overall capital developments planned by authorities in the coming 10 years.

Hospital building projects to be started in financial year 1989-90

District Health Authority	*Project*	*Projected start date*	*Estimated total costs (£ million)*
Clwyd	Deeside Community Hospital	September 1989	4·1
	Ysbyty Maelor Wrecsam—Phase 2A	November 1989	16·3
	Ysbyty Glan Clwyd—Adaptations to pharmacy	August 1989	0·12
East Dyfed	Amman Valley Hospital—Development	May 1989	0·86
Gwent	Torfaen Hospital—Mental illness unit	January 1990	3·2
	Blaina Rehabilitation Unit	July 1989	0·464
	Islwyn Mental Illness Unit	January 1990	0·9
Gwynedd	Druid/Ceifni Hospital—Amalgamation	January 1990	1·5
Mid Glamorgan	Ystrad Fechan Community Hospital	October 1989	8·0
	Aberdare Hospital—Elderly unit	July 1989	1·6
	East Glamorgan Hospital—Geriatric unit	January 1990	1·2
	East Glamorgan Hospital—Obstetrics theatre	May 1989	0·42
	Tonteg Hospital—Elderly mentally infirm ward	July 1989	0·45
	Tynyla Hospital—Elderly mentally infirm ward and day unit	April 1989	0·2
Pembrokeshire	Nil		
Powys	Machynlleth Hospital—Phase 1	July 1989	1·6
South Glamorgan	Llandough Hospital—Extension to children's centre	January 1990	0·068
West Glamorgan	Tonna Hospital—Development	May 1989	4·0

Woodland Grant Scheme

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 21 March, *Official Report*, column 501, whether the woodland grant scheme applications at Maesllymystyn and Gesail Ddu are in respect of adjoining land.

Mr. Peter Walker: The proposed planting schemes at Maesllymystyn and Gesail Ddu are on the same hillside but, following the withdrawal of part of one of the schemes, are now approximately three quarters of a mile apart.

Advertising

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide as much information as possible about his Department's expenditure on commercial television advertising, without breaching commercial confidentiality, over each of the past five years.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Department's spending on television advertising during the past five financial years is £20,000. This spending was in the financial year 1988-89 on the Welsh element of the misuse of drugs campaign.

Bathing Water

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the terms of reference of the current review of the bathing water compliance programme of the Welsh water authority, together with its timetable.

Mr. Grist: Water authorities have been asked to assess the feasibility and implications for investment and operating costs of bringing all identified waters up to standard.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Czechoslovakia (Human Rights)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has received concerning the human rights record of Czechoslovakia.

Mr. Waldegrave: We regularly receive letters from hon. Members and from members of the public on Czechoslovakia's human rights record, which gives considerable grounds for concern.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has received concerning the imprisonment by the Czechoslovakian authorities of Mr. Ivan Jirous.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have received a series of letters from hon. Members and from members of the public on the imprisonment by the Czechoslovak authorities of Mr. Ivan Jirous.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations have been made by his Department to the Czechoslovakian authorities concerning the imprisonment of Mr. Ivan Jirous.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State stressed our deep concern at the imprisonment of Mr. Ivan Jirous to a member of the Czechoslovak leadership, Mr. Miroslav Stepan, when he called on 15 May.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement outlining his Department's assessment of human rights in Czechoslovakia.

Mr. Waldegrave: We would like to see a substantial improvement in Czechoslovakia's unsatisfactory record on human rights. The Czechoslovak authorities have said they propose to bring their domestic legislation into line with their CSCE commitments. We urge them to do this without delay, and in the meantime to act in the spirit of those commitments.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he proposes to take to encourage the Government of Czechoslovakia to improve its record on human rights.

Mr. Waldegrave: We shall continue to raise abuses of human rights in Czechoslovakia with their authorities whenever necessary, and urge the Czechoslovak Government to fulfil their commitments and improve its record in this sphere.

European Community

Mr. Madel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many proposals from the European Commission since the signing of the Single European Act have been as a result of requests from member states for action; how many proposals came from within the Commission itself; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Since the Single European Act, the Commission has brought forward 1,255 legislative proposals. There has been no major change in the number of annual proposals made since the SEA. The Commission does not, however, produce statistics distinguishing between those originating in the Commission and those on which proposals have been requested by member states.

Mr. Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about progress made towards achieving the objectives set out in the solemn declaration on European union made by Heads of Government at the Stuttgart summit.

Mrs. Chalker: The Community has agreed the Single European Act which, in accordance with the solemn declaration of Stuttgart, contains measures to complete the internal market, improve decision-making and make foreign policy co-operation more effective.

Philippines (Military Aid)

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the total military aid to the Philippines in 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Mr. Waldegrave: It is not our practive to disclose the cost of assistance to individual countries.

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the total cost of military training provided for the Philippine Government; and in what form it is provided.

Mr. Waldegrave: Filipino students have attended a small number of British military training courses subsidised by Her Majesty's Government, including vehicle maintenance and security courses. It is not our practice to disclose the cost of assistance to individual countries.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in the age group 16 to 24 inclusive, 25 to 34, 35 to 44, 45 to 54, and 55 and over were *(a)* full-time employees in employment, *(b)* part-time employees in employment, *(c)* self employed, *(d)* not included above and on YOP, YTS, CP, STEP, CEP or JTS or *(e)* not included in the above and undertaking full-time education or training, from spring 1979 for each year to spring 1988.

Mr. Lee: Available estimates from labour force surveys are as shown in the following table:

Persons either in employment or undertaking full-time education or training, by age
Great Britain—Spring estimate

Thousands

	1979	1981	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	[5]1988
16 to 24								
Full-time[2] employees	4,535	4,149	3,826	3,801	3,875	3,822	3,855	3,884
Part-time[2] employees	249	455	461	580	634	652	688	773
Self-employed	96	136	159	212	210	216	246	271
On Government employment and training programmes[3]	n/a	n/a	243	261	332	323	382	390
Not in employment and undertaking full-time education or training[4]	n/a	n/a	1,279	1,259	1,146	1,118	1,128	1,040
25 to 34								
Full-time[2] employees	4,283	4,056	3,807	3,818	3,876	3,967	4,020	4,246
Part-time[2] employees	811	800	685	754	782	829	891	948
Self-employed	438	515	514	561	595	586	665	725
On Government employment and training programmes[3]	n/a	n/a	36	22	27	31	47	61
Not in employment and undertaking full-time education or training[4]	n/a	n/a	66	79	66	70	64	70
35 to 44								
Full-time[2] employees	3,472	3,360	3,507	3,484	3,564	3,612	3,640	3,745
Part-time[2] employees	1,080	1,098	1,115	1,216	1,274	1,318	1,346	1,358
Self-employed	519	617	676	804	826	836	892	963
On Government employment and training programmes[3]	n/a	n/a	37	15	12	20	26	36
Not in employment and undertaking full-time education or training[4]	n/a	n/a	20	17	27	25	25	24
45 to 54								
Full-time[2] employees	3,466	3,312	3,057	2,984	2,940	2,914	2,824	2,904
Part-time[2] employees	956	962	941	995	976	972	985	1,020
Self-employed	407	495	502	558	583	605	641	668
On Government employment and training programmes[3]	n/a	n/a	21	11	15	[1]	21	20
Not in employment and undertaking full-time education or training[4]	n/a	n/a	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
55 and over								
Full-time[2] employees	2,658	2,353	2,097	1,990	1,897	1,798	1,710	1,770
Part-time[2] employees	922	963	792	833	811	823	802	791
Self-employed	357	436	449	483	500	483	553	530
On Government employment and training programmes[3]	n/a	n/a	17	[1]	11	13	12	11
Not in employment and undertaking full-time education or training[4]	n/a	n/a	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]

[1] Sample size too small to provide a reliable estimate.
[2] Based on respondent's own assessment.
[3] Includes all on YTS, CI, CP, VPP and their predecessors, together with those on training courses under JTS, Training for Enterprise and Wider Opportunities Training Programme (successors of Training Opportunities Programme or TOPS) who said they did some paid work in the survey reference week.
[4] Includes all still in continuous full-time education or (i) on a sandwich course, (ii) studying at university, polytechnic or college full-time, or (iii) training for a qualification in nursing, physiotherapy, or a similar medical subject.
[5] Preliminary estimates (1988 only).
n/a = Not available.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were unemployment rates by ethnic origin and sex for each standard region and Wales, for each of the years 1983 to 1988.

Mr. Lee *[holding answer 19 May 1989]:* Unemployment rates by ethnic origin are available from the labour force survey for single years from 1983 to 1988 for Great Britain as shown in table 1. They are available for standard regions, Wales and Scotland averaged over three years as shown in tables 2-5; these averages produce more reliable estimates for ethnic groups than do data for a single year. Further, estimates are not shown in the tables where they are based on small samples.

Table 1: Trends in unemployment rates[2] by ethnic origin; spring 1983 to 1988

Persons of working age (16 to 59/64) — *Great Britain per cent.*

	GB labour force definition of unemployment		*ILO/OECD definition of unemployment*				
	1983	*1984*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988 (preliminary results)*
All persons							
All origins[3]	11·2	11·3	11·8	11·2	11·2	10·7	8·7
White	10·9	10·8	11·4	10·9	10·8	10·5	8·3
Ethnic minority groups of whom:	20·9	20·5	21·4	20·7	20·0	17·1	13·5
West Indian-Guyanese	23	25	24	22	23	18	15
Indian	18	15	16	18	17	13	12
Pakistan-Bangladeshi	32	35	34	30	28	29	21
All other origins[3]	16	19	19	18	17	15	10
Males							
All origins[3]	11·9	11·6	11·9	11·5	11·5	11·0	8·9
White	11·5	11·1	11·4	11·0	11·1	10·7	8·6
Ethnic minority groups of whom:	21·7	21·1	22·1	21·6	20·5	17·4	14·3
West Indian-Guyanese	28	29	30	21	26	21	18
Indian	17	13	13	19	16	10	11
Pakistan-Bangladeshi	31	34	33	28	27	30	25
All other origins[3]	17	18	19	18	17	15	9
Females							
All origins[3]	10·3	10·8	11·7	10·9	10·8	10·3	8·5
White	9·9	10·4	11·3	10·6	10·4	10·1	8·3
Ethnic minority groups of whom:	18·8	19·3	20·2	19·2	19·4	16·5	12·4
West Indian-guyanese	19	17	18	20	19	16	11
Indian	20	19	20	17	19	17	13
Pakistan-Bangladeshi	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
All other origins[3]	15	20	19	17	17	15	10

Source: LFS time series estimates.

[1] Less than 10,000 in cell: estimate not shown.

[2] Unemployed people expresses as a percentage of all economically active persons in the relevant group. Based on ILO/OECD definition of unemployment (except as indicated in the first two columns of table 1, and in table 5).

[3] Includes those who did not state origin.

Table 2

Unemployment rates[2] by ethnic origin and region: average, spring 1986-88

Persons of working age (16 to 59-64) — *Per cent.*

	All ethnic origins[3]	*White*	*Ethnic minority groups*	*West Indian/ Guyanese*	*Indian*	*Pakistani/ Bangladeshi*	*All other origins[3]*
All persons							
Great Britain	10	10	17	19	14	27	14
England	10	9	17	19	14	27	14
North	14	14	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
Yorkshire and Humberside	12	11	22	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
East Midlands	10	9	19	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
East Anglia	8	8	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
South East	7	7	13	16	10	24	12
Greater London	9	8	15	17	10	28	13
Rest of South East	6	6	9	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
South West	9	8	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
West Midlands	11	11	26	24	25	[1]	[1]
North West	13	13	23	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
Wales	13	13	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
Scotland	14	14	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
Males							
Great Britain	10	10	17	22	12	27	13
England	10	9	17	22	12	27	13
North	15	15	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
Yorkshire and Humberside	12	12	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
East Midlands	9	9	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
East Anglia	7	7	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
South East	7	7	14	19	[1]	[1]	12
Greater London	10	9	15	20	[1]	[1]	14
Rest of South East	6	6	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
South West	8	7	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
West Midlands	12	11	26	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
North West	14	13	23	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
Wales	14	14	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
Scotland	15	14	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]

	All ethnic origins[3]	White	Ethnic minority groups	West Indian/ Guyanese	Indian	Pakistani/ Bangladeshi	All other origins[3]
Females							
Great Britain	10	10	16	16	16	1	14
England	9	9	16	16	16	1	14
North	12	12	1	1	1	1	1
Yorkshire and Humberside	11	10	1	1	1	1	1
East Midlands	10	10	1	1	1	1	1
East Anglia	9	9	1	1	1	1	1
South East	8	7	13	13	13	1	1
Greater London	8	7	14	14	1	1	1
Rest of South East	7	7	1	1	1	1	1
South West	12	9[1]	1	1	1	1	1
West Midlands	11	10	25	1	1	1	1
North West	12	12	1	1	1	1	1
Wales	12	12	1	1	1	1	1
Scotland	13	12	1	1	1	1	1

See footnote to table 1.
Source: LFS estimates.

Table 3
Unemployment Rates[2] By Ethnic Origin and Region: Average Spring 1985—1987
Persons of working age (16 to 59/64)

Per cent.

	All ethnic origins[3]	White	Ethnic minority groups	West Indian/ Guyanese	Indian	Pakistani/ Bangaladeshi	All other Origins[3]
All persons							
Great Britain	11	11	19	21	16	29	17
England	11	10	19	21	16	29	16
North	15	15	1	1	1	1	1
Yorkshire and Humberside	12	12	26	1	1	1	1
East Midlands	10	10	23	1	1	1	1
East Anglia	9	9	1	1	1	1	1
South East	8	8	15	17	10	25	11
Greater London	10	9	16	18	10	1	15
Rest of South East	7	7	11	1	1	1	1
South West	9	9	1	1	1	1	1
West Midlands	13	12	31	31	27	12	1
North West	14	13	26	1	1	1	1
Wales	14	14	1	1	1	1	1
Scotland	14	14	1	1	1	1	1
Males							
Great Britain	11	11	20	24	15	28	17
England	11	10	20	21	15	29	17
North	16	16	1	1	1	1	1
Yorkshire and Humberside	13	13	25	1	1	1	1
East Midlands	10	10	1	1	1	1	1
East Anglia	8	8	1	1	1	1	1
South East	8	8	15	19	1	1	15
Greater London	10	9	17	21	1	1	17
Rest of South East	7	7	1	1	1	1	1
South West	8	8	1	1	1	1	1
West Midlands	14	13	32	1	1	1	1
North West	14	14	26	1	1	1	1
Wales	15	14	1	1	1	1	1
Scotland	15	15	1	1	1	1	1
Females							
Great Britain	11	10	18	18	18	1	16
England	10	10	18	18	18	1	16
North	12	12	1	1	1	1	1
Yorkshire and Humberside	11	11	1	1	1	1	1
East Midlands	11	10	1	1	1	1	1
East Anglia	10	10	1	1	1	1	1
South East	8	8	14	14	1	1	1
Greater London	9	8	14	15	1	1	1
Rest of South East	8	8	1	1	1	1	1
South West	9	9	1	1	1	1	1
West Midlands	12	11	31	1	1	1	1
North West	13	12	1	1	1	1	1
Wales	13	13	1	1	1	1	1
Scotland	13	13	1	1	1	1	1

See footnote to table 1
Source: LFS estimates.

Table 4

Unemployment Rates[2] By Ethnic Origin and Region: Average Spring 1984—1986

Persons of working age (16 to 59/64) *Per cent.*

	All ethnic origins[3]	*White*	*Ethnic minority groups*	*West Indian/ Guyanese*	*Indian*	*Pakistani/ Bangladeshi*	*All other Origins[3]*
All persons							
Great Britain	11	10	20	22	16	31	18
England	10	10	20	22	16	31	17
North	15	15	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
Yorkshire and Humberside	12	11	28	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
East Midlands	10	9	20	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
East Anglia	8	8	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
South East	8	8	16	18	11	26	16
Greater London	9	8	16	19	11	[1]	17
Rest of South East	7	7	14	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
South West	8	8	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
West Midlands	13	12	29	30	26	40	[1]
North West	13	13	29	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
Wales	14	14	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
Scotland	14	14	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
Males							
Great Britain	11	11	21	25	15	30	17
England	11	10	21	25	16	30	17
North	16	16	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
Yorkshire and Humberside	13	12	29	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
East Midlands	10	9	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
East Anglia	7	7	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
South East	8	7	16	21	9	[1]	15
Greater London	9	8	17	22	[1]	[1]	15
Rest of South East	7	7	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
South West	8	8	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
West Midlands	14	12	31	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
North West	15	14	31	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
Wales	15	14	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
Scotland	15	5	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
Females							
Great Britain	10	10	19	18	18	[1]	18
England	10	9	19	18	18	[1]	18
North	13	13	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
Yorkshire and Humberside	11	11	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
East Midlands	9	9	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
East Anglia	9	9	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
South East	8	8	16	16	14	[1]	17
Greater London	9	8	16	16	[1]	[1]	19
Rest of South East	8	7	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
South West	9	8	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
West Midlands	12	11	27	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
North West	12	11	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
Wales	12	12	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
Scotland	12	12	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]

[1] See footnote to table 1.

Source: LFS estimates.

Table 5

Unemployment Rates[2] By Ethnic Origin and Region: Average Spring 1983-85

Persons of working age (16 to 59/64) *Per cent.*

	All ethnic origins[3]	*White*	*Ethnic minority groups*	*West Indian/ Guyanese*	*Indian*	*Pakistani/ Bangladeshi*	*All other origins[3]*
All persons							
Great Britain	11	11	20	22	17	32	17
North	15	15	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
Yorkshire and Humberside	12	12	27	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
East Midlands	9	9	20	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
East Anglia	8	8	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
South East	8	8	16	19	12	25	15
South West	8	8	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
West Midlands	14	12	30	32	26	43	[1]
North West	14	13	29	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
Wales	14	14	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
Scotland	14	14	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
Males							
Great Britain	11	11	21	26	16	31	17

	All ethnic origins[3]	White	Ethnic minority groups	West Indian/ Guyanese	Indian	Pakistani/ Bangladeshi	All other origins[3]
North	17	16	1	1	1	1	1
Yorkshire and Humberside	13	12	30	1	1	1	1
East Midlands	10	9	1	1	1	1	1
East Anglia	8	8	1	1	1	1	1
South East	8	8	16	23	10	1	14
South West	8	8	1	1	1	1	1
West Midlands	15	13	32	1	1	1	1
North West	15	14	32	1	1	1	1
Wales	15	15	1	1	1	1	1
Scotland	15	15	1	1	1	1	1
Females							
Great Britain	10	10	19	18	18	1	18
North	13	13	1	1	1	1	1
Yorkshire and Humberside	11	11	1	1	1	1	1
East Midlands	9	9	1	1	1	1	1
East Anglia	9	9	1	1	1	1	1
South East	8	8	16	16	15	1	17
South West	9	8	1	1	1	1	1
West Midlands	12	11	26	1	1	1	1
North West	12	12	1	1	1	1	1
Wales	12	12	1	1	1	1	1
Scotland	12	12	1	1	1	1	1

See footnote to table 1. Results are based on Great Britain labour force definition of unemployment. Results for England, Greater London and rest of South East are not readily available.
Source: LFS estimates.

Unemployment Insurance

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will obtain for his departmental library a copy of "Insurance for Unemployment" by Michael Beenstock and Valerie Brasse of the City university.

Mr. Lee: A copy of "Insurance for Unemployment" by Michael Beenstock and Valerie Brasse is held in the Employment Department library.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will obtain for his departmental library a copy of the London School of Economics discussion paper, "The Mirage of Private Unemployment Insurance" by Nicholas Barr; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: A copy of "The Mirage of Private Unemployment Insurance" by Nicholas Barr is held in the Employment Department library. It has always been a policy of the library to obtain any material relevant to my Department's areas of interest.

Part-time Workers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Don Valley on 28 April, *Official Report*, column *690*, what countries in the Council of Ministers favoured deferring implementation of the European Economic Community directive giving part-time workers the same legal rights as full-time workers.

Mr. Cope: The Council of Ministers last considered the draft directive on voluntary part-time work in 1987. The draft directive was not adopted. Proceedings in the Council of Ministers are confidential.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has yet received any advice from the Health and Safety Executive concerning safety measures for workers in the slaughtering and butchery trade who may come into contact with bovine spongiform encephalopathy-infected products.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive's field staff is available to give advice to employers and employees when necessary on any health risks associated with cattle, their carcases and their products which may be infected with bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). I understand that, in the light of the report of the Southwood working party on BSE, the executive has established a task force on occupational zoonoses (ie diseases which may be transmissable from animals to man). As part of its remit, the task force is considering what further action may be necessary in respect of occupational health and safety aspects of BSE.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what guidance currently exists to occupational groups involved with handling of cattle or cattle products in the light of bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Nicholls: Advice on safety precautions to be taken has been issued to the Health and Safety Executive's inspectors for dissemination either on request or during the course of their visits to those dealing with cattle and animal products. It covers basic hygiene principles which are considered appropriate for bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Advertising

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide as much information as possible about his Department's expenditure on commercial television advertising, without breaching commercial confidentiality, over each of the past five years.

Mr. Cope: The total amount spent by my Department on commercial television advertising for each of the past five financial years is as follows:

	£ million
1988-89	[1]3·7
1987-88	3·0
1986-87	9·3
1985-86	nil
1984-85	nil

[1] Estimated out-turn. Includes employment service expenditure.

Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the total amount of money spent on work-related Government training schemes in each of the years 1983-88 inclusive.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 15 May 1989]:* The expenditure by the Government on work-related training programmes in Great Britain in the relevant financial years is as follows:

Year to 31 March	£ million
1983-84	837
1984-85	999
1985-86	1,042
1986-87	1,135
1987-88	1,300

NORTHERN IRELAND

Housing Executive (Grants)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* to show for each of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's grants offices the date of which approval for a grant would be issued for *(a)* an improvements grant and *(b)* a repair grant on an application received on 2 May.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I am advised by the chief executive of the executive that the information requested is not available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. To prepare such detail would require a major exercise in each of the grants offices.

Taxi Service (Castlereagh)

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the new taxi service operating from the vicinity of 231 Saintfields road, Castlereagh, has planning permission; how many taxis are based at this location; and whether there are adequate parking places for these taxis.

Mr. Needham: The taxi service is operating without planning approval. Enforcement action has commenced to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1972. Should this result in the receipt of a planning application, an assessment will then be made of the scale of operations intended.

Wild Birds (Conservation)

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects to meet his obligations with respect to the designation of special protection areas under article 4 of the EC Directive 79/409 on the conservation of wild birds; and if he intends to include sites at Upper Lough Erne and Lough Neagh.

Mr. Needham: The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland is giving priority to the designation of Areas of Special Scientific Interest under the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985. Where ASSIs are also potential special protection areas under EC directive 79/409, the Department will proceed towards SPA declarations as soon as is practicable after ASSI confirmations.

It is expected that a small number of SPAs will be declared during the next two years, and Lough Neagh and parts of Upper and Lower Lough Erne will be among the areas considered for early designation.

Health Board Staff

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list by each health board for each year since 1979 the numbers of staff expressed as a whole-time equivalent and as actual full-time and part-time members in the categories *(a)* ancillary, *(b)* administration and clerical, *(c)* nurses and midwives and *(d)* professional and technical.

Mr. Needham: The information is set out in the table.

	Nurses and Midwives			*Ancillary*			*Administration and Clerical*			*Professional and Technical Staff*	
	Full-time	*Part-time*	*Whole time equivalents*	*Full-time*	*Part-time*	*Whole time equivalents*	*Full-time*	*Part-time*	*Whole time equivalents*	*Number*	*Whole time equivalents*
Eastern Board											
1979	6,775	2,979	8,566·84	3,652	2,619	5,184·37	2,228	525	2,515·53	1,987	1,781·38
1980	7,142	3,298	9,074·09	3,708	2,685	5,284·19	2,287	554	2,590·83	2,103	1,879·93
1981	7,612	3,367	9,581·60	3,768	2,811	5,406·25	2,324	570	2,636·42	2,189	1,968·24
1982	7,861	3,347	9,854·68	3,754	2,899	5,433·79	2,381	590	2,706·43	2,243	2,026·44
1983	7,898	3,270	9,841·90	3,740	2,969	5,463·41	2,401	688	2,734·63	2,287	2,072·66
1984	7,940	3,223	9,856·19	3,572	2,975	5,302·10	2,412	630	2,760·06	2,295	2,086·22
1985	7,647	3,167	9,520·20	3,420	2,914	5,116·01	2,397	654	2,758·60	2,256	2,043·71
1986	7,517	3,128	9,378·77	3,191	3,012	4,939·57	2,467	704	2,857·28	2,268	2,058·94
1987	7,308	3,131	9,175·02	3,046	3,045	4,820·75	2,457	737	2,864·63	2,165	1,962·41
1988	7,396	3,400	9,409·54	2,868	3,068	4,656·56	2,529	772	2,955·00	2,113	1,917·35
Northern Board											
1979	1,861	760	2,339·47	1,165	513	1,433·32	718	175	809·47	549	472·38
1980	1,932	863	2,477·27	1,176	553	1,464·63	762	185	859·47	575	496·65

	Nurses and Midwives			Ancillary			Administration and Clerical			Professional and Technical Staff	
	Full-time	Part-time	Whole time equivalents	Full-time	Part-time	Whole time equivalents	Full-time	Part-time	Whole time equivalents	Number	Whole time equivalents
1981	2,103	925	2,719·24	1,200	577	1,502·67	817	202	922·80	599	511·70
1982	2,113	890	2,706·90	1,183	604	1,500·95	824	207	935·50	562	494·50
1983	2,207	885	2,808·16	1,144	663	1,493·79	837	208	949·45	596	516·96
1984	2,281	891	2,882·15	1,046	734	1,436·45	857	223	891·32	606	528·36
1985	2,248	938	2,884·87	1,008	767	1,421·97	886	233	1,005·80	591	510·89
1986	2,204	971	2,861·13	941	778	1,336·58	868	245	1,005·38	580	503·84
1987	2,192	1,033	2,888·08	898	796	1,340·00	839	266	991·06	564	486·27
1988	2,081	1,075	2,803·20	800	841	1,271·29	855	291	1,018·37	557	480·51
Southern Board											
1979	2,043	873	2,578·35	1,171	582	1,500·42	634	84	679·80	467	409·69
1980	2,006	992	2,639·30	1,177	598	1,514·86	634	79	676·63	475	420·54
1981	2,140	1,059	2,819·42	1,199	695	1,588·51	648	100	702·09	478	422·80
1982	2,187	1,067	2,871·39	1,168	758	1,589·24	676	104	731·96	508	449·43
1983	2,254	1,054	2,930·56	1,164	771	1,594·21	695	100	749·51	492	427·13
1984	2,242	1,043	2,913·46	1,083	785	1,525·11	709	104	765·19	503	438·30
1985	2,206	1,030	2,865·12	1,043	805	1,491·77	725	112	785·56	522	453·24
1986	2,162	1,044	2,802·46	985	855	1,457·49	704	133	775·83	490	418·08
1987	2,125	1,059	2,791·32	913	836	1,377·74	700	148	779·56	426	371·05
1988	2,146	1,086	2,831·26	862	811	1,313·79	701	186	803·13	449	396·38
Western Board											
1979	2,439	325	2,637·44	1,325	450	1,585·00	554	59	585·16	410	375·19
1980	2,479	333	2,684·82	1,295	484	1,574·28	583	58	613·87	415	380·90
1981	2,688	352	2,908·54	1,317	497	1,605·44	605	53	633·16	424	378·33
1982	2,683	347	2,901·12	1,312	555	1,636·78	612	64	645·78	426	388·87
1983	2,717	342	2,932·25	1,298	556	1,621·27	608	83	652·96	431	397·74
1984	2,650	332	2,860·00	1,224	576	1,564·59	633	85	677·97	446	410·13
1985	2,688	312	2,885·74	1,191	577	1,533·18	659	95	709·29	449	413·80
1986	2,636	318	2,833·52	1,176	587	1,528·06	664	118	727·23	424	390·66
1987	2,663	301	2,856·73	1,132	591	1,487·66	653	105	708·05	392	359·30
1988	2,629	305	2,821·10	1,065	609	1,426·14	719	124	787·24	416	380·42

Hospital Closures

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list, for each year since 1979 *(a)* each hospital closed completely and *(b)* each hospital closed partially; and if he will break that list down by each health board.

Mr. Needham: *(a)* The information is set out in the table:

Year	Eastern	Northern	Southern	Western
1979	—	—	—	—
1980	—	—	—	—
1981	Malone Place	—	Newry General	—
1982	—	Mary Ranken	—	—
	—	Ratheane	—	—
1983	—	Hopefield	—	—
1984	—	—	—	—
1985	Quoile	—	—	—
1986	Claremont St	Sir Thomas and	Bannvale	Strabane GP
	Samaritan	Lady Dixon	Drumarg House	Maternity Unit
	Templemore Ave	—	—	Roe Valley GP
	Haypark			Maternity Unit
1987	—	—	Moira	—
1988	Cultra House	Carrickfergus	Tower Hill GP	St. Columbs Co
		Smiley	Maternity Unit	Hospital
	—	Cushendall	Banbridge GP	—
			Maternity Unit	
1989	Lissue	—	—	Anderson House
				GP Maternity Unit

(b) There are no records of partial closures in Northern Ireland until last year, when a partial closure of Dalriada hospital in the northern board area was affected.

Capital Projects (Health Boards)

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details of each capital project costing more than £1 million *(a)* actually under construction and *(b)* at the proposal or planning stage; if he will give the estimated date of completion for each project; and if he will break this list down by each health board.

Mr. Needham: The answer is as follows:

(a) Schemes under construction

	Planned Completion date
Northern Board	
Holywell Hospital, Antrim—refurbishment of fire safety systems	November 1990
New 313-bed Acute Hospital, Antrim	January 1993
Southern Board	
Provision of a new 72-bed Geriatric Unit and 30-place Day Centre, Armagh	June 1989
Eastern Board	
Mater Infirmorum Hospital, Belfast—new block	October 1989
Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children—refurbishment of wards	June 1989
Musgrave Park Hospital, Belfast—provision of a new 72-bed Geriatric Unit	January 1990
Western Board	
Tyrone and Fermanagh Hospital, Omagh—upgrading of mechanical and engineering services	December 1990

(b) Schemes in planning:

Southern Board
St. Lukes Hospital, Armagh—provision of new Psychogeriatric Unit
105 place Adult Training Centre for the mentally handicapped, Armagh
105 place Adult Training Centre for the mentally handicapped, Newry

Eastern Board
Area Store
Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast—extension of cardiac surgery facilities
Royal Maternity Hospital, Belfast—Neonatal Intensive Care Unit
Ulster Hospital, Dundonald—extension of out-patients department; provision of laboratory facilities; X-ray facilities
Mater Infirmorum Hospital, Belfast—upgrading of engineering services
Belfast City Hospital—external works
Edgcumbe Adult Training Centre, Belfast

Western Board
Gransha Hospital, Londonderry—provision of 120-bed Geriatric unit

(c) Other schemes proposed and being considered:

Northern Board
Whiteabbey Hospital—72-bed ward unit
New Antrim Hospital—Laboratory facilities

Southern Board
Area Store

Eastern Board
Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service—replacement accommodation
Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast—new laboratories accommodation
Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children
—replacement theatres and intensive care unit
—refurbishment of Out-Patients and A and E Department

The priority of all major schemes not under construction is currently under review and it is not possible at this stage to give planned completion dates for these schemes.

Health and Social Services (Expenditure)

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give for each year since 1979 the total health and personal social sevices *(a)* current expenditure (gross) and *(b)* capital expenditure (net); and if he will give those totals adjusted by the HCHS pay and price deflator.

Mr. Needham: The table sets out gross current and net capital expenditure on health and personal social services in cash terms for the period from 1978-79 to 1988-89. The HCHS pay and prices deflator is an index of inflationary pressures on current expenditure in the hospital and community health services alone. It would be inappropriate, therefore, to apply the index to the total health and personal social services expenditure.

Year	Current[1] Expenditure (Gross) million	Capital[1] Expenditure (Net) million
1978-79	304	22
1979-80	369	26
1980-81	477	25
1981-82	540	26
1982-83	588	25
1983-84	634	26
1984-85	667	26
1985-86	701	24
1986-87	750	28
1987-88	810	30
1988-89[1]	892	32

[1] Estimated Outturn.

Advertising

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much advertising air time his office purchased with each commercial television company in each of the last five years.

Dr. Mawhinney *(holding answer 15 May 1989):* Information on television advertisements in the form requested is commercially confidential.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Student Numbers

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many higher education students are in *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time study at (i) universities; (ii) polytechnics and (iii) other higher education institutions; what were the comparable numbers five, 10, 15 and 20 years ago; what is his estimate of parallel future numbers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Information is shown on the following table. Long-term projections were published in November 1986 in "Projections of Demand for Higher Education in Great Britain 1986-2000". The projections are regularly updated and the most recently published ones are given in the public expenditure White Paper, Cm. 612.

Students in higher education in Great Britain

Thousands

Academic year beginning	*Universities excluding the OU*		*Open University*	*Higher education in Polytechnics and colleges*	
	Full-time	*Part-time*	*Part-time*	*Full-time*	*Part-time*
Actual					
1967	200	18	n/a	179	125
1972	239	23	41	234	116
1977	281	27	66	229	[1]134
1982	295	34	75	258	189
1987	305	41	86	303	233

[1] Relates to 1975.
n/a = Not applicable. The OU first admitted students in 1970.

National Curriculum

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has plans to increase the numbers of schools inspectors in connection with the establishment and operation of the national curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: There are no plans to increase the number of Her Majesty's inspectors, but education support grant, made available by the Department, will support an increase in local education authority inspectors. Grant will support the appointment of one additional inspector by each LEA, except ILEA, in 1989-90. It is intended to make further support available up to 1993-94, resulting in a 10 per cent. increase on present numbers.

Higher Education

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students were in higher education in the last year for which figures are available; and what was the comparative figure in 1978-79.

Mr. Jackson: There were 968,000 students in higher education in Great Britain in 1987-88, compared with 766,000 in 1978-79.

Higher Education (Principals' Salaries)

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what were the gross salaries of the principals of each of the public sector higher education institutions (i) on 1 January and (ii) on 1 May.

Mr. Jackson: By public sector higher education institutions I assume that the hon. Member is referring to institutions funded by the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council.

The Department collects information each autumn on the salaries of individual directors and principals of PCFC institutions as part of the administration of the teachers superannuation scheme and for statistical purposes. However, publication of the information, which is collected purely for pensions and statistical purposes, would be incompatible with the terms on which it is registered under the Data Protection Act 1984.

Teachers' Pay Award

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects local education authorities to begin paying the 1989-90 teachers' pay award to teachers.

Mrs. Rumbold: Many teachers are likely to receive their salary increases by the end of May.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to sign the necessary orders to bring the 1989-90 teachers' pay award into operation.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend hopes to make the order by the end of May.

Geological Survey

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to reduce or withdraw direct funding to the British geological survey in relation to its core programme of long-term projects; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Funding of the British geological survey is the responsibility of the Natural Environment Research Council from the council's allocation from the science budget. In my right hon. Friend's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) on 7 November 1988 at columns *2-3*, he announced that he had made available in 1989-90 an additional £3 million for the NERC for the BGS core programme, with planning additions of £4 million and £5 million for the following two years. He also said that further work was needed to define the survey's core programme, having regard to the priority needs of users and to examine the financial funding arrangements, including the charges for goods and services. This further work will be taken into account in this year's public expenditure survey.

Animal Encephalopathies

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he is aware of any research, past or current into the transmissibility of animal encephalopathies to man; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Research relevant to the possible transmissibility of animal encephalopathies to man has been reviewed in the report of the working party on bovine spongiform encephalopathy, chaired by Sir Richard Southwood, and published in February 1989. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

Bushloe High School

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from the staff and governors of Bushloe high school, Wigston Magna, Leicester, on the key issues in the Education Reform Act 1988; and if he will ensure that there is no delay in the publication dates of certain key information packs, particularly those related to the science curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: On 19 May, I received a letter forwarded by my hon. Friend from the head teacher of Bushloe high school, supporting the 1988 Act and seeking early delivery of certain National Curriculum Council publications. I will be replying to him shortly. Our aim is to equip schools with the necessary material as far as possible in advance of implementation of the national curriculum requirements. The statutory documents for science were laid before Parliament in March and then distributed to schools. The council's complementary non-statutory guidance for teachers is being printed and should be sent direct to all schools around the end of May.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will provide a provisional esimate of common agricultural policy market support expenditure in 1988-89.

Mr. MacGregor: Provisional outturn for class IV, vote 1, is £180 million, which is a saving of £379 million against the supply estimate provision. Excess appropriations in aid of £507 million are being surrendered to the Consolidated Fund. The total expenditure provision, which is expressed net of receipts for intervention sales and levies etc. in the supply estimate was £1,552 million, while estimated outturn was £1,173 million. The outturn figures on a commodity basis are:

£ million

	Supply-estimate	*Outturn*	*Difference*
Cereals	350	195	−15
Milk	295	124	−171
Beef	244	190	−54
Oilseeds	176	178	+2
Sheep	228	265	+37
Sugar	148	117	−31
Others	112	105	−7
Total	[1]1,552	[1]1,173	−379

[1] Total figures do not equate because of roundings.

A number of external factors, such as market prices, levels of production, exchange rates and trade volumes affect expenditure on this vote. The more significant factors affecting expenditure in 1988-89 were the drought in the United States, the increasing strength of sterling and lower than expected cereals yields in the United Kingdom in 1987 and 1988.

The largest savings were on purchases into intervention of cereals (£147 million), following two successive relatively low United Kingdom cereals harvests, and butter (£107 million). The reduction in butter purchases can be attributed to additional savings to those forecast as a result of the policy changes made to the milk regime in December 1986, which had a greater impact on intervention than had been anticipated. The other major saving in total expenditure arose from £98 million additional receipts for sales out of intervention of cereals, butter and beef. The excess appropriations in aid largely consisted of receipts from the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund for depreciation of new stocks on entry to intervention and for depreciation of old intervention stocks which took effect from 1 October 1988.

Fishing Vessels

Dr. Goodman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any proposals to re-introduce a scheme of de-commissioning of fishing vessels under EEC regulation No. 4028/86; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The reintroduction of a decommissioning grants scheme is one of a number of options which could contribute towards a reduction in the size of our fishing fleet, but before we would be prepared to consider such a step we would need to be satisfied that it would provide value for taxpayers' money and that there were no better alternatives.

Hedgerows

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how may farmers have sought his Department's advice on hedgerow management in the last 12 months for which figures are available.

Mr. Ryder: The information requested is not available.

Business Initiatives

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what future initiatives he is planning to implement the policies outlined in, "Lifting the Burden" and "Building Businesses . . . not Barriers"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department's current work programme on these policies is set out in paragraphs 6.11.1 to 6.11.7 of the White Paper "Releasing Enterprise". In addition, MAFF is actively participating in the wider initiatives described in "Releasing Enterprise", notably the programme for improving understanding between Government and business and the deregulation rolling review programmes, the first of which was announced by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs in his written reply of 31 January. More generally, my Department aims to promote efficient and competitive agriculture, sea fisheries and food and drink manufacturing and distribution industries by encouraging enterprise and better regulation, better relationships and better service.

Deregulation

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the initiatives he has taken to implement the policies outlined in "Lifting the Burden" and "Building Businesses . . . not Barriers"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The contribution of my Department to the Government's deregulation policy since the publication of "Lifting the Burden" and "Building Businesses . . . not Barriers" is set out in the progress report on deregulation "Encouraging Enterprise" published in May 1987 and in the White Paper "Releasing Enterprise" published in November 1988.

Tobacco (EC)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has made of the

GREAT BRITAIN HOUSE OF COMMONS
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)
1988/1989

Published on microfiche by Chadwyck-Healey Ltd
Cambridge Place
Cambridge CB2 1NR
England

Distributed in the USA by Chadwyck-Healey Inc.
1101 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
USA

Date of publication: 1989/1990

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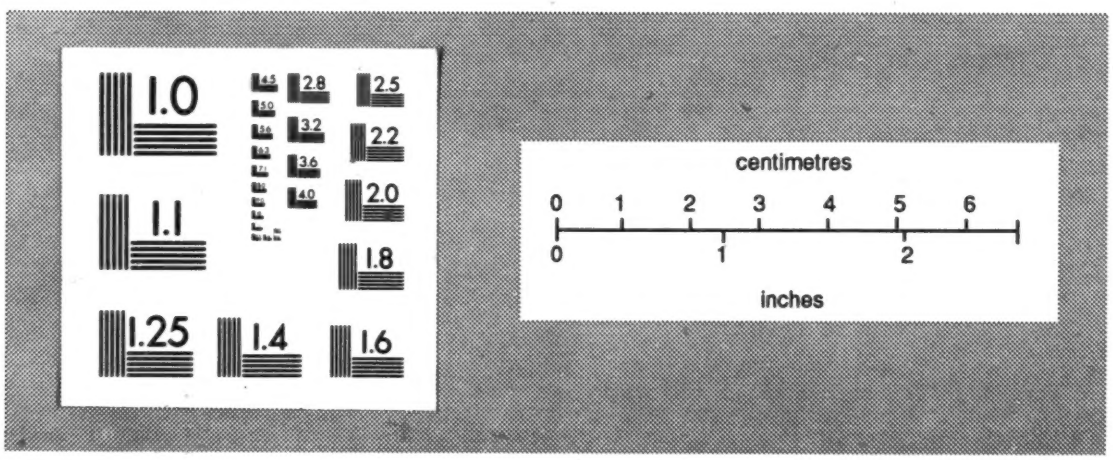
Technical data: Film type: postive silver halide, archivally permanent microfiche processed to BSI and NMA standards.

Producing laboratory: Chadwyck-Healey Microform Publishing Services



amount spent by the EEC in subsidising the production of tobacco and in storing and disposing of surplus production; what were the comparable totals in each of the past five years; and if he has received any proposal from the EEC Commission designed to reduce the expenditure in the tobacco industry.

Mr. Ryder: Expenditure on the CAP tobacco regime as requested is as follows:

Year	Total Cost (mecu)	Premia (mecu)	per cent.	Export Refunds (mecu)	per cent.	Intervention (mecu)	per cent
1984	776	712	92	36	4	28	4
1985	863	819	95	32	4	12	1
1986	782	734	94	32	4	16	2
1987	804	734	91	43	6	27	3
1988	966	895	93	43	4	28	3
[1]1989	1,033	911	88	49	5	73	7

[1] estimate

The Council of Ministers has approved the Commission's proposal for an agricultural stabiliser system for tobacco, which will reduce prices and premiums for the 1989 and 1990 harvests by up to 15 per cent. If prescribed levels of production are exceeded. We have keenly supported this development, which is in line with our policy of seeking to reduce expenditure on this regime through reorientation of production away from the less-marketable and higher tar varieties.

Scrapie

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when his Department was first notified of the existence of a scrapie-like disease occurring in cattle.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Through the animal health surveillance activities and the vigilance and expertise of veterinary scientists at MAFF veterinary investigation centres and the Central Veterinary Laboratory, bovine spongiform encephalopathy was first identified as an entity in November 1986 Research carried out between CVL and the neuropathogenesis unit in Edinburgh has confirmed that bovine spongiform encephalopathy is similar to a group of spongiform encephalopathies, including scrapie in sheep.

Tyrrell Committee

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the work currently being undertaken under the auspices of the Tyrrell committee.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Committee was set up to advise on the research work now in progress and on the future priorities for research into bovine spongiform encephalopathy and the other transmissible spongiform encephalopathies. The Government will be considering the committee's conclusions in due course.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has any evidence to suggest that spongiform encephalopathies in animals can be identified by post-mortem histological examination prior to the onset of clinical signs in the live animal.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The research consultative committee, under the chairmanship of Dr. David Tyrrell, is currently considering various research projects including a proposal to investigate the relationship between the onset of clinical symptoms of bovine spongiform encephalopathy and the occurrence of lesions in the brain.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table showing the incidence of confirmed cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy in each county of England and Wales for the four week period ended 19 May.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information is given in the table.

County	Confirmed cases
Avon	13
Bedfordshire	4
Berkshire	8
Buckinghamshire	6
Cambridgeshire	1
Cheshire	14
Cleveland	1
Clwyd	6
Cornwall	35
Cumbria	6
Derbyshire	5
Devonshire	41
Dorset	49
Dyfed	24
Essex	3
Glamorgan South	3
Gloustershire	18
Gwent	6
Gwynedd	3
Hampshire	13
Herefordshire and Worcestershire	9
Hertfordshire	2
Humberside	3
Ise of Wight	5
Kent	12
Lancashire	5
Leicestershire	8
Lincolnshire	5
Norfolk	5
Northmptonshire	5
Nottinghamshire	3
Oxfordshire	10
Powys	4
Shropshire	10
Somerset	38
Surrey	8
Staffordshire	10
Suffolk	4
Sussex East	9
Sussex West	7
Warwickshire	3
Wiltshire	34
Yorkshire North	12
Yorkshire West	1

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has concerning the existence of bovine spongiform encephalopathy in the United States of America.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I am not aware that any cases of BSE have been recorded in the United States of America.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what regulations or procedures are currently in force in the United Kingdom to ensure that meat and bone meal contaminated with the agent responsible for the outbreak of bovine spongiform encephalopathy in the United Kingdom is not exported to other countries for inclusion in cattle rations.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him on 8 March, at column *533*.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what advice he has received concerning the level of infectiousness of bovine spongiform encephalopathy infected cattle prior to the onset of clinical symptoms of the disease.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him on 21 March, at column *513-4*.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he, or any of his Ministers, were advised prior to the publication of the Southwood report, by any member of the Southwood committee that 75 per cent. was the appropriate level of compensation in respect of confirmed cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many tests his Department has conducted during the last 12 months on samples of animal protein for use in cattle rations.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Ministry conducts a wide range of analyses on animal protein to assess nutritional values or levels of contamination. Those carried out on protein for use in cattle feeds cannot be separately identified.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what monitoring or testing for bovine spongiform encephalopathy is now being conducted on the progeny of bovine spongiform encephalopathy infected cattle; and whether he has any intention of introducing controls on the movement of such progeny.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Ministry has taken powers to control the movement of progeny, though I have no plans to use these powers at present. The identities of the progeny of affected animals are being recorded, which will enable further investigations to be made if any of these are subsequently notified as suspect cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy. The Ministry has also accepted the recommendation of the Southwood working party that a study be carried out to determine whether maternal transmission can take place.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total number of bovine spongiform encephalopathy cases confirmed to date in each of his Departments veterinary investigation centres.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Before bovine spongiform encephalopathy became a notifiable disease on 21 June last year, histopathological examinations of brains from suspected animals were carried out at the Ministry's central veterinary laboratory, Weybridge, and at other Ministry establishments. Since 21 June last year, diagnoses have been carried out at nine veterinary investigation centres. The number of cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy confirmed by each centre is as follows:

	Number
Cambridge	466
Carmarthen	487
Newcastle	132
Polwhele	663
Reading	491
Shrewsbury	654
Starcross	497
Thirsk	552
Wye	66

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether bovine spongiform encephalopathy has yet been reported in any European Economic Community member state other than the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No.

Animal Products

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all those products sold to the general public during the past 20 years derived from animals being treated with pharmaceutical products under an animal test certificate granted under the Medicines Act but prior to the granting of a product licence.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Since animal test certificates were introduced in 1971, trials have been authorised in all major animal species. Products from such animals will have been marketed except when it was a condition of the ATC that they should not be.

Slaughterhouses

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the recommendations of the Preston report on conditions in slaughterhouses and the action taken by his Department in respect of each.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Copies of the report and of the Government's response, which was announced on 15 October 1987, have been placed in the Library of the House.

Of the recommendations which the Government accepted, meat inspection procedures in non-exporting and exporting plants were broadly aligned by the Meat Inspection Regulations 1987 and the Fresh Meat Export (Hygiene and Inspection) Regulations 1987. We have already announced that ante-mortem inspection of animals in non-exporting premises is to be introduced from 1 January 1991. The system of regional liaison meetings envisaged in the report has been established and is proving to be of value.

In accordance with Community measures which have been adopted since the publication of the Government's response to the report, new arrangements for meat inspection charges are to be introduced from 1 January

1991. The Community has also agreed on arrangements for collecting information on diseases found at slaughterhouses which should be passed back to those resonsible for production. Detailed rules for the implementation of these arrangements throughout the EC have yet to be determined. The Commission is developing proposals on the duties and qualifications of inspection personnel in slaughterhouses. Further measures to align standards in all plants will be developed, having regard to decisions in Brussels on the arrangements to be adoped for the completion of the single market.

Ruminant Feedstuffs

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking to enforce his ban on the inclusion of ruminant derived protein in cattle rations.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him on 9 March, column *620*.

Icelandic Fish

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps are taken to monitor the quality of containered and fresh Icelandic fish imported into the United Kingdom; and to what European Community standards of grading it is subject.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Fresh and chilled fish imported into the United Kingdom is required to be graded in accordance with Council regulation (EEC) No. 103/76 as amended, which lays down common standards covering size and freshness grades for the main species marketed in the Community.

Our sea fisheries inspectorate checks that fresh and chilled Icelandic fish displayed for sale by auction at ports is in accordance with the Community's grading requirements. Also, the local port health authorities separately monitor the quality of fish for public health purposes.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what percentage of fish landed and sold at Lowestoft, Hull, Grimsby, Peterhead and Aberdeen for February, March and April has come from Icelandic container vessels.

Mr. Donald Thompson: While sales of Icelandic container fresh and chilled fish are recorded at Hull and Grimsby, where the bulk of such fish is marketed, the percentage figure requested cannot be derived from available information.

Porcine Somatotropin

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he authorised the sale for public consumption of animal products produced with the aid of porcine somatotropin under an experimental licence.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding reply 18 May 1989]:* No. It was a condition of the animal test certificate that no treated animals were to be offered for slaughter for human consumption.

Veterinary Staff

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many vacancies there have been at the veterinary officer grade in each service in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 18 May 1989]:* The number of vacancies at veterinary officer grade in the Ministry's state veterinary service in each of the last 10 years is:

	Number	
1980	50	(9)
1981	40	(7)
1982	37	(2)
1983	42	(–)
1984	47	(1)
1985	61	(1)
1986	58	(3)
[1]1987	21	(5)
1988	21½	(3)
1989	27½	(7)

Notes:
(a) Figures in brackets relate to the veterinary investigation service, which is part of the state veterinary service.
[1] Agricultural Development and Advisory Service economies and improvements in efficiency announced in 1986 included a reduction of posts in the state veterinary service.

ENVIRONMENT

Sea Pollution

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has issued any guidelines to local authorities in England which border onto the Irish sea concerning the reduction of pollution levels in that sea.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. The control of most land-based discharges of pollutants entering the sea is the primary responsibility of water authorities in England and Wales.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to ban all dumping at sea of raw sewage and dangerous chemical wastes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The disposal of waste at sea from ships, other than operational discharges, is licensed by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to take place only where he is satisfied that disposal will not put at risk the marine environment. Similar responsibilities are exercised by the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Northern Ireland.

In the case of industrial waste, following the second North sea conference in London in November 1987, hosted by my right hon. Friend. the Secretary of State for the Environment, the Government's guidance note on implementation of the declaration announced a review of all outstanding licences. Ths review is being carried out jointly by the Fisheries Departments and Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution to examine whether there are practicable disposal options for the waste on land. So far, 20 approvals for dumping of liquid industrial waste have been reviewed in detail and either withdrawn or the company has indicated a firm intention to terminate. In the case of the remaining 10 approvals, further discussions are now under way into the practicability of disposal on land without causing harm.

In the case of sewage, licences are granted only for the dumping of sewage sludge, and only in cases where, having considered land-based alternatives, it has been assessed as representing the best practicable environmental option. In line with the ministerial declaration of the second North sea conference, the United Kingdom is implementing restrictions on the loads of persistent toxic substances in sludge to ensure that their total quantities do not exceed the levels discharged in 1987.

Child Abuse

Mr. Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing, for each local authority in England functioning as a social services authority, the amount by which its rate support grant for the year 1989-90 was increased to take account of its need for resources to cope with the increase in child abuse referrals.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Rate support grant is unhypothecated and provides support for local authority spending on all services. It is not possible to show how much RSG is paid in support of a particular aspect of social services provision. RSG is, however, distributed in accordance with the Government's assessment of individual local authorities' need to spend, including their need to spend on all aspects of social services. Provision for local authority current expenditure on social services for children aged 0 to 17 for 1989-90 is £1,201 million, an increase of £120 million, 11·1 per cent., over provision for 1988-89. In addition, this year the aggregate of Exchequer grant paid to local authorities includes a specific grant of £7 million to support the costs of training social services staff working with children and their families.

Playing Fields

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to safeguard playing fields; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: Local authorities are generally best placed to make judgments on land use and are primarily responsible for making such decisions in their own area. In exceptional circumstances the Secretary of State for the Environment may choose to intervene but only where issues of more than local importance are involved. Nevertheless, the Government have urged local authorities to take into account the needs of the wider community and to consult local sport and recreation interests before allowing recreational land to be developed.

Community Charge

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the notional community charge for the London borough of Ealing; what was the notional community charge for each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Illustrative community charges have been published for 1985-86 to 1988-89. The figures for Ealing (disregarding the transitional safety net) are

	£
1985-86	172
1986-87	164
1987-88	278
1988-89	234

The figure for 1988-89 is, of course, affected by rate capping.

UN Environment Convention

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps have been taken to implement in his Department the United Nations environment programme global convention.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) on 10 May at columns *433-4*.

Air Pollution

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the resources requirement of local authorities for the new controls over air pollution.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The consultation paper issued in December 1986 estimated that the new local authority system would add £0·5 million to current expenditure. This recognised that the system would involve a reallocation of resources within environmental health departments. These departments are already responsible for control of air pollution from most of the processes involved, but have to use the less satisfactory combination of clear air and statutory nuisance controls. In April this year the Department issued a consultation paper on cost revovery charging for integrated polluton control (IPC). This paper proposed introducing a charging system for local authority control of air pollution compatible with the charges to be made by HMIP for exercising IPC. The volume of local authority resouces needed will be reviewed further in the light of responses received.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what preparations are in hand to ensure effective implementation of the new controls over air pollution.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The national air pollution inspectorates are already well equipped to implement their part of the proposed new system. As for the local authority part, a committee representing local authority associations and national pollution inspectorates (IPLA) has been set up to provide guidance to local authorities on the proposed new air pollution controls and to ensure consistency of enforcement both among local authorities and between them and the national inspectorates. It will also advise on related matters, such as training. A local authority unit has been set up within HMIP to service IPLA and to prepare authoritative guidance on the control of particular processes.

Pollution Inspectorate

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the resource needs of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution for integrated pollution control.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Preliminary assessment of the resources necessary for integrated pollution control suggested that the net increase solely attributable to integration would be in the order of three additional

inspectors and two support staff. We expect there to be a temporary increase in the workload on the inspectorate whilst the new system is introduced. We will continue to keep under review the objectives of the inspectorate and the level of resources required to fulfil its functions.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give an up to date list of the present offices of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, together with the addresses and telephone numbers of the new regional offices and outstations.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The present offices of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution are as follows:

Addresses of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution Offices

Headquarters
Romney House
43 Marsham Street
LONDON SW1P 3PY
276 3000

Radioactive Substances Regional Offices

Mitre House
Church Street
LANCASTER LA1 1BG
0524 382100

Berkeley House
Croydon Street
BRISTOL BS5 ODA
0271 350412/3

New Crown Buildings
Cathays Park
CARDIFF CF1 3NQ
0222 825111 Ext 3175

Air District Offices

Vincent House
1st Floor
2 Woodland Road
Darlington
0325 380635

(Includes sampling laboratory)
Woodside House
261 Low Lane
Horsforth
Leeds LS18 5TW
O532 581099

Sovereign House
40 Silver Street
Sheffield S1 2ES
0742 700459

1st Floor
Viking House
98 Newland Road
Lincoln LN1 1YY
0522 512566
Ansaphone (0522 20968)

14 Cardiff Road
Luton
Bedfordshire LU1 1PP
0582 424240

39 Baddow Road
Chelmsford CM2 0HL
O245 490473

Victoria House
Ormskirk Road
Preston PR1 1HH
0772 202322

Gateway House
86 Northgate Street
Chester
0244 40939

McLaren Buildings
2 Masshouse Circus
Queensway
Birmingham
021 236 7674

3 East Grinstead House
London Road
East Grinstead
West Sussex RH19 1RR

Brunel House
2 Fitzalen Road
Cardiff CF2 ITT
0222 497702

Inter City House
Mitchell Lane
Victoria Street
Bristol BS1 6AN
0272 277732

Sampling Laboratories
Sampling and analysis of emissions to air

Luton

14 Cardiff Road
Luton
Beds LU1 1PP
0582 34121

Cardiff

Spur 'L'
Government Buildings
Ty Glas
Llanishen
Cardiff CF4 5XW
0222 766996 Ext 2208

Newcastle-under-Lyme

The Marches House
Midway
Newcastle-under-Lyne
Staffs ST5 1DT
O782 711113

We are currently reorganising the fieldforce of HMIP on an integrated basis to produce a much more effective deployment of resources. A three region structure is being developed covering the north, south west and south east, in each of which there will be a regional headquarters' office. The existing air district offices will initially be retained as outstations of the regional offices.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give an update of the current staffing list of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution including administrative support.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: On 31 March 1989, 194 staff were in post in Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. Their grades are as follows:

	Number
Grade 3 director	1
Grade 4 deputy director	1
Chief inspector (air)[1]	1
Deputy chief inspector (air)[1]	2
Grade 6	7
District inspector (air)[1]	13
Grade 7 professional	30

	Number
Grade 7 administration	6
Inspector (air)[1]	24
Senior scientific officer-Senior professional and technical officer	16
Senior executive officer	6
Higher executive officer	12
Higher scientific officer	5
Executive officer	16
Scientific officer	4
Administrative officer	22
Administrative assistant	8
Senior personal secretary	1
Personal secretary	[2]16½
Typist	[2]2½
Total	194

[1] Denotes departmental grade inherited from the Health and Safety Executive.
[2] Includes part-time staff.

Water Privatisation

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals there are for informing local authorities of their responsibilities for monitoring water quality after privatisation.

Mr. Howard: We propose to issue a circular to local authorities in due course.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from manufacturing industries regarding possible effects of privatisation of the water industry on manufacturing industry; what matters of concern they have expressed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Organisations representing manufacturing industry, including the Confederation of British Industry, have commented on a wide range of water privatisation matters, which are being considered in the context of the Water Bill currently before Parliament.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received on the subject of water charges following privatisation of the water industry.

Mr. Howard: Most of the letters that the Department has received about charges after privatisation have sought clarification about the arrangements that will apply.

Standing Charges (Water)

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, when he next meets the chairmen of the water authorities, he will urge them to abolish standing charges on water bills for pensioner customers.

Mr. Howard: No. It is for the water authorities themselves to determine how they structure their charges.

Pensioners on low incomes are more appropriately assisted through income support.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received following *(a)* the publication of the Select Committee on the Environment report on toxic waste and *(b)* the publication of the Government's response to that report; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: None, apart from requests as to the publication date of the response.

Football Spectators (Identity Cards)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many letters or other communications he has now received from the general public about the football spectators identity card scheme proposal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: By 16 May I had received 1,522 letters from hon. and right hon. Members, most of which included letters from their constituents, and 4,020 representations directly from members of the general public, about the national membership scheme.

Methyl Chloroform and Carbon Tetrachloride

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals his Department has for controls on the production and use of the compounds methyl chloroform and carbon tetrachloride; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Although methyl chloroform is significantly less damaging to ozone than the chorofluorocarbons (CFCs), its world-wide production is greater than for any single CFC. Production of carbon tetrachloride is lower, but its potential to deplete ozone is greater than that of the CFCs. Review panels on the science and effects of ozone depletion and on the technical and economic implications of controls are due to report later this year to the parties to the Montreal protocol, who will decide at their meeting in London next year on measures to strengthen the protocol, including the possible inclusion of additional substances.

Methanes

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has commissioned any studies on the effects of methane on humans.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department plans to commence a two-year study this year on health risks associated with landfill practices, which will include the effects of methane.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will visit the Barky Thorpe road site in Leicester to discuss proposals to excavate methane generating rubbish.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are no plans to visit this site. Such matters are the responsibility of the local planning and waste disposal authorities.

Bridge Street (Subway)

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are his Department's responsibilities for the subway under Bridge street.

Mr. Chope: The subway is leased by the Department to Westminster city council, which is responsible for its care and maintenance. I understand that the council is considering what works may be needed to stop water seeping into the subway. I will ensure that the hon. Member's concerns about the lack of cleanliness are drawn to the city council's attention.

Water Authorities (Land)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what area and proportion of the land owned by regional water authorities was compulsorily purchased.

Mr. Howard: This information is not available centrally.

Sea Mammals

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has assessed the risk of the bottle-nosed dolphin and the harbour porpoise disappearing as breeding species in British coastal waters; and whether the level of harmful chemicals existing in the bodies of those remaining is the major cause of this decline.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 15 May 1989]:* Available evidence based on sightings and strandings of these species, including that compiled by the United Kingdom cetacean group, indicates that there has been a decline in these species in United Kingdom coastal waters. It is not possible to say how far pollutants or other factors such as changes in fish stocks may have contributed to this. The Department of the Environment, together with other interested Departments and agencies, is considering further research to improve our knowledge of the questions.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Recruiting Policies

78. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what studies his Department has made into the effectiveness of the recruiting policies adopted by *(a)* national savings and *(b)* other similar agencies.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend keeps Civil Service recruitment policy under continuous review.

Privatisation

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will state in current prices the total proceeds to the Exchequer from privatisation since 1979; and if he will estimate the likely proceeds from the privatisation of the water and electricity industries.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The net proceeds for privatisation since May 1979 amount to some £24½ billion. This is £25·7 billion in 1987-88 prices (using the GDP deflator, which is not yet available for 1988-89 prices).

The proceeds and costs relating to the privatisation of the water and electricity industries will be announced in due course in the usual way.

Passenger Ferries (Safety)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what balancing charges he expects to recover from the seven passenger ferries which do not comply with the enhanced safety standards, and which their owners have declared to be uneconomic to repair.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I cannot comment on the tax affairs of particular individuals or companies.

Balancing charges are made to recover tax relief given for depreciation of a business asset which turns out to be greater than the depreciation actually experienced. The need to make such a charge depends on the precise circumstances of each case and, in particular, on whether the disposal value exceeds any expenditure on the ship which remains unrelieved for tax purposes.

Lloyd's Underwriters

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of indexed securities which fall within the provision of schedule 11 of the Finance Bill was purchased by Lloyd's Underwriters in 1986 and 1987 respectively.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 15 May 1989]:* Schedule 11 of the Finance Bill does not apply to securities disposed of or redeemed before 14 March 1989 or to gilts issued before that date. On the information and advice currently available, the Inland Revenue are not aware of any indexed securities purchased by Lloyd's underwriters in 1986 and 1987 which are chargeable to income tax under the provisions of schedule 11.

ENERGY

Fluid Burning

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what investigations or studies have been carried out by his Department into the Swedish fluid burning systems.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My Department is aware of the main technical features of the Swedish fluidised bed combustion systems. It keeps in touch with the retrofit projects at small older power stations in Spain and the United States of America, and with progress with the Vartan plant in Stockholm, which combines power generation and district heating.

Amazonian Rain Forest

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his replies, *Official Report*, 10 April, columns *563-64*, if he will make a statement on the results of his meetings with the President of Electrobras on positive British co-operation with Brazil on problems of power station transmission, construction of nuclear power stations between Sao Paolo and Rio, and measures to protect the ecology of the Brazilian Amazonian rain forest.

Mr. Peter Morrison: At my meeting with the President of Electrobras, I explained the United Kingdom's plans for electricity privatisation and experiences in energy efficiency and offered further discussions with officials in my Department. Electrobras has not yet had an opportunity to take up this offer.

Potassium Iodate Stocks

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has on the total cost to the Central Electricity Generating Board of its current replacement programme of potassium iodate stocks at power stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for the CEGB and I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Gentleman direct.

Bold Power Station

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy to what extent cannisters containing radioactive waste are stored at Bold power station; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have been advised by the Central Electricity Generating Board that no canisters containing radioactive waste are stored at Bold coal-fired power station. However, on occasions new uncontaminated transport flasks are stored on the site prior to their transportation to nuclear power stations sites.

Advertising

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will provide as much information as possible about his Department's expenditure on commercial television advertising, without breaching commercal confidentiality, over each of the past five years.

Mr. Parkinson: Expenditure by my Department on television advertising over the last five years has been as follows:

	£ million
1988-89	nil
1987-88	nil
1986-87	[1]16·3
1985-86	2·2
1984-85	1·3

[1] This includes expenditure of £13·5 million on the flotation of British Gas. All other expenditure in this and prior years is in connection with the energy efficiency campaign.

Director General of Electricity Supply

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for Department of Energy if he will make a statement about the appointment of the Director General of Electricity Supply.

Mr. Parkinson: Subject to Parliament approving the Electricity Bill, I and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland intend to appoint Professor Stephen Littlechild, currently head of the department of industrial economics and business studies at the University of Birmingham, to be the Director General of Electricity Supply. His formal appointment will be made as soon as possible after Royal Assent and will run initially for a period of five years.

The Director General will have a key role in making the privatised industry function in a competitive, customer sensitive way. He will be responsible for the price control formulae which will govern the supply and transmission of electricity. He will have a particular duty to promote the efficient use of electricity, reflected in a specific condition in the public electricity supply companies' licences. He will have a duty to foster competition and prevent discrimination. He must ensure that the relevant provisions of the Electricity Bill and various licences are observed and, if necessary, modified. He will be responsible for the consumer protection and representation arrangements, and for the electricity meter examining service which will be transferred to the Office of Electricity Regulation from my Department. He will also monitor the non-fossil fuel obligation and the operation of the fossil fuel levy in England and Wales.

Professor Littlechild has extensive experience of regulatory issues both in the United Kingdom and abroad. He has worked on the regulatory regime for British Telecom, has been a member of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission for six years, and has a wide knowledge of regulatory systems both here and in the United States of America. He is admirably qualified for the post and my right hon. and learned Friend and I are very happy that he has accepted the job.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Cyprus

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds), *Official Report*, 9 May 1989, column *361*, he will take steps to ensure that in future information is collected as to the destination and purpose of assistance given by the United Nations and its agencies to the different communities in Cyprus.

Mr. Chris Patten: United Nations agencies generally work through the Government of the Republic of Cyprus. It would not be realistic to seek a breakdown of the benefit of United Nations programmes to the Turkish Cypriot community. However, some programmes specifically directed toward this community are listed on page 121 of the "Register of Development Activities of the United Nations System, 1987," a copy of which is in the Library.

Commonwealth Development Corporation

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to respond positively to calls for Her Majesty's Government to increase financial support for the Commonwealth Development Corporation.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Government regard the Commonwealth Development Corporation's operations as an important part of Britain's overall development effort overseas, particularly in relation to the private sector. I propose to increase the level of aid loan support for the CDC by £21 million from £49 million in 1988-89 to £70 million this financial year; £20 million of this will be additional to the existing agreed aid provision.

PRIME MINISTER

General Practitioners

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Prime Minister if the Jarman index is to be applied to Wales in the proposed general practitioners' contract.

The Prime Minister: This is currently being discussed between the Welsh Office and representatives of the medical profession.

Government Information Officers (Code of Ethics)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister for what reasons she will not publish in the *Official Report* the text of Mr. Ingham's letter to Ms. Elizabeth Jenkins on a code of ethics for Government information officers.

The Prime Minister: It is not my usual practice to publish the official correspondence of members of my staff.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Footwear Imports

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what representations he has received from the British footwear manufacturers on proposals for action by the EEC Commission on imports from the far east; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what information he has on the conclusions of the European Commission on the effects on Britain's footwear industry of the imports from the far east;

(3) what steps he has taken through the Common Market to reduce imports from the far east into Britain.

Sir John Farr: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will list in the *Official Report* the steps he has taken in the last 12 months to reduce imports from far eastern sources that are causing damage to the United Kingdom footwear industry;

(2) what steps he is proposing to take to encourage EEC officials to come to a conclusion and take action in relation to cheap imports of footwear to the United Kingdom, particularly from the far east, which were investigated in 1988.

Mr. Alan Clark: The European Commission has conducted a Community-wide investigation into imports of footwear from Taiwan and South Korea. I have pressed the Commission to report its findings at the earliest possible date and we will consider what action to take immediately the Commission's recommendations are known.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what was the level of imports of shoes from Korea to Britain for each year from 1984 to 1988 and for each month in 1989;

(2) what was the level of imports of shoes from Taiwan to Britain for each year from 1984 to 1988 and for each month in 1989.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is given in the following table:

United Kingdom imports of footwear

£ million

	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*January 1989*	*February 1989*	*March 1989*
South Korea	28·3	28·0	33·0	50·9	76·2	6·8	6·8	6·8
Taiwan	51·2	49·2	47·1	69·9	74·6	7·7	7·2	6·5

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics.
Notes:
Footwear defined as Division 85 of Standard Internation Trade Classification Revisions 2 and 3.
1988 and 1989 data provisional.

Sir John Farr: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list as a percentage, for each of the last 10 available years, imports of footwear into the United Kingdom as a proportion of all supplies to the home market.

Mr. Alan Clark: Imports of footwear into the United Kingdom as a percentage of all supplies to the home market over the last 10 available years were as follows:

	Percentage
1978	30
1979	34
1980	35
1981	39
1982	42
1983	44
1984	47
1985	46
1986	45
1987	47

Sir John Farr: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what was the total level of imports of footwear from Taiwan *(a)* five years ago and *(b)* at the latest available date;

(2) what was the total imports of footwear from Korea *(a)* five years ago and *(b)* at the latest available date.

Mr. Alan Clark: Imports of footwear from South Korea in 1984 were valued at £28·3 million; in the period January to March 1989, the latest information available, imports of footwear were valued at £20·4 million. For the same periods, imports of footwear from Taiwan were valued at: 1984, £51·2 million; January to March 1989, £21·4 million.

Brewing Industry

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if, as part of his consideration of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the supply of beer, he will make it his policy to consider the introduction of a discount on the market price to encourage licensees and tenants to purchase their pubs.

Mr. Maude: We are currently considering a wide range of representations being made on this report and will announce as soon as possible the action we propose to take.

Balance of Payments

Mr. Douglas: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give details of the balance of payments; current, visible and in manufactures, between the United Kingdom and *(a)* the whole world and *(b)* the total European Community, for the year 1988; and what was the balance of trade in manufactured goods between the United Kingdom and (i) the whole world, (ii) the total European Community, (iii) each member country of the European Community, and (iv) Japan, for the year 1988.

Mr. Alan Clark: Estimates on a balance of payments basis for the United Kingdom current account, visible trade, and trade in manufactures, for 1988 are as follows:

Balance of Payments £ billion

	Current account	Balances Visible trade	Manufactures
World	−14·7	−20·6	−14·4
European Community	Not yet available	−13·5	−12·6

The balances of trade in manufactured goods for 1988 were:

Table 2
Overseas trade statistics basis[1], £ billion (provisional)

	£ billion
World	−17·3
European Community	−13·4
France	−1·1
Belgium and Luxembourg	−0·6
Netherlands	−1·9
Federal Republic of Germany	−8·7
Italy	−1·8
Irish Republic	+0·5
Denmark	−0·1
Greece	+0·2
Portugal	—
Spain	+0·3
Japan	−4·9

[1] Exports fob less imports cif.

European Mortgage Services

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has received any complaints from the public concerning the collapse of European mortgage services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 19 May 1989]:* The Department did not itself receive any complaints from the public concerning European mortgage services before the company was wound up in the public interest on 10 May. Since the winding-up order was made, some 80 claims for the repayment of deposits required by the company have been received by the Official Receiver.

Building Societies

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he remains satisfied that building societies should remain outside the ambit of the Financial Services Act's investor protection provisions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 19 May 1989]:* Any building society which carries on investment business in the United Kingdom must be either an authorised person or an exempted person under the Financial Services Act. In this respect their position under the Act is identical to that of any other person carrying on investment business. Certain requirements imposed by the SIB and the self-regulating organisations recognised under the Act do not apply to building societies—for instance, those relating to financial supervision and the coverage of the compensation scheme. The application of such provisions is a matter for the board or the organisation concerned.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has any plans to extend the Financial Services Act's investor protection provisions to cover building societies which become plcs under the Building Societies Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 19 May 1989]:* A building society which becomes a plce and which carries on investment business is subject to the requirement to be authorised or exempted under the Financial Services Act in the same way as any other person carrying on investment business. The application to such societies of particular requirements of the SIB or a relevant self-regulating organisation recognised under the Act is a matter for the SIB or the organisation concerned.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Human Rights

Mr. Michael Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek to incorporate into British law article 10 of the European convention on human rights, which guarantees freedom of expression and information.

Mr. Renton: No. I am satisfied that compliance with the provisions of article 10 of the European convention on human rights presents no difficulty under existing British law.

Prisoners

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total *(a)* design capacity and *(b)* occupancy of all prisons in England and Wales; and if he will estimate to what length of sentence it would be necessary to go in order to reduce the number at *(b)* to that at *(a)*, assuming that prisoners were released starting at those serving the shortest sentence and working towards those serving longer sentences.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: ON 12 May, the total population of all prison service establishments in England and Wales was 49,100 and the total certified normal accommodation was 44,700—a difference of 4,400. On 31 March 1989, 3,900 sentenced inmates (10 per cent. of the total sentenced population) were serving sentences of six months or less.

Entry Visas

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people from the Indian sub-continent have been refused entry to the United Kingdom because they did not have an entry visa since the change in the rules regarding visas in 1986.

Mr. Renton: Between November 1986 and March 1989 (the latest month for which figures are available) about 2,400 citizens of countries within the Indian sub-continent were refused leave to enter and removed from the United Kingdom where the main or only reason for refusal was the absence of a visa.

Private Prisons

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what evidence he has received on the possible effect that private prisons might have on the speed of new prison construction, efficiency, humane conditions and hygiene; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A number of the submissions made in response to the Green Paper "Private Sector

Involvement in the Remand System" (Cm. 434) contained evidence about claimed benefits from such involvement. In the course of their study, which led to their report to the Home Office, made public on 1 March, the management consultants Deloitte, Haskins and Sells carried out extensive research to determine whether private sector involvement on the lines envisaged would be viable and beneficial. They concluded that, on certain assumptions and subject to further examination of certain issues, private sector involvement in the operation of new remand centres would be feasible and could provide scope for the cost-effective provision of a better standard of service than that now obtained. As my right hon. Friend announced on 1 March at columns 277-8, further work is now in hand to test those findings.

Magistrates' Clerks

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to alter the pay scales of magistrates' clerks.

Mr. John Patten: The national pay scales for court clerks are a matter for the joint negotiating committee for magistrates courts staff.

Drug Trafficking

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons have been convicted under the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information available centrally, which may be incomplete, indicates that one person was convicted in 1987 under the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986. In addition, in 1987 3,160 persons were convicted of drug trafficking offences under section 4(3) and 5(3) of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. Information for 1988 is not yet available.

Cosmetics (Tests on Animals)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list in the *Official Report* the total number of *(a)* guinea pigs, *(b)* mice, *(c)* rabbits, *(d)* hamsters and *(e)* dogs used in cosmetic testing in each of the past five years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested is contained in table 2 (cosmetics and toiletries) of the annual "Statistics of Experiments on Living Animals, Great Britain" for the years 1983-86 inclusive (Cm. 9311, 9574, 9839 and Cm. 187), and in table 3 (cosmetics and toiletries) of "Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals, Great Britain, 1987" (Cm. 515). Before 1987, hamsters were included in the classification "other rodents". Copies of all these publications are in the Library.

Passports

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether he will provide extra staff for the Liverpool passport office to clear the current backlog of applications;

(2) if he will provide extra staff to ensure that people telephoning the Liverpool passport office have their calls answered.

Mr. Renton: Yes. Additional staff have been employed to help deal with the backlog, and the telephone system has been improved to increase the number of incoming calls that can be handled. A system of free two-year extensions to the life of expired passports is being introduced to help relieve the immediate problem.

Police Numbers

Sir Charles Morrison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police there were per 1,000 members of the population in 1959 and 1988.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information, based on establishments of forces in England and Wales on 31 December 1988, is as follows:

Year	*Police officers per 1,000 of population*
1959	1·73
1988	2·46

Albany Prison

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for how long Mr. Dean Miles (2672) has been held in the segregation unit at Albany prison; whether there is any intention of charging him with any criminal offence; and for what reason he is held there.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Mr. Miles was removed from the segregation unit at Albany prison on 3 May, when he was transferred to Wandsworth prison. It is for the prosecuting authorities to decide whether Mr. Miles will be charged with any criminal offence.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners have been held in the segregation unit at Albany prison for *(a)* three months or more, *(b)* four months or more, *(c)* five months or more and *(d)* six months or more.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: During the past 12 months, the following numbers of prisoners at Albany have been removed from association with other prisoners in their own interests or in the interests of good order and discipline:

Period	*Number*
(a) for three to four months	8
(b) for four to five months	2
(c) for five to six months	2
(d) for six months or more	Nil

Of these, one prisoner at present in the segregation unit has been held there for just over three months.

Police (Exchange of Information)

Mr. Gorst: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what general guidance has been given to chief officers of police by the Chief Inspector of Constabulary, on the subject of the exchange of information on criminal cases on a police-to-police basis.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Home Office circular 17/1989, issued in February, provides guidance to the police on communication with police forces abroad. I have arranged for a copy to be placed in the Library.

INFORM

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make it his policy, when reviewing grant-aid for INFORM, to refuse further funds if there is evidence of material supporting cults and material produced by cults being supplied to inquiriers without the source being disclosed;

(2) if he will make it his policy, when reviewing grant-aid to INFORM, to refuse further funds if there is evidence of active support of cults by its members;

(3) if he will make it his policy, when reviewing grant-aid for INFORM, to refuse further funds if there is evidence of its members accepting hospitality from cults;

(4) what restrictions regarding involvement with cults were placed on its members when agreeing to grant-aid INFORM.

Mr. Hurd: The grant paid to INFORM (Information Network Focus on Religious Movements) is to assist it in its work of providing impartial information about cults. No formal conditions relating to INFORM's operational methods have been attached to the payment of the grant. INFORM tells me that it has such contact with cults as is necessary to enable it to carry out its functions as a research and information network; such contacts may include accepting hospitality, but INFORM will accept no money from the cults and no members of the Governors or staff may be members of a cult. I do not therefore propose to introduce any formal conditions at this stage, but I shall continue to keep INFORM's performance under review.

Computers

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will indicate the functions of the Home Office large major enquiry system.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Home Office large major enquiry system is a computer system which was developed to assist the police service in the investigation of major crimes. A typical system consists of three modules: an index of names, addresses, telephones, vehicles categories and sequences of events; a document and action management system; a free text retrieval and typing system.

Information can be exchanged between systems in different forces by means of tape transfer. The Home Office has set up a central facility which forces can use if an investigation outgrows the capacity of a force system.

DEFENCE

Defence Export Services Organisation

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of the staff of the Defence Export Services Organisation are seconded from industry; and what their functions in the organisation are.

Mr. Sainsbury: There are four members of staff within the Defence Export Services Organisation who have been seconded from industry.

(a) The Head of Defence Export Services is responsible for undertaking all necessary actions within Whitehall and in our relations with other governments to encourage and promote the sale of British defence equipment overseas where these offer the prospect of benefits commensurate with the risks involved.

(b) The strategic planning officer is directly responsible to the Head of Defence Export Services for developing, co-ordinating and monitoring the Defence Export Services Organisation's planning activity and for providing aid, advice and assistance to British industry on strategic planning and on the long-term geographic opportunities in the world defence market.

(c) The post of international finance adviser exists to enhance the expertise of the Defence Export Services Organisation in the field of international credit arrangements for defence exports and thus contributes to the range of support provided by the Defence Export Services Organisation to overseas sales by the British defence industry.

(d) The business development adviser's central task is to advise the Defence Export Services Organisation on the methods of identifying and exploiting new opportunities for defence export business.

Women Staff

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many of the two women in grades 1 to 4 are in grades 1, 2 and 3 respectively.

Mr. Sainsbury: There is one woman in the Ministry of Defence at grade 3.

Teachers

Mr. Ken Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to introduce formal union recognition arrangements for locally entered teachers employed on British bases in Germany; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Any claim that a union or staff association might make for formal recognition would be considered in the light of the Ministry of Defence's normal policy and criteria.

Junior Leaders

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy on junior leaders who seek a discharge from the armed forces *(a)* during their period of service and *(b)* upon attaining their 18th birthday; and if he has any plans to review this policy.

Mr. Neubert: Junior leaders have the right to claim their discharge free of cost at any time after 28 days and before the end of six months after joining for duty at their training units. If discharge is not claimed during this period, junior leaders are required to serve for a minimum of six years after their 18th birthdays. However, on reaching the age of 18, they are given the option to reduce their engagements to three years.

Former junior leaders can apply for premature voluntary release on payment after completing three years service with their adult units. However, those who reduce their commitment to three years will not normally be released until they have honoured their reduced commitment in full.

There are no plans at present to review this policy, which reflects both the requirement for stability in manning the Army and the need to ensure a return on the high costs of initial training.

HMS Cardiff

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the weapons carried on HMS Cardiff on her forthcoming courtesy visit to Cardiff.

Mr. Hamilton: It is not our practice to disclose the weapons carried on individual HM ships at specific times and locations.

Naval Accidents

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contingency plans his Department has for dealing with an accident involving any naval nuclear weapons in the course of non-operational activities including courtesy calls; and what specific arrangements apply to the port of Cardiff.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms. Gordon) on 10 May at column *476*.

University Students

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many students at UMIST and University college London are on courses sponsored by the Ministry of Defence.

Mr. Sainsbury: The MOD does not sponsor courses at either university, although it does fund the chair of naval architecture at University college, London, and provides the professor and his supporting academic staff.

Advertising

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide as much information as possible about his Department's expenditure on commercial television advertising, without breaching commercial confidentiality, over each of the past five years.

Mr. Neubert: Annual expenditure on television advertising over the past five years is as follows:

	1984-85	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
Royal Navy/Royal Marines	Nil	0·044	0·005	0·0005	0·0005
Army	0·100	0·500	0·450	0·5330	2·8000
Royal Air Force	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Total £ Million	0·100	0·544	0·455	0·5335	2·8005

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Divorce Notifications

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Attorney-General if he intends to take any action to prevent divorce notifications in newspapers containing the reasons for a divorce; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: To provide protection against divorces being granted where the facts required by law do not exist, Parliament provided in section 9 of the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973 that any person may show why a decree nisi of divorce should not be made absolute. To that end, the evidence and facts pleaded in support of a divorce petition are available to the public either through a hearing in open court or by allowing them to examine the certificate of the decree nisi and the filed evidence. Although the press are restricted in what they may report by the Judicial Proceedings (Regulation of Reports) Act 1926, they may among other things, report the names and addresses of the parties and the statutory facts on which the petition relies. Given the policy underlying section 9, it would not be appropriate to impose any greater restriction upon what the press may publish. The Law Commission is, however, reviewing the law relating to the grant of divorce and the Lord Chancellor has made arrangements for this matter to be drawn to its attention.

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Attorney-General how many staff have joined the Crown prosecution service in the last six months who were formerly magistrates' clerks.

The Attorney-General: During the latest available six month period, from 1 November 1988 to 30 April 1989, 38 staff commenced employment with the Crown prosecution service having previously been magistrates' clerks.

THE ARTS

National Museums and Galleries

60. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what information he has on the state of repair of the buildings of the national museums and galleries.

Mr. Luce: The national museums and galleries which I sponsor provide information on the state of their buildings in their corporate plans which are updated each year and which I and my officials discuss with them.

61. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what information he has on staffing costs as a percentage of total running costs in the national galleries and museums.

Mr. Luce: As an average, staffing costs for national museums and galleries represented 73 per cent. of total running costs for the year 1988-89.

65. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what information he has on the education budgets of the national galleries and museums.

Mr. Luce: Education is very much a part of the function of the national museums and galleries and one to which they attach great importance. Details of their activities are contained in their trustees' reports, which are publicly available.

69. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he last met the chairman of the Museums and Galleries Commission to discuss the acquisition, maintenance and staffing budgets of the national museums and galleries.

Mr. Luce: I meet the chairman of the Museums and Galleries Commission quite frequently and on a wide range of subjects which have included matters raised in the commission's May 1988 report on the national museums.

70. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what steps he will take to ensure that museums and galleries have adequate resources for structural maintenance to ensure adequate safeguarding of their collections.

Mr. Luce: I recognise this as a priority area and have made substantial increases in the provision for building and maintenance work at the national museums and galleries which I sponsor. The current year's provision of £48 million represents a 50 per cent. increase in real terms since 1979-80. Further increases will bring the figure to £55 million by 1991-92.

British Theatre Association Library

59. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make a further statement on the rehousing of the British Theatre Association library.

Mr. Luce: I am pleased to say that the British Theatre Association has accepted the generous offer of Mr. Robert Holmes a'Court to provide both premises for the association in central London and financial backing to enable it to continue its operation on a firm basis. I was pleased to have been able to provide the association, through the British Library, with professional advice on its library operations, and I have contributed £25,000 towards its transitional costs.

Museums (Building and Maintenance Costs)

62. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what increase in provision has been made in the last four years for the building and maintenance costs of museums.

Mr. Luce: A number of changes have been made in the method of funding the building and maintenance programmes of the national museums and galleries in the last four years but, comparing like with like, there has been a 23 per cent. increase in cash terms in provision over this period.

Government Contribution

63. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what is the Government contribution to the arts in 1989, and what it was in 1979, in real terms.

Mr. Luce: In the financial year 1989-90, the central Government programme for the arts will be £439 million. The corresponding figure for 1979-80, at 1989-90 prices, is £316 million.

Tate Gallery

64. **Mr. Sedgemore:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he last met the Chairman of the Tate gallery to discuss its staffing cost and maintenance budget.

Mr. Luce: I meet the chairman from time to time to discuss matters of mutual interest. I look forward to meeting the chairman and director shortly to discuss the Tate gallery's future plans.

Museums (Private Income)

66. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will estimate the private income generated by museums in the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: The national museums and galleries estimate that they will generate over £26 million in private income in 1989-90.

Tate Gallery of the North

67. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what information he has on staffing and on the acquisition budget available to the Tate gallery of the north in Liverpool.

Mr. Luce: There are 55 staff at the Tate gallery, Liverpool, 33 of whom are warders. The gallery does not operate a separate acquisition budget from that of the main Tate collection.

Northern Ballet

68. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what is the latest information he has on the funding of the Northern Ballet; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend for Stockport (Mr. Favell) earlier today.

Incentive Funding

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister for the Arts what return from the private sector has been achieved as a result of his incentive funding scheme.

Mr. Luce: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague) earlier today.

CIVIL SERVICE

Ministers' Private Secretaries

75. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service, pursuant to his oral answer of 24 April to the hon. Member for Linlithgow, *Official Report*, column 654, what representations he has received from the First Division Association concerning pressures on Ministers' private secretaries *(a)* to sanction the release of official information other than by conventional means and *(b)* to seek means to avoid parliamentary scrutiny of ministerial actions.

Mr. Luce: None, Sir.

Morale

76. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will meet the general secretary of the NUCPS to discuss Civil Service morale.

Mr. Luce: I have no plans at present to meet the NUCPS.

Agency Employees

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how many civil servants are employed in the Civil Service agencies announced so far.

Mr. Luce: There are just over 6,000 staff working in the five agencies which we have already established. A further 36 activities, including three in the Northern Ireland Civil Service, have been announced as candidates. These cover nearly 200,000 civil servants or about a third of the Civil Service.

SCOTLAND

"Assessment of Achievement—Twists in the Numbers Game"

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if his Department's library has a copy of "Assessment of Achievement—Twists in the Numbers Game" published in the *Times Educational Supplement Scotland* on 21 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 15 May 1989]:* Yes.

The assessment of achievement programme's central support unit at the Scottish Council for Research in Education, which is responsible for the sampling design and analysis of results for the 1988 assessment of achievement programme methematics project, responded in a letter to the *Times Educational Supplement Scotland* of 28 April 1989 rejecting the claims of bias made in the article on 21 April and emphasising, contrary to what the article suggests, that the definition of the population tested was identical for 1983 and 1988. Moreover, in *The Scotsman* of 25 April 1989, the director of the Scottish Council for Research in Education stated:

"It would be nonsense in our view to say that there has been no drop in performance".

The article to which the hon. Member refers is an unwarranted attack on the independence and integrity of reputable research organisations with proven expertise in assessment and testing. The author appears to misunderstand entirely the objectives and functions of the assessment of achievement programme.

The hon. Member, as reported in *The Scotsman* and the *Times Educational Supplement Scotland* casts aspersions on the work, reputation and uprightness of The Northern college of education and The Scottish Council for Research in Education. The facts of the situation are that the whole of the research process in the assessment of achievement programme—the design and conduct of the survey, the sampling of pupils, the administration of the tests, the marking of the tests and the analysis of the results contained in the published report—was carried out by the Northern college and the Scottish Council for Research in Education. The published report is the work of these independent institutions; it was right to alert both parents and the education community to the interim findings and to make them publicly available as soon as was practicable.

Central Institutions and Colleges of Education

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give at constant prices the Department's grant towards recurrent expenditure paid to each central institution and college of education for each of the years 1978-79 to 1988-89, inclusive.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information for the central institutions and colleges of education funded by the Scottish Education Department is set out in the tables:

Scottish Central Institutions: Recurrent grants (£ million)[11]

	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	[1]1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
Dundee Institute of Technology	4·235	4·184	4·903	4·378	5·476	5·607	5·742	[2]5·813	[2]6·235	[2]6·462	6·733
Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art	3·019	2·846	3·214	3·032	3·517	3·606	3·558	3·525	3·582	3·625	3·671
Edinburgh College of Art	3·002	3·098	3·551	3·532	3·796	4·053	4·018	4·008	4·076	4·055	4·100
Glasgow College of Technology[3]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	[2]5·496	[2]11·147	[3]11·477	11·959
Glasgow School of Art	2·742	2·746	3·201	3·200	3·571	3·624	3·666	3·632	3·751	[3]3.847	3·686
Leith Nautical College[4]	1·860	1·916	2·230	2·111	2·163	2·204	1·999	1·877	1·897	0·554	—
Napier Polytechnic of Edinburgh[3]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	[2]6·920	[2]15·830	[2]16·166	16·856
Paisley College of Technology[5]	6·745	6·543	7·628	7·583	9·026	9·400	9·559	[2]9·778	[2]10·223	[2]10·500	10·751
Queen's College Glasgow	2·087	2·053	2·317	2·216	2·646	2·771	2·822	2·899	2·957	2·991	3·123
Queen Margaret College	2·879	2,840	3·420	3·376	3·948	4·030	3·989	4·082	4·125	4·142	4·259
Robert Gordon's Institute of Technology	7·211	7·069	8·039	7·908	9·743	10·463	10·355	[2]10·678	[2]11·262	[2]12·097	12·312
Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama	1·439	1·356	1·574	1·662	1·703	1·798	1·820	1·809	1·884	2·289	2·479
Scottish College of Textiles	1·297	1·336	1·540	1·718	1·983	2·202	2·470	2·192	2·281	[2]2·287	2·375

Colleges of Education: Recurrent grants (£ million)[11]

	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83[1]	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
Aberdeen College of Education[6]	4·168	3·721	3·770	3·742	3·812	3·673	3·558	3·489	3·344	—	—
Callendar Park College of Education[6]	1·744	1·693	1·490	·667	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Craigie College of Education	1·735	1·524	1·505	1·411	1·443	1·332	1·346	1·351	1·421	1·469	1·628
Craiglockhart College of Education[7]	1·196	1·076	1·187	·507	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dundee College of Education[8]	4·047	3·470	3·561	3·338	3·477	3·362	3·274	3·305	3·153	—	—
Dunfermline College of Physical Education[10]	1·917	1·845	2·025	1·997	2·105	2·121	2·045	2·053	2·053	—	—
Hamilton College of Education[6]	2·783	2·420	2·488	1·175	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Jordanhill College of Education[8]	10·283	9·598	10·368	11·421	13·002	12·040	11·832	11·610	11·749	10·475	10·271
Moray House College of Education	6·186	5·469	5·928	6·123	6·641	6·247	6·269	5·984	6·071	7·647	7·456
Northern College of Education	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6·360	6·339

	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83[1]	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
Notre Dame College of Education[7]	3·822	3·162	3·180	1·617	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
St. Andrew's College of Education	—	—	—	2·146	4·394	4·266	4·186	4·077	3·990	3·844	3·828

[1] The change between 1981-82 and 1982-83 reflects the reduction in the standard tuition fees paid by home students.
[2] Figures include grant allocated under the Switch to Technology Programme.
[3] Napier Polytechnic of Edinburgh and Glasgow College of Technology joined the Central Institution Sector on 1 September 1985.
[4] Leith Nautical College transferred to the local authority sector with effect from 1 August 1987.
[5] Excludes funding for Micro Electronics Educational Development Centre.
[6] College dissolved on 15 September 1981.
[7] Merged to form St. Andrew's College of Education on 15 September 1981.
[8] Includes funding for Jordanhill College School to 31 March 1987.
[9] Merged to form Northern College of Education on 1 April 1987.
[10] Merged with Moray House College of Education on 1 April 1987.
[11] The figures have been expressed at 1988-89 prices using the GDP deflator.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total number of academic staff in each central institution and college of education for each of the years 1978-79 to 1988-89, inclusive.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information in respect of the central institutions funded by the Scottish Education Department and the colleges of education is set out in the table:

Academic Staff Numbers

	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89[a]
Central Institutions:											
Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art	100	100	100	100	98	98	98	98	98	98	98
Dundee Institute of Technology	140	148	153	156	157	160·5	162·5	168·5	171·5	174·5	174·5
Edinburgh College of Art	107	107	109	106	106	106	104	104	102	100	100
Glasgow College of Technology	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	343·5	347·5	350·5	350·5
Glasgow School of Art	95	98	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	102	102
Leith Nautical College[3]	62	63	63	63	63	63	63	53·5	—	—	—
Napier Polytechnic of Edinburgh	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	441	451	462	462
Paisley College of Technology[1]	209	223	229	231·5	235·5	239·5	239·5	246·5	250·5	255·5	255·5
Queen Margaret College	115	128	127	125	124	121	125	122	122	122	122
Queen's College, Glasgow	77·5	78·5	78·5	76·5	76·5	76·5	81	81	74	81	81
Robert Gordon's Institute of Technology[2]	265	267	272	275	277	280	283	292	301	311	311
The Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama	64	64	65·5	62·5	59·5	59·5	60·5	60·5	60·5	60·5	60·5
Scottish College of Textiles	46	49	50	51	52	53	53	53	54	55	55
Colleges of Education:											
Aberdeen[6]	126·5	112	118	117	106	103	92	87	—	—	—
Callendar Park[4]	42	41·5	40·5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Craigie	45·4	37·5	39	41	36	37	38·5	40	39	39	39
Craiglockhart[5]	38	33·1	35·1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dundee[6]	127	110·5	102	92	84	82	77	73	—	—	—
Dunfermline[7]	72	72	67	68	56	51	47	45	—	—	—
Hamilton[4]	78	73	59	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Jordanhill	315	277	287	342	301	306	278	271	268	244	244
Moray House	221	200	186	213	184	175	169·5	170	207	208	208
Northern	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	158	151	151
Notre Dame[5]	124	106	104	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
St. Andrew's	—	—	—	122	111	109	102	97	96	91	91

Notes:
a. The figures for the Central Institutions and from 1982-83 for the Colleges of Education represent the approved complements. The figures for 1978-79 to 1981-82 are the staff in post as reported to the SED by the Colleges of Education.
[1] Excludes staff from the Non-Destructive Testing Centre.
[2] Excludes staff from the Off-Shore Survival Centre and from the Off-Shore Health Centre.
[3] Leith Nautical College transferred to the local authority sector with effect from 1 August 1987.
[4] College dissolved on 15 September 1981.
[5] Merged to form St. Andrew's College of Education on 15 September 1981.
[6] Merged to form Northern College of Education on 1 April 1987.
[7] Merged with Moray House College of Education on 1 April 1987.
[8] Estimate.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total number of full-time students enrolled at each central institution and college of education for each of the years 1978-79 to 1988-89, inclusive.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information available is set out in the table. Consistent information for the years 1978-79 and 1979-80 is not available.

Central Institutions	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art	832	843	896	938	983	1,006	1,026	1,059	n/a
Dundee Institute of Technology	1,435	1,686	1,773	1,846	1,998	2,022	2,041	2,009	n/a
Edinburgh College of Art	807	843	894	950	973	976	979	975	n/a
Glasgow College of Technology	—	—	—	—	—	3,370	3,376	3,352	n/a
Glasgow School of Art	788	992	998	983	1,021	1,019	865	776	n/a
Leith Nautical College	504	441	507	445	415	262	137	—	n/a
Napier Polytechnic of Edinburgh	—	—	—	—	—	4,316	4,586	4,753	n/a
Paisley College of Technology	2,316	2,568	2,739	2,886	2,797	2,872	2,869	2,870	n/a
Queen Margaret College	942	1,001	1,021	1,029	1,140	1,225	1,263	1,294	n/a
Queen's College, Glasgow	664	678	713	752	815	837	851	884	n/a
Robert Gordon's Institute of Technology	2,420	2,602	2,828	3,025	3,061	3,197	3,261	3,284	n/a
The Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama	292	356	371	374	362	360	347	388	n/a
Scottish College of Textiles	439	422	413	497	607	598	625	643	n/a

Figures for central institutions cover vocational and non-vocational courses, and include sandwich course students.
Napier Polytechnic of Edinburgh and Glasgow College of Technology entered the central institution sector in 1985-86, and Leith Nautical College left the sector in 1986-87.

Colleges of Education	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
Craigie	200	198	202	201	208	215	237	283	267
Jordanhill	1,366	1,300	1,233	1,116	932	972	1,020	1,304	1,220
Hamilton	252	135	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Moray House	800	739	705	583	508	512	536	1,383	1,354
Calendar Park	184	127	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dunfermline	390	341	298	246	202	178	163	—	—
St. Andrews	—	659	596	552	510	526	551	573	527
Craiglockhart	202	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Notre Dame	556	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Northern	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	878	814
Aberdeen	624	563	488	437	385	401	433	—	—
Dundee	321	297	269	235	218	230	266	—	—

Figures for colleges of education for 1980-81 to 1986-87 include overseas students, but exclude students enrolled for non-teacher training courses as this is not available on a consistent basis (there were 788 students on these courses in 1988-89).
Hamilton College amalgamated with Jordanhill, Calendar Park and Dunfermline with Moray House, Craiglockhart and Notre Dame to become St. Andrews and Aberdeen and Dundee to become Northern.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total number of part-time students enrolled at each central institution and college of education for each of the years 1978-79 to 1988-89 inclusive, excluding those on in-service courses at colleges of education.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is set out in the table. Consistent information is not available for colleges of education, or for the years 1978-79 and 1979-80 for central institutions.

Central institutions	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art	275	793	615	682	702	776	735	647	n/a
Dundee Institute of Technology	918	946	874	792	499	458	448	198	n/a
Edinburgh College of Art	88	95	202	941	134	766	730	726	n/a
Glasgow College of Technology	—	—	—	—	—	3,642	3,555	3,052	n/a
Glasgow School of Art	320	1,165	1,164	1,146	919	1,163	1,527	1,531	n/a
Leith Nautical College	1,839	1,995	2,052	2,083	2,115	1,763	1,233	—	n/a
Napier Polytechnic of Edinburgh	—	—	—	—	—	3,845	4,059	4,254	n/a
Paisley College of Technology	2,038	3,942	4,501	5,786	3,768	2,568	4,055	5,110	n/a
Queen Margaret College	587	729	650	748	647	501	925	1,144	n/a
Queen's College, Glasgow	71	73	137	219	319	313	200	265	n/a
Robert Gordon's Institute of Technology	7,887	10,772	12,674	12,883	14,559	13,756	12,155	13,285	n/a
The Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama	—	221	399	382	320	388	347	306	n/a
Scottish College of Textiles	99	71	127	204	160	191	81	149	n/a

The figures cover vocational and non-vocational courses. Napier Polytechnic of Edinburgh and Glasgow College of Technology entered the central institution sector in 1985-86, and Leith Nautical College left the sector in 1986-87.

Employment Training

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of staff involved in monitoring fraud by employment training scheme management agencies and employers in Scotland.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 17 May 1989]:* Employment training is delivered through Training Agency area offices each of which has a team, backed up by a professional adviser in the office for Scotland, responsible for the monitoring of monies paid out against contracts. Adequate staff resources are deployed to investigate irregularities and allegations of fraud as necessary.

Radioactivity (Venison)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list results for the radioactive monitoring of *(a)* deer, and *(b)* goats for each year since April 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 19 May 1989]:* There is regular monitoring of venison in dealers' stores on an all-Scotland basis. Goatmeat is not consumed in significant quantities and we have accordingly not thought it necessary to institute a programme of monitoring of this meat.

The results of the monitoring of samples of venison are set out in the table:

Venison (Becquerels per Kilo Cs 134 + Cs 137)

	0-500	*500-1,000*	*1,000-2,000*	*Over 2,000*
1986	50	9	5	1
1987	113	28	13	2
1988	100	4	1	—

These results do not give cause for concern since a person would require to eat more than 40 kg of venison at a level of radiation of 2,000 Bq/kg to come near to the levels at which, under international recommendation, action to restrict consumption should be considered.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice he is issuing concerning the safety of eating venison contaminated with radioactivity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 19 May 1989]:* The levels of radioactivity in venison, coupled with the relatively low consumption of this meat by the general public, do not warrant advice against eating venison being given to the public at large.

It is conceivable that a small number of forestry, estate and other workers, might eat large amounts of venison at the top end of the radiation levels identified. Even at that level the risk would be very small indeed. An individual would have to eat about 40 kg of venison a year at a level of 2,000 Bq/kg to come near to the levels of dose at which, under international recommendation, action to restrict consumption should be considered.

Advice was issued in 1987 and 1988 to forestry, estate workers and others eating venison in quantities considerably higher than average on a regular basis that they might wish to consider eating less venison as a precautionary measure.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what measures he is taking to ensure that radioactive *(a)* goatmeat, and *(b)* venison are not entering the food chain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 19 May 1989]:* Not much goatmeat is eaten in Scotland, the goat population mainly being kept to supply milk and fibre. Most goats are kept on low ground and inbye land where radioactive caesium from Chernobyl fallout is not readily available for ingestion by grazing animals. Accordingly no specific measures relating to the consumption of goatmeat are considered necessary.

Regular samples are taken of venison in dealers' stores on an all-Scotland basis so that the levels of radioactivity in venison destined for human consumption may be monitored. No unacceptably high levels of radioactivity have been detected in this continuing monitoring programme.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Short Money

Mr. Coleman: To ask the Lord President of the Council how much Short money has been paid to the Opposition parties in the last five years.

Mr. Wakeham: The total amount of Short money paid to Opposition parties in the past five years is £3,518,503·75p. A breakdown for each year is as follows:

	£
1984	454,749·76
1985	631,091·00
1986	631,598·75
1987	597,741·27
1988	1,203,322·97

HEALTH

Homeless People

77. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he plans to hold any discussions with the Salvation Army and other similar organisations on social service aids for homeless people in Greater London and other major cities who are not temporarily resident in officially designated homeless accommodation.

Mr. Mellor: We have no plans at present for discussions, but if the Salvation Army's recent survey has produced information which would help to direct social services more effectively to homeless people in the category described I—and the authorities immediately responsible —would be pleased to have it.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what statistics his Department keeps regarding patient waiting time to see a hospital consultant on referral by a general practitioner.

Mr. Mellor: None. Information on waiting times of out-patient referrals is not available centrally.

Hospital Treatment (Bolton)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people received in-patient treatment at Bolton hospitals in 1988; and what were the comparable figures during each of the last five years.

Mr. Freeman: The information is given in the table.

In-patient cases treated, Bolton District Health Authority, 1982 to 1987-88

Year	*In-patient cases treated*
1982	32,598
1983	33,471
1984	33,837
1985	35,289

Year	In-patient cases treated
1986	35,385
1987-88	37,205

Source: SH3 1982-86.
SH3a Financial year 1987-88.

West Lancashire District Health Authority

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients were treated in 1988-89 and 1978-79 by the West Lancashire district health authority as in-patients, out-patients and day patients; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The latest year for which data are currently available is the financial year 1987-88. The available information is given in the table.

Patients treated in NHS hospitals, West Lancashire District Health Authority 1978 and 1987-88

	1978	1987-88	Percentage change 1978-1987-88
In-patient cases treated	13,812	17,540	27·0
Day cases	1,411	2,776	96·7
New out-patients	13,181	19,543	48·3
Total out-patient attendances	56,398	88,960	57·7

Source: SH3 1978
SH3a Financial year 1987-88.

AIDS

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements he is making for the early provision of soluble CD4 for patients with HIV once the outcome of trials taking place in the United States is known.

Mr. Mellor: No medicinal produce may be marketed in the United Kingdom until licensed. Where this is justified on public health grounds a licence application may be fast tracked to ensure that the product can be marketed with minimum delay if it meets licensing requirements.

Drug Prices

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the purchase price paid by the National Health Service for (i) Acupan Tabs, 90 and 30, (ii) Adalat 5mg Caps, 100 and 40, (iii) Adalat 10mg Caps, 100 and 50, (iv) Adalate 10mg Caps, 90, (v) Adalat AR 20mg Tabs, 100 and 50, (vi) Adalat LP 20mg Tabs, 30, (vii) Adalat Retard, 50, (viii) Aldactone 100mg Tabs, 100 and 20, (ix) Aldomet 250mg Tabs, 100, (x) Aldomet 500mg Tabs, 100, (xi) Allegron 10mg Tabs, 100 and (xii) Allegron 25mg Tabs, 100; and how much in cash terms of each drug was dispensed by retail pharmacy contractors in the last year for which figures are available;

(2) what is the purchase price paid by the National Health Service for (i) Alrhumat 50 mg Caps, 100, (ii) Amoxil 500 mg, 100, (iii) Androcur 50 mg Tabs, 100 and 50, (iv) Artiflam 200 mg Tabs, 60, (v) Avlocardyl Ret Caps, 28, (vi) Azantac 150 mg Tabs, 60 and 30, (vii) Becotide, 1, (viii) Benortan Suspension, 300 ml, (ix) Blocadfren 10 mg Tabs, 100, (x) Brufen 400 mg Tabs, 100, (xi) Canestan Cream (Blue Pack), 30 g and (xii) Canestan Cream (Red Pack), 20 g; and how much in cash terms of each drug was dispensed by retail pharmacy contractors in the last year for which figures are available;

(3) what is the purchase price paid by the National Health Service for (i) Capoten 25 mg Tabs, 90 and 45, (ii) Capoten 50 mg Tabs, 90 and 45, (iii) Cinobac 500 mg Caps, 14 and 20, (iv) Cinopal 300 mg Caps, 20 and 24, (v) Clamoxyl 250 mg Caps, 500 and 12, (vi) Clamoxyl 500 mg Caps, 100 and 12, (vii) Clinoril 100 mg Tabs, 100 and 50, (viii) Clinoril 200 mg Tabs, 100 and 50, (ix) Clomid Tabs, 30 and 10, (x) Cordarone 200 mg Tabs, 30 and 60, (xi) Corgard 80 mg Tabs, 28 and 30 and (xii) Corlan Pellets 2·5 mg; and how much in cash terms of each drug was dispensed by retail pharmacy contractors in the last year for which figures are available;

(4) what is the purchase price paid by the National Health Service for (i) Danatrol 200 mg Caps, 100, (ii) Dolobis 250 mg Tabs, 100 and 30, (iii) Eusaprim Forte Tabs, 100 and 200, (iv) Eusaprim 480 mg Tabs, 100 and 250, (v) Feldene 10 mg Caps, 60 and 20, (vi) Feldene 20 mg Caps, 30 and 10, (vii) Fepron 600 mg Tabs, 100 and 75, (viii) Fluanxol 0·5 mg Tabs, 100 and 50, (ix) Fluanxol 1 mg Tabs, 100 and 50, (x) Froben 50 mg Tabs, 100 (xi) Froben 100 mg Tabs, 100 and 60 and (xii) Gaviscon Liquid 500 ml and 250 ml; and how much in cash terms of each drug was dispensed by retail pharmacy contractors in the last year for which figures are available;

(5) what is the purchase price paid by the National Health Service for (i) Gyno-Canesten Pess, 12, (ii) Haycion 0·25mg Tabs, 30 and 20, (iii) Hirudoid Gel, 40g, (iv) Hydergine 1·5 mg Tabs, 100 (v) Imodium 2mg Caps, 30 and 20, (vi) Imuran Tabs, 100 and 50, (vii) Indera L.A. 160mg Tabs, 28 and 56, (viii) Inderetic Caps, 100 and 42, (ix) Indocid 25mg Caps, 100 and 30, (x) Indocid 50mg, 100, (xi) Indocid Suppositories, 10 and (xii) Kemadrin 5mg, 500 and 25; and how much in cash terms of each drug was dispensed by retail pharmacy contractors in the last year for which figures are available;

(6) what is the purchase price paid by the National Health Service for (i) Kemadrine 5mg Tabs, 500 and 40, (ii) Kinidrin Durettes 250mg, 100, (iii) Lioresal Tabs, 100 and 50, (iv) Locoid Cream, 30g, (v) Locoid Ointment, 30g, (vi) Lomotil Tabs, 100 and 12, (vii) Loniten 5mg, 100 (viii) Modamide 5mg Tabs, 30 (ix) Modapar 125mg Caps, 100 and 60, (x) Modapar 250mg Caps, 100 and 60, (xi) Moducren Tabs, 28 and 30 and (xii) Motilium 10mg Tabs, 30 and 100; and how much in cash terms of each drug was dispensed by retail pharmacy contractors in the last year for which figures are available;

(7) what is the purchase price paid by the National Health Service for (i) Natrilex 2·5mg Tabs, 30, (ii) Negram 500mg Tabs, 56 and 40, (iii) Nerisone Pommade, 30g, (iv) Orap 4mg Tabs, 100 and 20, (v) Otosporin Drops, 5ml and 10ml, (vi) Panoxyl 5 per cent. Gel, 40g, (vii) Panoxyl 10 per cent. Gel, 40g, (viii) Parlodel 2·5 mg Tabs, 100 and 30, (ix) Parlodel 10mg Tabs, 100 and 30, (x) Pevaryl Cream, 30g, (xi) Prothiaden 75mg Tabs, 28 and (xii) Prothiaden 25mg Tabs, 100; and how much in cash terms of each drug was dispensed by retail pharmacy contractors in the last year for which figures are available;

(8) what is the purchase price paid by the National Health Service for (i) Proviron 25mg Tabs, 50, (ii) Rivotril 2mg Tabs, 100, (iii) Salazopyrin 0·5mg Tabs, 100, (iv) Salazopyrin E.N. Tabs, 300, (v) Septrin Tabs 400/80mg, 500 and 10, (vi) Septrin Forte Tabs, 100, (vii) Septrin Paed

Susp, 100ml, (viii) Septrin Adult Susp, 100ml, (ix) Serc Tablets, 120 and 100, (x) Sinemet 100 Tabs, 100, (xi) Stromba 5mg Tabs, 56 and 10 and (xii) Stugeron Forte, 100 and 20; and how much in cash terms of each drug was dispensed by retail pharmacy contractors in the last year for which figures are available;

(9) what is the purchase price paid by the National Health Service for (i) Tagamet 200mg Tabs, 120 and 50, (ii) Tagamet 400mg Tabs, 60 and 25, (iii) Tegretol 200mg Tabs, 100 and 50, (iv) Tegretol 400mg Tabs, 100, (v) Tildiem 60mg Tabs, 100 and 30, (vi) Timoptel 0·25 per cent., 5ml, (vii) Timoptol 0·5 per cent., 5ml, (viii) Tinset 30mg Tabs, 25, (ix) Tofranil 10mg Tabs, 100 and 60, (x) Tofranil 25mg Tabs, 100, (xi) Trandate 100mg Tabs, 56 and 75, and (xii) Trandate 200mg Tabs, 56 and 75; and how much in cash terms of each drug was dispensed by retail pharmacy contractors in the last year for which figures are available;

(10) what is the purchase price paid by the National Health Service for (i) Trasicor 80mg Tabs, 100 and 40, (ii) Trasicor Ret 160mg Tabs, 28, (iii) Triludan Suspension, 200ml, 120ml, (iv) Ventolin Inhaler (boxed), 1, (v) Ventolin Pouch, 1, (vi) Vermox 100mg Tabs, 6 and 10, (vii) Vermox Suspension, 30ml, (viii) Viskaldix Tabs, 28, (ix) Voltarene 25mg Tabs, 100 and 30, (x) Voltarene 50mg Tabs, 100 and 30, (xi) Voltarene LP 100mg Tabs, 28 and 15, and (xii) Voltlen Ret 100mg Tabs, 28 and 10; and how much in cash terms of each drug was dispensed by retail pharmacy contractors in the last year for which figures are available;

(11) what is the purchase price paid by the National Health Service for (i) Zaditen 1mg Caps, 60, (ii) Zantac Tablets 150mg 60 and 20, (iii) Zarontin 250mg Caps, 50, (iv) Zovirax 200mg Tabs, 25, (v) Zyloric 100mg Tabs, 100 and 50, (vi) Zyloric 300mg Tabs, 30 and 28 and (vii) Zyloric 100mg Tabs, 25; and how much in cash terms of each drug was dispensed by retail pharmacy contractors in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Mellor: The price paid for medicines prescribed by their proprietary name and dispensed by pharmacy contractors is the manufacturer's list price. These prices are published from time to time in the *British National Formulary*, a copy of which is in the Library. Where no list price is available the price paid is the price which the pharmacist has had to pay.

The net ingredient cost of prescriptions written using the names of the products in respect of which information is requested and dispensed by pharmacy contractors in 1987 is contained in a list which has been placed in the Library.

Speech Therapy

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what decisions have been taken as to whether speech therapy services will be classed as core services; and whether such decisions will be made centrally.

Mr. Mellor: I refer my hon. Friend to my right hon. and learned Friend's reply on 7 February to the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) at column *640*.

GPs (Home Visits)

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many home visits he estimates are made by the average general practitioner; to what extent he expects that number to increase as a result of revision of the general practitioners' contract; and what was the figure in 1979.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested, based on the small sample used for the general household survey, is estimated as follows:

England

	Average list size	*Number of Home Visits*
1979	2,286	1,320
1987	2,020	1,290

Although under the new contract for GPs we expect patients aged 75 and over to be visited annually as part of their general health assessment, this requirement need not be carried out by the GP personally.

Prescribing Budgets

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what funds he intends to make available in 1990-91 to the regional health authorities to cover the administrative and computer technology costs of introducing indicative prescribing budgets.

Mr. Mellor: We have made quite clear that we will meet the necessary additional costs of implementing the indicative prescribing budget scheme.

It is premature to state what funding will be made available to regional health authorities since we are engaged in discussions with various interested parties about how the scheme should be implemented.

Snapethorpe Hospital, Wakefield

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when his Department instructed the Wakefield district health authority to draw up plans for the building of houses on the site of Snapethorpe hospital, Wakefield.

Mr. Freeman: I know of no such plans. If permanent closure of Snapethorpe is agreed by Ministers it will be for the district health authority in consultation with the regional health authority, to decide upon its disposal or future use.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his Department's estimate of the site value of Snapethorpe hospital, Wakefield.

Mr. Freeman: The district and regional health authorities, in consultation with the district valuer, and taking account of future use potential, are responsible for assessing the site value.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which organisations and individuals have objected to the proposed closure of Snapethorpe hospital, Wakefield.

Mr. Freeman: Details are given in the document "Responses to the Consultation Document, Officer Comments and Recommendations" put to the 30 September meeting of Wakefield health authority. This is available from the health authority.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of patients treated in Snapethorpe hospital, Wakefield, in each year since 1979.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is given in the table.

Snapethorpe Hospital—Deaths and Discharges

	Chest Diseases	Geriatrics	Mental Illness	General Medicine	Pre-Convalescent	Total
1979	288	—	22	13	26	349
1980	245	33	16	—	—	294
1981	187	46	25	—	—	258
1982	190	—	35	—	—	225
1983	182	33	—	—	—	215
1984[1]	31	—	—	—	—	31

[1] to 31 March 1984

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if his Department instructed the Wakefield district health authority to withdraw from discussions with the Wakefield metropolitan district council regarding the possibility of a scheme of joint use of Snapethorpe hospital, Wakefield.

Mr. Freeman: No.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to discuss with Wakefield district council its proposals for the future use of Snapethorpe hospital, Wakefield, before any decision is made by his Department regarding its closure.

Mr. Freeman: I am aware that the district health authority has had meetings with the district council and will have taken the council's views into account in putting forward closure proposals. I have however, already agreed to meet the hon. Member to discuss the matter.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to visit Snapethorpe hospital, Wakefield, before any decision is made by his Department regarding its closure.

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Member's suggestion is noted. I shall consider it on its merits before any final decision is taken.

National Health Service Capital Expenditure

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will provide figures for National Health Service capital expenditure in each year since 1975 in 1988 prices, excluding the effect of asset disposal and realisation.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is shown in the table:

NHS capital expenditure (England)—Net of Capital Receipts at 1988 prices

£ million

Year	Net of capital receipts at 1988-89 prices[1]
1974-75	967
1975-76	1,039
1976-77	998
1977-78	778
1978-79	800
1979-80	765
1980-81	875
1981-82	972
1982-83	944
1983-84	927
1984-85	974
1985-86	980
1986-87	966
1987-88	899
1988-89	874
1989-90 (plan)	910

[1] As measured by GDP deflator.

Infant Care Programme

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance his Department has issued to district and regional health authorities about the provision of breathing monitors and scales for mothers involved in the care of the next infant programme.

Mr. Freeman: The Department has not issued specific guidance to regional and district health authorities about the provision of breathing monitors and weighing scales for mothers involved in the care of the next infant (CONI) programme, which is run by the Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths. However, the third report of the maternity services advisory committee on the care of the mother and baby, which we have commended to health authorities, advises that, in regard to babies considered to be at risk of unexpected death, detailed attention should be paid to weight gain and to early symptoms of illness or signs that something may be amiss.

North Devon District Hospital

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what consideration has been given to the impact on continuity of patient care of the proposed closure of 25 acute psychiatric beds at weekends within the North Devon district hospital; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what are the projected savings resulting from the proposed closure of 25 acute psychiatric beds at weekends with the North Devon district hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: No decision on this management option has been taken by the North Devon health authority.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans there are to introduce five-day-a-week wards similar to those proposed at the North Devon district hospital in other parts of the country; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I understand that the possibility of converting one or two wards in the North Devon district

hospital to a five-day week is an option that is being examined, but on which no management view has yet been taken. Local bed management is a matter for individual health authorities.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what representations he has received concerning the legality of charges imposed on patients since 1 May 1989 by North Devoon health authority for hospital transportation to take patients to hospital for treatment; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what representations he has received concerning the legality of car parking charges to be imposed at the North Devon district hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: None. It is for health authorities to take appropriate legal and other professional advice on local management decisions. However, no charge is made for the transportation of patients to hospital if it has been prescribed by a doctor as clinically necessary.

Bexley Health Authority

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether Bexley health authority worked with Bexley London borough in ensuring that the contract to provide accountancy services to Social Policy Management Services Limited, awarded to Auckland Goddard Hampson and Swain (Chartered Accountants), was put out to tender.

Mr. Freeman: Decision on accountancy services is entirely a matter for Social Policy Management Services Ltd.

Cervical Cancer

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many deaths have been recorded annually in recent years of women under the age of 20 years from cervical cancer.

Mr. Freeman: The information is shown in the table.

Number of deaths from cervical cancer[1] of women under the age of 20 years in England and Wales, 1978-87

Year	Number of deaths
1978	—
1979	—
1980	—
1981	—
1982	1
1983	—
1984	—
1985	—
1986	1
1987	—

[1] Assigned to the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) 8th and 9th revision code 180.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Stretford on 4 May, *Official Report*, column *230*, what estimates he makes of the reduction of deaths from cervical cancer if the frequency of cervical smears was reduced from five years to *(a)* three years and *(b)* two years; what are the cost implications of this; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Estimates made by the Department of Health cancer screening evaluation unit would suggest that, in comparison with screening every five years, cervical smears taken every three years between the ages of 20 and 64 could reduce by some further 7 per cent. the number of deaths which would otherwise occur from cancer of the cervix at an additional cost of somewhat over £22 million per annum. Screening every two years would reduce the number of deaths by an additional 1 or 2 per cent. at a further additional cost of some £28 million. These estimates are based on a hypothetical 100 per cent. acceptance of screening. Since we know that the majority of women who die from cervical cancer have never been screened, we have recommended to health authorities that increasing the proportion of women being screened regularly should take precedence over increasing the frequency of screening.

Blood Supplies

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what studies are being undertaken to monitor the incidence of the retrovirus human T cell lymphotropic virus-1 in blood supplies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: This is a rare infection in this country. The national blood transfusion service is preparing for a study to monitor the prevalence of this infection in blood donations. As part of these preparations, an investigation of the methods available for identifying the infection is underway.

Drug Supplies

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the total number of complaints registered against representatives of pharmaceutical companies in each of the last five years in relation to financial and other incentives offered to general practitioners for the prescribing of specific products; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: None. Pharmaceutical industry sales promotion conduct is regulated by the industry's code of practice. Complaints alleging unacceptable conduct are considered by the code of practice committee of the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI). The Royal College of Physicians has issued advice on "The Relationship between Physicians and the Pharmaceutical Industry".

"Working for Patients"

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he is yet in a position to announce the composition of the NHS policy board and the NHS management executive proposed on the White Paper, "Working for Patients."

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am announcing today that the members of the board, which I shall chair, will be:

Sir Roy Griffiths (Deputy Chairman).
The Minister of State for Health.
The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Health.
Sir Donald Acheson Chief Medical Officer, Department of Health.
Sir James Ackers, Chairman of West Midlands Health Regional Authority.
Professor Cyril Chantler, Professor of Paediatric Nephrology at Guys Hospital.
Mrs. Julia Cumberlege, CBE, Chairman of South West Thames Regional Health Authority.

Sir Graham Day, Chairman of the Rover Group and Cadbury Schweppes.
Sir Kenneth Durham, Chairman of Woolworth holdings and Deputy Chairman of British Aerospace.
Sir Christopher France, CB, Permanent Secretary at the Department of Health.
Mr. Duncan Nichol, CBE, Chief Executive of the NHS Management Executive.
Sir Robert Scholey, CBE, Chairman of British Steel.

The policy board will determine the strategy, objectives and finances of the NHS in the light of Government policy, and will set objectives for the management executive and monitor whether they are achieved.

The NHS management executive members will be:

Mr. Duncan Nichol, CBE, Chief Executive
Mr. Graham Hart, CB, Director of Operations
Mr. Michael Fairey, Director of Information and Review
Ms. Sheila Masters, Director of Finance
Mr. Peter Wormald, Director of Personnel
Dr. Ron Oliver, CB, Medical Director
Miss Patsy Wright-Warren, Nursing Director
Mr. Bryan Rayner, CB, Director, Family Practitioner Services
Mr. Idris Pearce, CBE, Estates Adviser

The executive will deal with all operational matters relating to both the hospital and community health service and the family practitioner service, within the strategy and objectives set by the policy board.

"Working for Patients" emphasised the need to distinguish in our central management of the NHS between strategy—making clear the direction the Government want the service to follow—and the operational tasks involved in putting that strategy into practice. In other words, it is Ministers' job to set a framework of policies, priorities and resources and, within that, to leave managers to manage and to answer for their performance.

This is reflected in the different roles of the policy board and the management executive. I am delighted that, as chairman of the policy board, I shall be able to draw on such a wide range of experience and achievement and that the chief executive of the management executive will lead an equally strong team.

Syringe Exchange Schemes

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the implications of the final report of the evaluation of 14 experimental syringe-exchange schemes.

Mr. Mellor: The evaluation points to some encouraging features of schemes, in particular the ability of some to attract significant numbers of injectors—many of whom have not been in contact with services before—and to help regular attenders make or sustain changes in risky behaviour. However, the research also shows that schemes have a high turnover of clients and are less good at attracting women, younger injectors and those with a short history of injecting drug misuse. They tend to attract those injectors who have already made, or are motivated to make changes in their behaviour.

We have concluded that exchange schemes and other measures to make sterile injecting equipment more readily available—such as, where appropriate, sales by pharmacists and provision by general practitioners in the context of treatment of drug misusers—can be potentially valuable components of the wider-ranging strategy we need to prevent the spread of HIV-infection amount and from drug misusers. This strategy must also include the development of readily accessible advice and treatment services where drug misusers can get help with drug problems, and with reducing their risk of acquiring or transmitting HIV-infection through drug using or sexual behaviour. At the same time, we continue to attach the utmost importance to tackling the misuse of drugs itself, both by the interdiction of supplies and through effective education and information to discourage young people from starting to take drugs.

We have increased to over £14 million the funds available to health authorities from 1989-90 for services for drug misusers, including measures to prevent the spread of HIV-infection, in order that such a strategy may be implemented. In Scotland and in Wales £2 million and £1·6 million respectively are being provided for this purpose. We will circulate the key findings of this recent research in order that they may be taken into account in planning and developing services.

Health Education Council

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the budget of the Health Education Council for each year from 1978-79 to 1986-87, expressed as actual expenditure and as a percentage of total National Health Service spending for England.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 26 April 1989]:* The information requested is as follows:

Health Education Council budget

Financial year	*Actual expenditure* £ million	[1]*As percentage of total NHS spending for England* Per cent.
1978-79	3·7	0·06
1979-80	4·5	0·06
1980-81	5·0	0·05
1981-82	6·6	0·06
1982-83	8·6	0·08
1983-84	9·3	0·08
1984-85	9·6	0·07
1985-86	10·1	0·07
1986-87	10·15	0·07

[1] Total NHS spending for England has been taken as the total revenue and capital expenditure of regional and district health authorities and the special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals plus the expenses of the Dental Estimates board and the Prescription Pricing authority. The administrative expenses of family practitioner committees and their total expenditure on family practitioner services (net of patients' charges) have also been included. Figures used represent annual outturn figures, not adjusted for inflation.

Desiccated Liver Powder

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether desiccated liver powder is categorised as a food supplement or a pharmaceutical product; and whether he will make a statement about the importing of desiccated liver powder in relation to the Imported Food Regulations 1984.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 2 May 1989]:* The decision whether desiccated liver powder is regarded as a food supplement or a pharmaceutical product for purposes of the imported food regulations rests with the port health authority responsible for the application of the regulations

at the port of entry. It is for the authority to make this decision on the basis of the facts which are available to it at the time of import, relating to the end use of the powder.

Assistance

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will state by rate of population per 1,000 by age group, for years 1980 to 1989, the number of cases of assistance to persons during the year provided by (i) Calderdale, (ii) Bradford, (iii) Kirklees, (iv) Leeds, (v) Wakefield, (vi) Oldham and (vii) Rochdale for *(a)* installation of telephone and attachments, *(b)* payment of telephone rentals, *(c)*installation of other communications equipment, *(d)* installation of television, *(e)* payment of television licence or rental, *(f)* supply of radio, *(g)* supply of personal aids, *(h)* adaptation to non-local authority property and *(i)* holidays.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 11 May 1989]:* Tables showing available information in respect of year ended 31 March 1980 to 31 March 1987 have been placed in the Library. Information in respect of subsequent years has not been collected centrally.

Gynaecologists

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will call for a report from the chairman of the Trent regional health authority on the wording used in the advertisement for two consultant gynaecologists placed by the authority in the *Lancet* of 8 April.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 16 May 1989]:* No. but officials have drawn to the attention of the regional health authority the guidance issued in 1975 and 1979 by the then Chief Medical Officer concerning advertisements for consultant posts in obstetrics and gynaecology.

NHS Review

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice he has given to the chairman of the Wakefield family practitioner committee on requests made to the chairman of the family practitioner committee to discuss the White Paper, "Working for Patients;" and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 16 May 1989]:* None, although the chairman did send me copies of a recent exchange of correspondence with the hon. Member. I note that the chairman offered to arrange a meeting between representatives of the committee and hon. Members representing local constituencies to discuss the future implementation of the White Paper, which is the task assigned to the committee. I hope that hon. Members will take up that offer and I am writing to the chairman to encourage him to pursue it.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when his Department received a request for copies of the White Paper, "Working for Patients," to be supplied to members of the Wakefield family practitioner committee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 16 May 1989]:* Copies of the White Paper were sent to all family practitioner committees at the time of publication. It was for each committee to arrange its own internal distribution and to obtain any additional copies it might need.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has received from the Wakefield family practitioner committee any proposals for a health profile giving details of demands on services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 16 May 1989]:* No. We have recommended that all family practitioner committees should prepare a health profile of the area in collaboration with the district health authority as part of their own planning process. I understand that such a document in respect of Wakefield is in the course of preparation. We do not ask that the document should be sent to the Department except at the time of a performance review.

IVF Treatment

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to ensure that treatment for IVF in the South West regional health authority area is available free of charge for patients living in north Devon as it is for patients living in Bristol.

Mr. Freeman *[pursuant to his reply,* 15 May 1989 c. *80-81]*: I now understand that the infertility treatment available for a limited number of patients in north Devon is gamete intra fallopian transfer (GIFT) and not in vitro fertilisation (IVF) as previously stated. I am sorry we did not get this right.

TRANSPORT

Sir Keith Bright

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now announce the terms on which Sir Keith Bright resigned from London Transport.

Mr. Portillo: The terms are still under discussion.

Roads Provision

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now publish his plans to involve the private sector in roads provision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: I have today published, with the agreement of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, a consultation paper entitled "New Roads by New Means—Bringing in Private Finance". It covers England, Scotland and Wales. Copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

The Government are committed to providing a transport infrastructure suited to the needs of a modern economy. We showed that commitment in the plans contained in the White Paper, "Roads for Prosperity", published on 18 May, which dealt with roads in England. The White Paper was largely concerned with publicly-financed road schemes, but the private sector is playing an important and growing role in providing transport infrastructure. I see great potential opportunities for the private sector to finance and build more of our roads and bridges, complementing our greatly expanded road programme. My aim is to make full use of the innovation, enterprise and management efficiency of the private sector in improving the road network and in providing better value for money for taxpayers and road users. Our consultation paper proposes a way forward.

We have already started. From the international partnership on the Channel tunnel to local partnerships with councils on road schemes, the initiative and flair of the private sector have been making their impact. We already have an example of the successful involvement of private finance in a major national road scheme. The Dartford-Thurrock bridge, the first privately financed road scheme this century, is our starting point. The private sector is also tendering for the second Severn bridge.

This is a new field. There have been uncertainties for potential promoters. The consultation paper addresses these issues. For example, it describes a new approach by the Government to the question of additionality—the possible effect of private financing on the Government's total roads expenditure, which has been of considerable concern to the private sector. We give the assurance that we will not subtract the cost of privately financed roads from public sector provision on a scheme-by-scheme basis. This decision on additionality reinforces our belief that private sector schemes will provide the opportunity for more roads than would otherwise have been built.

The Government are concerned to achieve the most cost-effective provision of roads. Where appropriate, this will involve comparing privately financed schemes with their public sector alternatives. In future, however, no such comparison will be required unless the road scheme concerned is already in the programme or enjoys a high degree of monopoly.

The consultation paper proposes measures to make it easier for roads financed by contributions from developers to be built. It also concludes that new procedures are needed to authorise privately financed tolled roads. It makes detailed proposals for those new procedures, which would require primary legislation.

Privately-financed tolled roads will take the form of concessions, broadly similar to those for the Channel tunnel and the Dartford-Thurrock bridge. I would usually grant a concession after a competition. Competitions will help to ensure the best value for road users. In addition, EC law will require that concessions should be the subject of competitions. For these reasons, exclusive rights will not usually be conferred on promoters; but commercially confidential innovations will be protected, and originators of ideas will be given a place on the short list for the competition.

There will be an order-making procedure to authorise the roads and the tolls to be charged. The promoter would ask me to make the necessary orders. Where there are objections, there would be public inquiries to ensure that full regard is paid to the environment, and to protect the rights of affected individuals. The promoter would consult widely before applying for the required orders. All relevant orders would be considered at the same inquiry.

The Government will keep up the momentum of the private finance initiative. "New Roads by New Means" announces our intention to establish an early competition for a privately financed scheme to increase road capacity in the Birmingham-Manchester corridor.

I can also announce today that I intend to hold a competition for the Birmingham northern relief road.

"New Roads by new Means" is a consultation document. We are asking for comments by 14 July. I want to encourage people with ideas to come forward and help me to take this exciting initiative forward, and so to improve the road network still more for industry and motorists.

Advertising

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will provide as much information as possible about his Department's expenditure on commercial television advertising, without breaching commercial confidentiality, over each of the past five years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department of Transport's planned expenditure on commercial television advertising airtime in 1989-90 is £1·7 million. This relates to our campaign against drinking and driving.

Our objective in buying airtime is to obtain equivalent "reach" in respect of our target audience in each of the television areas. Expenditure is proportionately higher in the south (the areas covered by Television South, London Weekend Television, Thames Television and Television South West) because the cost of airtime is higher.

I have already provided information on the Department's expenditure over the past five years, during which time the same principle of equivalent "reach" has applied.

Tankers (Kilbrannan Sound)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what provisions his officials have made for allowing stricken tankers into Kilbrannan sound; what consultations were conducted concerning this matter with locally based commercial fishermen who fish the sound, before his officials took their decision; which other interested parties were consulted; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: In answer to the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question, no particular areas around United Kingdom are designated by the Department to be safe havens for stricken tankers and if a tanker is seriously damaged and needs shelter it will seek the nearest available. The Department holds general navigation details of the United Kingdom coast and such environmental details as is available. In the event of an incident it will advise and consult to the extent that time will allow all relevant local authorities before agreeing to or taking action to prevent, the tanker's intended movements.

Street Works (Horne Report)

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he now expects to introduce legislation regarding street works arising from the Horne report and related initiatives.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: As soon as there is suitable opportunity. Detailed proposals have been prepared and an opportunity is currently being given to interested parties to comment on them.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Transitional Payments

3. **Mr. Henderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will consider giving the full uprating to those still receiving transitional additions to their benefits.

4. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will consider giving the full uprating to those still receiving transitional additions to their benefits.

7. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will consider giving the full uprating to those still receiving transitional additions to their benefits.

19. **Mrs. Golding:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will consider giving the full uprating to those still receiving transitional additions to their benefits.

44. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will consider giving the full uprating to those still receiving transitional additions to their benefits.

Mr. Moore: I have no plans to do so. However, the House will know that when the additional help that we are giving to pensioners is introduced this autumn it will not affect the amount of transitional protection they are receiving.

40. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people in *(a)* Leeds and *(b)* Wakefield lost transitional payment benefit from April 1989 for the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 6 March at column *445*.

31. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people last month experienced the termination of transitional payment which they had previously received.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information will not be available for housing benefit transitional payments until the final closing date of 30 June 1989 has been reached and all applications have been received, assessed and payments made which are backdated to April 1988. To date, 184 people are no longer receiving transitional payments because their capital has increased to over £8,000 and payments have ceased for 72,234 people whose transitional payments were £2·00 per week or less, although their overall benefit income will have increased at April 1989.

An estimated 610,000 income support claimants ceased to need transitional protection following this year's benefit uprating. These people now receive more benefit income by way of income support than they got through supplementary benefit.

Benefits

6. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans for introducing new technology wall-mounted cash dispensers for benefit claimants.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have no such plans but the Department will continue to examine whether such methods offer advantages over existing methods of payment.

26. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will meet benefit claimants in Nottingham, North to discuss the operation of the benefits system.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have no plans to do so.

30. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what resources have been committed by his Department over the past year to ensuring that those eligible for benefits are aware of their entitlement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In financial year 1988-89, a total of £12·7 million was spent in promoting awareness of the Department's benefits. This sum includes advertising and publicity leaflets. In addition freeline social security offers a free general advice and information service on social security matters and is now receiving more than 900,000 calls yearly. The Department is currently running an advertising campaign, including television, to make people aware of their entitlement to family credit and to encourage them to claim. This campaign is costing £4·8 million.

Pensioners

13. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many pensioners in Fylde will benefit from the new benefits package announced last November.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The new package will benefit some 2·6 million pensioners across the country. I regret that I am unable to provide separate figures for my hon. Friend's constituency.

36. **Mr. Robert Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to improve the financial position of the retired and others dependent upon fixed incomes no longer entitled to benefit entitlements following the recent changes in the arrangements for social security payments and housing benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We undertook to monitor the effects of the reforms and as a result have already acted to improve the benefit position of certain vulnerable groups. Last April we acted quickly to raise the capital limit for housing benefit to £8,000 bringing 100,000 people (nearly all pensioners) back into benefit. Recently we announced further help for two particular groups. From October there will be improvements in income support and housing benefit for older and disabled pensioners; including husbands and wives some 2·6 million people will be better off as a result. From July certain 16 and 17-year-olds will benefit from changes to the income support rules and all 16 and 17-year-olds receiving housing benefit only will see an improvement in their benefit position.

46. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average level of Government financial support for pensioners in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* the European Community.

49. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average level of Government support for pensioners *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in the European Community.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Social security spending in the United Kingdom on the elderly is currently approximately 5 per cent. of gross domestic product. Comparable figures for the other member states of the European Community are not available.

50. **Mr. Wolfson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many men and women who will reach retirement age on or after 1 October will benefit from the abolition of the retirement pensions earnings rule.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There are three main catetgories of people who will benefit from the abolition of the retirement pension earnings rule. Individuals who reach pension age on or after 1 October will be able to choose to receive their retirement pension and earn as much as they can, with no reduction in their state retirement pension. There are 200,000 individuals currently deferring receipt of their retirement pension and a further 2,500 individuals whose retirement pension is currently reduced because of earnings over £75 a week who will benefit. In addition, there are about 200,000 individuals who currently earn less than £75 a week who may choose from 1 October to earn more, plus a large number of people who are not earning at present who may now choose to start earning.

Claimants (Medical Examination)

14. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will review the circumstances under which long-term invalidity benefit claimants are referred for independent medical examination by his Department's divisional medical officers.

Mr. Scott: We are satisfied that the present arrangements, using independent doctors employed by the Department of Health, strike the right balance between the interests of the claimant and the need to ensure that benefit rules are fulfilled. In 1988, 55 per cent. of claimants referred to the regional medical service were found incapable of work without the need for them to undergo a further medical examination. I have no plans for a review.

Leaflets

15. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many requests for social security leaflets have been met in the 48-hour turnabout period; and how many requests are still outstanding.

32. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many requests for social security leaflets have been met in the 48-hour turnabout period; and how many requests are still waiting.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Since the introduction this month of the additional distribution arrangements for leaflets and forms there have been seven items requested making a total order of 5,615 pieces sent within the 48-hour turnabout. There is one part of one order outstanding awaiting the supply of re-printed leaflets. The remainder of this order is expected to be fulfilled this week.

Disabled People

17. **Mr. Hannam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what his Department has done to help disabled sportsmen and women.

21. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what he is doing to help disabled sportsmen and women.

Mr. Scott: On 26 April, I announced that the Government had awarded £500,000 to set up a fund to help sportsmen and women with disabilities to practice their chosen sport. The fund will be administered by the British Paralympic Association, and will help disabled people and voluntary organisations with the costs of equipment, training or organising events. It will be of considerable assistance to disabled people wishing to take part in sport at any level.

Although of course the responsibility for sporting issues lies with the Department of the Environment, officials in both Departments work closely together on matters affecting sportsmen and women with disabilities. For example, the Department has participated in the major review of sporting needs and opportunities for people with disabilities, which has been led by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment and Minister for Sport. [The review group's report is due to be published in July.]

28. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the financing of local services for disabled people for which his Department has responsibility.

Mr. Scott: The Department of Social Security does not finance any services for disabled people through local authorities but, through its network of local offices, provides benefits to disabled people at nationally determined rates.

35. **Mr. Alfred Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how he proposes formally to consult disabled people, and their organisations, on the review of disability benefits.

Mr. Scott: Organisations representing disabled people are already commenting on the published findings of the surveys of disability carried out by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. We welcome those comments, which contribute to the process of reviewing disability benefits in the light of the OPCS data. As I said in my reply to the right hon. Member on 17 April at column *10*, I hope to announce a timetable for further action after all the survey results have been published in July.

38. **Mr. Butterfill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether the United Kingdom has been involved in any European programmes for the disabled.

43. **Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether the United Kingdom has participated in any European programmes for the disabled.

Mr. Scott: The United Kingdom participated in the European Commission's first action programme for the disabled (1983-1987), and is currently participating in the second follow on action programme called Handicapped people in Europe Living Independently in an Open Society (HELIOS). This programme involves setting up local model activities to represent good practice in vocational and economic integration, social integration and independent living, and educational integration.

In addition in 1988 the United Kingdom allocated £27·8 million from the European social fund towards vocational training projects for the disabled re-entering the open labour market. This represents the largest allocation to any EC member state for 1988 and accounts for just under 8 per cent. of the allocation to the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the increase in real terms in spending on social security benefits for the sick and disabled since 1978-79; and what proportion of this increase has been due to *(a)* the increase in the number of people receiving benefit, *(b)* increases in the actual benefit rates and *(c)* increases in the total real value of payments for reasons other than *(b)*.

Mr. Scott: Spending on the long-term sick and disabled increased by £3·5 billion in real terms between 1978-79 and 1988-89, a real increase of 90 per cent. Increases in the numbers of beneficiaries account for about 90 per cent. of the real increase and the balance of 10 per cent. represents a real increase in the average amount of benefit paid. It is not possible to provide a breakdown of the increase in the amount of benefit paid as requested in *(b)* and *(c)*. A full comparison of benefit rates in 1978-79 and 1988-89 cannot be made because of the changes to the income-related benefits over this period.

Expectant Mothers

18. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will make a statement on benefit allowances for expectant mothers.

Mr. Scott: A pregnant woman who has worked during her pregnancy will generally get 18 weeks statutory maternity pay (SMP) from her employer. The rate payable depends on her length of service and earnings, but if she has worked for the same employer for at least two years she will get 90 per cent. of her earnings for the first six weeks of payment. A pregnant woman with a recent employment record who does not qualify for SMP will get 18 weeks maternity allowance (MA) from the Department of Social Security. Pregnant women on low incomes also qualify for income support under the normal rules for that payment. Where they are in receipt of income support or family credit they can, in addition, claim an £85 social fund maternity payment.

34. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what savings will be made in 1989-90 by not uprating the social fund payment to pregnant women on income support in line with other benefits.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Since there is no statutory duty to uprate social fund maternity payments, no saving arises in 1989-90. However, to have increased such payments in line with other benefits would have cost about £650,000.

Family Credit

20. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if statistical information is available on the number of claimants and subsequent recipients of family credit in each area of the United Kingdom; and what arrangements are being made to monitor the take-up rate during the current campaign.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information is now available on the number of people actually receiving family credit in each local social security office area in Great Britain immediately before the start of the current take-up campaign, and this information will be updated from time to time as part of the monitoring of the campaign. A similar breakdown of the number of claims for family credit is not available. Information about take-up rates can only be obtained retrospectively, from family expenditure survey data, and only on a national basis.

Community Charge

22. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the arrangements for paying the community charge rebate.

33. **Mr. Eadie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the arrangements for paying the community charge rebate.

39. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the arrangements for paying the community charge rebate.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Members to my reply to the hon. Members for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) and for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) earlier today.

Efficiency

23. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what evidence he has as to whether the social security reforms have increased efficiency in the social security system.

Mr. Scott: There is considerable evidence that the social security reforms have resulted in benefits being directed more accurately and promptly. For example, income support (formerly supplementary benefit) error rates are down from 12 to 8 per cent. claims clearance times have fallen from six to five days and, for family credit (formerly family income supplement), claims clearance times have fallen from 18 to 16·5 working days.

Invalid Care Allowance

24. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the outturn for 1988-89 in invalid care allowance; and what has been the increase in real terms over the past five years.

Mr. Scott: The estimated outturn for invalid care allowance in 1988-89 is £160 million. This represents an increase in real terms of 1,043 per cent since 1984-85.

Residential Homes

25. **Mr. Wall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he last reviewed the payment limits for residential homes.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) earlier today.

37. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he last reviewed the payment limits for residential homes.

Mr. McKelvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he last reviewed the payment limits for residential homes.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Members to my hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) earlier today.

45. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has had from Oxfordshire social services on benefit levels for private residential nursing and rest homes.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have received a letter from the director of social services for Oxfordshire about the levels of benefit available to people in homes. A reply has been sent.

Family Expenditure

27. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by how much he estimates expenditure on the family has increased under this Government.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Excluding the extra help needed because unemployment was rising, support for families fell between 1974-75 and 1978-79 by 7 per cent. in real terms —or £500 million in 1988-89 values. Under this Government, the real increase up to 1988-89 was £1·8 billion (£1,840 million)—a rise of 27·3 per cent.

Disaster Fund Payments

29. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether payments made from any disaster fund raised by public donations affect the housing allowances or other social security benefit entitlement of the recipient; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Payments from disaster funds do not affect the majority of social security benefits.

The income-related benefits—income support, family credit and housing benefit—may be affected by payments from disaster funds but this will depend on the size and nature of the payments. The first £5 per week of any regular payment may be disregarded and a lump sum payment will not affect benefit unless it takes the claimant's capital over £3,000. An income of £1 per week is assumed for every £250, or part thereof, of capital between £3,000 and £6,000 in income support and family credit, and between £3,000 and £8,000 in housing benefit. No income support or family credit is payable if the capital held is over £6,000, and no housing benefit is available if it is over £8,000. However, capital held on trust, may be disregarded. For example, any payment made from a disaster fund because of a personal injury, which is placed on trust, is fully disregarded for at least two years and, in the case of a child, for as long as the child is a dependant. Any actual payments from the trust will be taken into account as income or capital in the normal way. In addition, any payment made to a third party will be completely disregarded if it is used to provide goods or services which are not already met by benefit. Officials continue to liaise with the administrators of the Hillsborough disaster fund and they have advised them of the social security rules.

The 1989 Social Security Bill will not result in any social security benefit being recovered from payments made from any disaster fund.

Family Support

41. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the level of Government financial support for the family in the European Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer my hon. Friend to my right hon. Friend's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) earlier today.

"The Business of Service"

42. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he is acting on any of the recommendations made in "The Business of Service" report.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Department is taking action on all the recommendations of "The Business of Service" report. When we published the report in June 1988 my right hon. Friend anounced to the House that we had not rejected any of the report's 54 recommendations, although some needed further work. A copy of the action plan giving details of our response to all the report's recommendations was placed in the Library in January this year. A full implementation report will be prepared by the autumn.

Substantial progress is being made on the recommendations which need further work and we are in the process of implementing the recommendations we have accepted. In particular, my hon. Friend will be aware that we have already announced plans for relocation of some work from some London social security offices. My right hon. Friend also announced on 17 May the publication of a national definition of service, the setting of new performance targets and plans to turn social security operations work into "Next Steps" agencies.

Reforms (Monitoring)

48. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what he is doing to monitor the social security reforms.

Mr. Scott: We have given an undertaking to monitor all aspects of the social security reforms. This is a continuing process and is showing that the reforms are meeting their main objectives in producing a benefit system that is easier to understand and administer, that is better targeted on priority groups and that enhances rather than obstructs individual responsibility and choice.

The monitoring process has also enabled us to make improvements where these have been shown to be necessary. For example, since April 1988:

- the capital limit for housing benefit has been increased from £6,000 to £8,000, at a cost of £30 million;
- transitional payments of housing benefit have been introduced for pensioners, working families with children, sick and disabled people and widows, at a cost of £70 million;
- £70 million extra help has been given to poorer families with children on top of a normal uprating;
- nearly £200 million extra will be available to older and disabled pensioners from October this year, on top of their uprated benefits;
- the independent living fund has been established to enable severely disabled people to live independently in the community;
- extra help will be given, from July this year, to 16 and 17-year-olds who are forced to live away from home;
- women widowed before the introduction of the reforms have had their benefit restored in line with the expectations that they formed then;
- premiums within income support are being extended to all claimants receiving urgent cases payments, notably asylum seekers.

I believe that these measures demonstrate the Government's readiness to respond quickly in those areas

where fine tuning is shown to be necessary and that they add to the success and underlying coherence of the reforms.

Dorothy Moran

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when his Department will pay Dorothy Moran her claim for the higher rate of attendance allowance as upheld by the social security commissioners, under their issued decision CA/139/1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The tribunal of social security commissioners decision CA/139/1988 did not award Mrs. Moran the higher rate of attendance allowance, but it found that the independent attendance allowance board had made errors in law in its decision that she satisfied only the medical criteria for the lower rate of the allowance. The board is in the process of reviewing its decision in the light of the commissioners' findings.

National Insurance Contributions

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give for each year since 1979 the total number of prosecutions initiated by the Department of Social Security against employers for failure to pay over national insurance contributions.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Department uses both civil and criminal proceedings to recover national insurance contributions that have not been paid over by employers. The information requested is not available prior to 1983-84. The available information is as follows:

	Civil proceedings	*Criminal proceedings*
1983-84	2,080	1,971
1984-85	1,570	1,326
1985-86	1,259	13
1986-87	1,508	15
1987-88	1,254	10
1988-89	1,522	6

The reduction in criminal proceedings after 1984-85 resulted partly from the repeal of section 152(4) of the Social Security Act 1975.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give for each year since 1979 the total amount of unpaid national insurance contributions.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is as follows:

Year	*Amount* £
1979-80	8,659,576
1980-81	69,687,552
1981-82	30,402,682
1982-83	73,073,351
1983-84	83,505,000
1984-85	77,606,000
1985-86	94,325,000
1986-87	99,794,000
1987-88	94,952,000

Notes:
1. Prior to 1980-81, amounts of unpaid national insurance contributions transferred from Inland Revenue were recorded only when the Department had abandoned hopes of recovery. As a result, a significant total debt accumulated, much of which was eventually abandoned. From 1980-81, it was decided to record as unpaid amounts transferred from Inland Revenue in the year the transfer took place. Outstanding sums transferred in earlier years amounting to £40,764,693 were therefore included in the figure shown for 1980-81.
2. The amount shown for 1981-82 was affected by industrial action.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give for each year since 1979 *(a)* the total number of inquiries from local Department of Social Security offices to the contributions office in Newcastle and *(b)* the number of inquiries returned because they cannot be linked to any record of contributions.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Records show that the number of inquiries to DSS Newcastle central office from all sources, including local offices of the Department, is as follows:

	Number
1981-82	10,846,742
1982-83	24,542,960
1983-84	19,706,292
1984-85	18,384,182
1985-86	30,451,984
1986-87	37,465,803
1987-88	22,887,640
1988-89	23,254,859

No information is available for years before 1981-82.

Records are kept of the number of items which are rejected during computer processing, but records of the number of items rejected because no account has been traced are not maintained separately. For 1988-89 the overall total of rejected items was 721,960.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give for each year since 1979 *(a)* the total number of claimants requesting that contributions are deemed paid under regulation 39 of the Social Security (Contributions) Regulations 1979 and *(b)* the number of such requests granted; and if he will also give these figures broken down according to type of benefit claimed.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No record is kept of the number of claimants who request deeming of contributions under regulation 39 of the Social Security (Contributions) Regulations 1979. Regulation 39 is applied only where the secondary contributor is unable to pay arrears of contributions due. This usually happens when an employer is bankrupt or goes into liquidation. Where claimants to benefit find that their contribution record is deficient and report the fact that they have paid contributions to DSS, investigations are commenced to recover the moneys due. As benefit rights in respect of all such employees are protected records, the number of these reports is not maintained.

Martin Smale

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will now prepare a statement of case with regard to Martin William John Smale of Grosvenor house, Ivybridge; and why no action has taken place since completed forms in respect of an appeal were acknowledged as having been received by the DHSS on 28 June 1988.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A statement of case has been prepared in respect of the war pension entitlement appeal lodged by

Martin William John Smale of Grosvenor house, Ivybridge. Medical branch is currently preparing the opinion of medical division which accompanies the statement of case. Both documents will be despatched to Mr. Smale's representative within the month.

At the time of lodging the appeal, Mr. Smale's representative made representations about the terms of Mr. Smale's discharge from the Navy. War pensions branch made inquiries to the Ministry of Defence and wrote to Mr. Smale's representative about the findings on 20 April. This was in addition to preparing the statement of case and seeking medical advice.

Widows

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what information he has and from what sources, on the proportion of widows, under 45 years, who remarry.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Latest available information indicates that about 90 per cent. of widows aged 44 and under remarry within 10 years. This information was published in Population Trends No. 30 (January 1983), in table 3 of the article by John Haskey of OPCS, entitled "Widowhood, Widowerhood and Remarriage".

Maternity Benefits

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what comparative assessment he has made of the United Kingdom system of maternity benefits as against those of European Community countries.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer my hon. Friend to my hon. Friend's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West (Mrs. Shephard) earlier today.

Appeal Procedures

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what further steps he proposes to take to speed up the social security appeals procedures.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Delays in hearing social security appeals are steadily decreasing due to a reduction in their volume caused largely by the introduction of the social fund and the replacement of supplementary benefit by the simpler scheme of income support.

The administrative procedures involved are undertaken partly by the president of social security and medical appeal tribunals, and partly by the Department of Social Security. However, overall responsibility for appeals processing lies with the president, and the hon. Member may wish to take up the matter directly with him.

Grants and Loans

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of *(a)* budgeting loans, *(b)* crisis loans and *(c)* community care grants were awarded to each of the 15 client groups defined by his Department since the introduction of the social fund.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 9 May 1989]:* The latest provisional estimates based on data from June 1988 to March 1989 are given in the table.

Social fund budgeting loans, crisis loans and community care grants for year 1988-89
Estimated percentages of numbers of awards by client group

Client group	*Budgeting loans*	*Crisis loans*	*Community care grants*
Not known or unallocated	0·5	0·2	0·4
Applicant or partner aged 60 or over			
80 and over, with IS higher pensioner premium	0·3	0·1	4·5
Aged 60-79, disabled with higher pensioner premium	0·6	0·1	3·7
Aged 60-79	3·9	0·9	14·3
Applicant and partner aged under 60			
Lone parents with IS disability premium	0·4	0·2	0·9
Family with IS disability premium	3·6	1·3	3·4
Others with IS disability premium	3·6	1·5	10·0
Lone parents	43·9	19·8	25·2
Unemployed, signing quarterly at UBO, with IS family premium	0·7	0·1	0·7
Unemployed, signing quarterly at UBO, without IS family premium	2·1	0·5	1·5
Unemployed or with training allowance, with IS family premium	16·7	13·8	9·5
Unemployed or with training allowance, without IS family premium	18·8	42·8	16·4
Others, with IS family premium	1·0	1·1	2·0
Others, without IS family premium	3·8	5·9	6·3
Involved in a trade dispute	0·0	0·0	0·0
Not on IS	n/a	11·8	1·1
Total	100·0	100·0	100·0

n/a = Not applicable.
Note: Percentages are based on data from June 1988 to March 1989.

Advertising

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide as much information as possible about his Department's expenditure on commercial television advertising, without breaching commercial confidentiality, over each of the past five years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Department has spent £1,978,831 on commercial television air time since being formed in August 1988. Prior to that expenditure on TV advertising was incurred by the Department of Health and Social Security. Between May 1984 and July 1988 that figure was £1,752,745.

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much advertising air time his Department purchased with each commercial television company in each of the last five years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 15 May 1989]:* I regret that this information is commercially confidential.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 23 May 1989

THE ARTS

Printed Matter (Preservation)

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Minister for the Arts (1) what is his policy for co-ordinating processing arrangements in connection with printed matter and material held in the various museums, archives and libraries which are the responsibility of his Department;

(2) what study he has made of the processing arrangements for printed matter and material under development in the United States of America, Canada and Austria; if any useful lessons have been learned from the techniques employed in these and other countries; and if he intends to introduce changes in British practice.

Mr. Luce: It is for the institutions themselves to ensure that their processing arrangements are efficient and up to date and to keep in touch with developments. The British Library, for example, is among the leaders in the development of bibliographic standards and techniques and works closely with libraries and other institutions both in the United Kingdom and abroad.

Schools (Educational Opportunities)

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on the use made of the educational opportunities afforded to schools by arts bodies.

Mr. Luce: I believe that arts bodies, museums and galleries and public libraries all offer valuable ways of supplementing and supporting the teaching in schools. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science and I are commissioning work on a package of material, illustrating good practice, which will be distributed to all maintained schools early next year. The booklet will provide examples of the range of learning opportunities available in the contemporary arts and in museums and will show how these and similar initiatives in related fields can have wider educational applications.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Manufacturing Output

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the index of manufacturing output for each of the standard regions and Wales for each 12-month period from June 1979 to June 1988, inclusive.

Mr. Major *[holding answer 19 May 1989]:* Information on the standard regions of England is not available; using latest published data, the indices of manufacturing output for Wales are as follows:

Year[1]	*Wales*
1979-80	99·1
1980-81	90·6
1981-82	94·9
1982-83	93·0
1983-84	98·9
1984-85	99·8
1985-86	102·1
1986-87	113·3
1987-88	128·5

1985 = 100, seasonally adjusted.
[1] Averages for the periods 3rd quarter to 2nd quarter.
Source: Welsh Office.

Production Industries

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the index of production industries in each of the standard regions, Scotland and Wales for each 12-month period from June 1979 to June 1988.

Mr. Major *[holding answer 19 May 1989]:* Information on the standard regions of England is not available; using latest published data, the indices of production for Scotland and for Wales are as given below:

Year[1]	*Scotland*	*Wales*
1979-80	99·6	105·9
1980-81	92·4	95·2
1981-82	93·6	97·7
1982-83	93·0	98·5
1983-84	95·4	98·1
1984-85	98·2	95·5
1985-86	99·2	102·5
1986-87	97·9	108·2
1987-88	102·9	119·2

1985 = 100, seasonally adjusted.
[1] Averages for the periods 3rd quarter to 2nd quarter.
Source: Scottish Office, Welsh Office.

VAT

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the revised proposals by the European Economic Community for the revision of value added tax arrangements in the United Kingdom, and, in particular, what items, at present zero-rated, would require to be taxed; and if there are any other proposals linked to the arrangements proposed by the European Economic Community for changes in excise duty.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 22 May 1989]:* The Commission announced its revised thinking on indirect taxation in the single market on 17 May. It now accepts that some zero rates may be retained, but still seeks a measure of tax approximation in the shape of an unspecified minimum standard rate for VAT; a reduced VAT rate band as previously proposed; and, as yet unspecified, minimum rates or rate bands for excise duties. It also suggests quadrupling the tax-paid travellers' allowances and doubling the duty paid allowances on alcohol and tobacco in stages by 1992. Announcement of its technical proposals for fiscal control of exciseable goods has been deferred until August.

The Commission's admission that zero rates are acceptable in principle is clearly a step forward and a vindication of our firm stance, and we welcome it; but we shall obviously need to clarify a number of elements, given our very clear commitments in this area. We also welcome the proposals on travellers' allowances, for which we have

been pressing. Other parts of the Commission's revised thinking, such as its continued desire for tax approximation, are less welcome; our position on that issue is unchanged.

These proposals would require the unanimous assent of all member states.

Tobacco (Taxation)

Mr. Amos: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the level of taxation on tobacco products.

Mr. Lilley: Since 1979, the combined burden of duty and VAT on cigarettes has risen by nearly 50 per cent. in real terms. The level of duty in the United Kingdom remains the highest in the Economic Community, with the exception of Denmark.

Alcohol Taxation

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the annual revenue from alcohol taxation.

Mr. Lilley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Reigate (Mr. Gardiner) on 14 April 1989 at columns *739-40*.

Taxes and Benefits

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) of 27 February, *Official Report*, column *27*, how many people earn less than the respective point at which the tax benefit withdrawal level falls to 34 per cent.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 24 April 1989]:* I have been asked to reply.

Reliable estimates are not available on the basis requested. Estimates of the number of full-time workers in receipt of income-related benefits and facing combined income tax and benefit withdrawal rates in excess of 40 per cent. were given to my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) on 8 May at column *309*. It is very unlikely that there are any full-time workers facing marginal deduction rates between 34 and 40 per cent.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Church-aided Schools

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last reviewed his Department's policy in respect of the funding of capital projects for Church-aided schools.

Mr. Butcher: The COGE (control of grant aided expenditure) working group was set up in 1986 to examine methods of improving the control of grant-aided expenditure for voluntary aided and special agreement schools. My right hon. Friend accepted its recommendations for improved procedures designed to secure more reliable predictions of capital expenditure needs at voluntary aided schools. The group concluded that the Department's priorities for the funding of voluntary school building projects were fair and just. Each year bids for work are carefully scrutinised to ensure that resources are targeted to those projects where needs are greatest.

Nursery Education

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the number of nursery places per 1,000 children in the shire counties; what is the average figure for the metropolitan districts; and what factors account for the difference between the figures.

Mrs. Rumbold: Information on nursery places is not collected centrally. The number of pupils under five attending maintained nursery schools and nursery classes in primary schools in England in January 1988 per 1,000 of estimated population aged three and four in each non-metropolitan county and the overall average for metropolitan districts is given in the following table. A variety of factors may account for the differences between the figures including local policies on the education and care of the under-fives and the priority given by successive Governments to the most disadvantaged areas.

Number of pupils under five in maintained nursery schools and classes per 1,000 children in the population[1]
January 1988

	Pupils
Avon	151
Bedfordshire	300
Berkshire	244
Buckinghamshire	121
Cambridgeshire	118
Cheshire	208
Cleveland	536
Cornwall[2]	141
Cumbria	212
Derbyshire	284
Devon	99
Dorset	60
Durham	387
East Sussex	70
Essex	59
Gloucestershire	0
Hampshire	49
Hereford and Worcester	61
Hertfordshire	297
Humberside	329
Isle of Wight	56
Kent	51
Lancashire	170
Leicestershire	216
Lincolnshire	75
Norfolk	52
North Yorkshire	179
Northamptonshire	176
Northumberland	262
Nottinghamshire	472
Oxfordshire	127
Shropshire	115
Somerset	8
Staffordshire	224
Suffolk	142
Surrey	114
Warwickshire	177
West Sussex	34
Wiltshire	21
Total non-metropolitan counties	167
Total metropolitan districts	374
England	239

[1] The estimated population aged three and four.
[2] Includes Isles of Scilly.

Community Charge

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he will take to ensure that students aged 18 years will not pay the full community charge

during the period between leaving school and entering higher or further education later in the year; and what effect this will have on student loans or grants.

Mr. Jackson: School leavers aged 18 will, after leaving school, remain exempt from community charge for as long as they are the subject of continuing entitlement to child benefit. Once that entitlement has expired, a person aged 18, and between school and higher or further education, will be liable to the full community charge, but will be able to claim rebate on the charge, provided that his income or resources (or, in the case of a couple, their joint income or resources) do not disqualify him from the rebate. Once enrolled full-time in further or higher education, that person will become eligible to a rebate of 80 per cent. of the full charge, and his previous status will be irrelevant to eligibility for grant.

Association of University Teachers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met representatives of the Association of University Teachers; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend has not recently met the AUT, but we are in touch with it from time to time in the same way as we are in touch with a wide variety of bodies in order to keep abreast of developments.

School Discipline

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received in response to the Elton report on school discipline.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend has to date received three letters commenting on the report of the committee of inquiry on discipline in schools, chaired by Lord Elton, which was published on 13 March.

Teachers

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of teachers in *(a)* Surrey and *(b)* England leave the profession within five years.

Mr. Butcher: Information is not available in respect of Surrey, nor nationally in the precise form requested. However it is estimated that amongst teachers trained in England and Wales who enter full-time service in the maintained nursery, primary and secondary sector in England and Wales, 35 per cent. leave again within five years of qualification. About a fifth of these leavers re-enter service within the same five-year period, and many more do so subsequently.

Examination Papers (Security)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what assistance he gives to local education authorities and schools for the secure storage of public examination papers; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is for the examining bodies themselves to establish procedures governing the security of question papers and for individual schools and colleges acting as examination centres to ensure compliance with them.

"Jean Monnet, Father of Europe"

Sir Ian Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what arrangements have been made to distribute the video cassettes of the film entitled "Jean Monnet, Father of Europe" made available by the European Commission, among schools in the United Kingdom; and what proportion of these have been distributed to Hampshire and Havant, respectively.

Mr. Jackson: The European Commission has not supplied copies of the video cassette to my Department for general distribution. A limited number of copies is available from

The London Office of the Commission of the European Communities
Jean Monnet House
London
SW1P 3AT

Cancer Research

78. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he can give an estimate of the current value of research into the causes, prevention and treatment of all forms of cancer; and how much is attributable to the Imperial Cancer Research Fund.

Mr. Jackson: The Medical Research Council, which receives its grant in aid from this Department, is the main agency through which the Government support medical research. I understand that, in 1987-88, the last financial year for which figures are available, the council's expenditure for research into the causes, prevention and treatment of all forms of cancer was £9·9 million. The corresponding figure for the Department of Health was £2·3 million.

In addition, university departments and medical schools support a range of basic research from public funds, some of which will be relevant to cancer research.

Information is not collected centrally on the whole range of organisations funding research into the causes, prevention and treatment of all forms of cancer. I understand from the latest edition of the handbook of the Association of Medical Research Charities that the research expenditure of the Imperial Cancer Research Fund for the year to 30 September 1987 was £41·8 million.

Teacher Exchange Schemes

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, in considering local management schemes, he will ensure that local education authorities retain as an exception from delegation, sufficient funds to meet the overhead costs of teacher exchange schemes.

Mr. Butcher: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 12 December 1988, at column *389*.

ENERGY

Mining Subsidence

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what is the provision in British Coal accounts for 1988-89 for coal mining subsidence damage costs;

(2) if amounts of moneys levied on coal production costs by British Coal to cover coal mining subsidence costs are carried over into the next financial year;

(3) if amounts of moneys levied on coal production costs to cover coal mining subsidence damage costs are included in British Coal's global accounts year by year;

(4) pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Mansfield on 15 May, *Official Report*, column *102*, if he will supply figures showing the financial costs of coal mining subsidence damage, externally to British Coal for each year since 1979, with a regional breakdown by coalfield area;

(5) pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Mansfield on 15 May, *Official Report*, column *102*, if he will supply figures giving a breakdown of coal mining subsidence damage costs broken down into administration, repair, compensation, outside consultancies, and other relevant categories for each year since 1979, with a regional breakdown by coalfield area;

(6) pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Mansfield on 15 May, if he will supply figures showing the amounts of moneys levied on coal production costs by British Coal for each year since 1979, with a regional breakdown by coalfield area;

(7) pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Mansfield on 15 May, *Official Report*, column *102*, if he will supply figures showing the provision in British Coal's accounts for coal mining subsidence damage costs for each year since 1979, with a regional breakdown by coalfield area;

(8) pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Mansfield on 15 May, what is the current total financial amount held by British Coal for the provision of repair, compensation and administration of coal mining subsidence damage.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Administration of the subsidence compensation and repair system, including making the necessary provisions in the accounts, is a matter for British Coal. Details on the level of provisions are given each year in the annual report and accounts, copies of which are in the House of Commons Library. Details of the number and cost of claims settled, broken down by coalfield areas, are provided in British Coal's annual report to the Secretary of State for Energy, the first of which was placed in the House of Commons Library towards the end of last year. I am asking the chairman to write to the hon. Member if any additional information is readily available.

UKAEA (Regulation)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to relax the statutory regulation of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority to enable it to exploit market opportunities more fully.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have no plans to do so at present, although the matter is under discussion with the AEA.

British Coal (Investment)

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has considered the British Coal Corporation's initial response to the report by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on the corporation's investment programme.

Mr. Parkinson: As announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the MMC published its report on the investment programme of British Coal on 25 January. The corporation has now provided its initial response, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

The MMC rightly draws attention to British Coal's impressive achievement over the last five years in reducing costs and restructuring the industry, but identifies a need for a more cohesive and systematic approach towards its business planning, including fuller and more regular analysis of risk scenarios and contingency responses, greater use of modelling, and more local input on business prospects as the market evolves. I share the commission's view that these are priority areas for attention.

The United Kingdom market for coal is becoming increasingly open, with greater price differentials both regionally and as between market sectors. This makes it particularly important to identify, and base business decisions upon, the true profitability of individual coal flows, so that management at all levels can respond promptly and concertedly to the impact of market developments on profitability. Exposure to loss-making business must be reduced if the corporation is to achieve its objective of maximising profitability. I accordingly welcome the corporation's intention to continue to adapt its business planning systems and organisation to meet changing circumstances, and I expect the detailed steps taken under each of the commission's recommendations to be fully set out in the corporation's further responses to the MMC report. My recent appointment of a second deputy chairman should help to strengthen the corporation's efforts in this direction over the coming year.

The commission concluded that British Coal's controls over capital investment are generally good, and expressed confidence that the corporation's investment programme is achieving a rate of return of at least 5 per cent. Since its report was published, the Government have increased the required rate of return to 8 per cent, and I will be considering with British Coal over the next 12 months the implications of this for the test discount rates for individual categories of expenditure.

I do not share the commission's view that the Asfordby project was never viable; as British Coal points out, an independent review in July 1983 suggested that at that stage an acceptable rate of return could be achieved. But I agree that such large projects, particularly where lead times and payback periods are long, tend to be financially more risky than many other types of expenditure, and that this requires to be fully recognised in the criteria for initial investment appraisal. This should minimise the risk of future projects being 'piece-mealed through time'; as regards Asfordby itself, it is important that the substantial balance of the expenditure still uncommitted should show a robust financial return. I also share the commission's view that, in general, conditional approval should not be given in advance of a sound financial prospectus.

I welcome British Coal's acceptance of the need to assess the system effect of large projects involving new capacity; as the commission recognises, however, even relatively small amounts of new capacity can have a significant effect in localised or special quality markets. I also welcome the importance attached by both the commission and British Coal to the spread of six-day operations and other more flexible working patterns.

I share the commission's view that new medium-term financial objectives need to be agreed between the corporation and Government, but I recognise that these

cannot be sensibly finalised ahead of the coming negotiations with National Power and Power Gen on the terms of coal supply beyond January 1990. In the meantime the external financing path to 1991-92 which I announced to the House on 6 February provides a provisional basis for forward planning.

I am anxious that early progress should be made on this agenda. Under the normal arrangements for the follow-up to MMC recommendations arising from section 11 inquiries, British Coal will be reporting to me after one and three years on progress achieved in implementing the recommendations. I shall lay its report before the House next spring.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about the meeting of the European Community's Council of Energy Ministers on 11 May.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I represented my right hon. Friend at the Council.

The Council decided on a programme for improving the efficiency of electricity use and approved recommendations aimed at reducing any distortions of competition between oil refineries resulting from differences in environmental protection standards. It agreed conclusions setting a framework for detailed discussions of Thermie, a proposed new scheme for demonstrating and disseminating new technology in the energy sector, including efficient use of energy; the existing schemes are due to finish at the end of this year. Eleven member states, including the United Kingdom, similarly agreed a framework for discussing improvements in energy price transparency. No conclusions were reached in a discussion on trade between integrated electricity systems, during which I stressed the importance of consumer choice and competition.

Arrangements will be made for the Energy Council to convey its opinion to the Internal Market Council before any decisions are taken on the energy aspects of the Commission's proposals on procurement in the energy, water and transport sectors.

In an inconclusive discussion of the 1975 directive controlling the use of gas for generating electricity, the United Kingdom strongly urged its repeal, particularly on environmental grounds, but also in the interests of competition, exploration and efficiency. The Commission was unwilling to propose repeal before the next review of the Community's energy objectives, but would do so if it were shown that the directive restricted the development of the gas industry.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Personal Pensions

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of the population have taken out personal pensions since the reform of pension arrangements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Since July 1988, around 3 million people have taken out a personal pension: this is equivalent to about 11 per cent. of the working population.

Family Credit

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the latest figures for the take up of family credit as a percentage of total family credit budgets for each of the DSS offices in Glasgow.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Family credit is dealt with centrally, and expenditure estimates are made for Great Britain as a whole. Similarly, information about percentage take up rates can be obtained only for Great Britain, and only retrospectively, from family expenditure survey data.

At the beginning of April 1989, the number of families receiving family credit who were living in the areas covered by each of the local social security offices in Glasgow at the time the award was made was as follows:

	Number
Glasgow (Anniesland)	646
Glasgow (Bridgeton)	143
Glasgow (City)	341
Glasgow (Craigton)	403
Glasgow (Cumbernauld)	600
Glasgow (Laurieston)	367
Glasgow (Maryhill)	336
Glasgow (Parkhead)	575
Glasgow (Partick)	20
Glasgow (Provan)	875
Glasgow (Rutherglen)	658
Glasgow (South Side)	516
Glasgow (Springburn)	275

Transitional Protection

Mr. Ted Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applicants' claims for transitional protection failed, in total and as a percentage of the whole.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: At 18 May 1989, a total of 474,974 applications for housing benefit transitional payments had been received. Of these 446,035 had been assessed and in 247,623 cases (52 per cent. of all applications) no benefit was payable. Of the cases outstanding the majority are awaiting the return of inquiry forms about housing benefit details from local authorities.

Community Care Grants

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how much money is being allocated for the national advertising campaign in respect of social fund community care grants;

(2) if he will place in the Library the national consultancy report on which the forthcoming advertising campaign in respect of social fund community care grants has been based;

(3) how its forthcoming national advertising campaign in respect of social fund community care grants is being conducted; and if he will make a statement;

(4) if he will place in the Library the draft formats of any posters, leaflets, and so on relating to the forthcoming advertising campaign in respect of social fund community care grants;

(5) if he will be making available additional funds to advice agencies during the forthcoming advertising campaign in respect of social fund community care grants;

(6) when the national advertising campaign on social fund community care grants is starting;

(7) if he will make available additional funds by virtue of his power under section 32(6) of the Social Security Act 1986 in order to meet demand generated by the forthcoming advertising campaign in respect of social fund community care grants in excess of Department of Social Security local office budget profiles.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have no plans to mount a national advertising campaign in respect of social fund community care grants and we are not aware of any national consultancy report on this subject.

We are, however, intending to produce additional information material on the social fund, including community care grants, which will be aimed at potential applicants. Leaflet SB16 "A guide to the Social Fund" is also being revised to take account of forthcoming changes to the social fund manual guidance on community care grants. This new information material should be available to the public this summer. The costs will be met from within the Department's budget for leaflets. We do not think that it would be helpful to lay draft copies in the Library, but we shall ensure that copies of the final versions are made available.

Our intention is to provide both potential applicants and advice agencies with better information about the scheme than they have at present. There is therefore no need for additional funds to be made available to advice agencies as a result of this initiative, nor do we intend to increase the community care grants budget allocation for the current year.

Resettlement Units Executive Agency

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to establish the resettlement units executive agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: The resettlement units executive agency will tomorrow become the first part of the Department of Social Security to achieve agency status. Its main aim is to provide help and assistance to a group of people who are among the most disadvantaged. There are two key tasks: first, to manage the existing DSS units efficiently and effectively, examining how to get the best out of the resources available; secondly, to implement the policy set out by the Government in 1985 that the needs of these people, and in particular their prospects for a more settled way of life, could more appropriately be met in accommodation that is locally run and administered by local authorities and by voluntary organisations rather than in large centrally run institutions.

The units provide 1,836 beds, 670 of which are in London, for single homeless people. In addition to providing food and shelter, the units seek to encourage users to adopt a more settled way of life and to help them to find accommodation of their own.

The agency will be a more effective way of carrying out that work. Efficiency targets have been set, but in accordance with the promises made by the Government in 1985 all efficiency savings will be retained by the agency. A more clearly defined timetable for taking forward the replacement programme will be developed. The new concept of a single agency budget, and the flexibilities given within that, will facilitate the work of the chief executive in deploying all the resources available in the best interests of the users of resettlement accommodation.

Copies of the agency framework document and of the initial set of performance targets, have been placed in the Library.

PRIME MINISTER

Vale of Glamorgan

Q17. **Mr. John P. Smith:** To ask the Prime Minister whether she plans to make an official visit to the Vale of Glamorgan.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Romania

Q121. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Prime Minister if she proposes to make an official visit to Romania.

The Prime Minister: No.

Collisions at Sea

Q151. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Prime Minister if Her Majesty's Government have any proposals to minimise the risk of collisions between fishing vessels and submarines.

The Prime Minister: The Royal Navy already takes the greatest care to ensure that the risk of collisions between submarines and fishing vessels or their gear is very low. I understand that the hon. Member recently visited the Clyde with a group of Members from this House and that some suggestions were made for technical improvements to fishing vessels to reduce the risk further. These suggestions will, of course, be considered on their merits.

Rain Forests

Q173. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Prime Minister what information she has received concerning the rate of destruction of the world's forests for each of the past 20 years; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Data on the rate of destruction of the world's forests are not available on an annual basis. The latest internationally comparable figures were published by the Food and Agriculture Organisation in 1982 and relate to tropical forests during the period 1976-1980. Annual deforestation rates for all tropical closed forests by region and worldwide were:

	Tropical closed forest	
	Area lost (Millions of hectares/ year)	*Per cent. of total area*
Africa	1·33	0·61
Asia, Pacific	1·82	0·59
Latin America	4·12	0·61
Total	7·27	0·61

Comparable data for earlier periods are not available. The FAO and the United Nations Environment Programme will make a second forest resources assessment in 1990.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the circumstances in which Her Majesty's Government would order the firing of nuclear weapons.

The Prime Minister: No.

Broadleaved Woodland

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Prime Minister why thre is no system of felling licences to protect Northern Ireland's broadleaved woodlands; if she will extend the United Kingdom system of felling licences to Northern Ireland; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The 1970 White Paper "Forestry in Northern Ireland" stated that the Government felt that there was no longer the need for restrictive legislation on the felling of trees and proposed that the relevant legislation be repealed. This was done in 1982. There are no proposals to reintroduce felling licences in Northern Ireland. The Department of Environment for Northern Ireland has powers to make an order (known as a tree preservation order) to prohibit the cutting down of trees.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 23 May.

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 23 May.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 23 May.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 23 May.

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 23 May.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 23 May.

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 23 May.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had a number of meetings. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings with ministerial colleagues and others later today.

Gulf and Gulf of Oman (Award)

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Prime Minister whether an award is to be made to members of the armed forces and civilians who were engaged in recent operations in the Gulf and the Gulf of Oman.

The Prime Minister: In recognition of service and with special regard to the dangers and hardships which accompanied duty there, for personnel who served in vessels of the Royal Navy and the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, her Majesty the Queen has graciously approved the award of the General Service Medal 1962 with "Gulf" clasp. The award covers operations in the Gulf of Oman between 17 November 1986 and 31 October 1988 and continuing mine counter-measures operations in the Gulf from 1 November 1988 until 28 February 1989. A Command Paper (Cm. 699) which, inter alia, sets out the criteria of eligibility, is being laid before the House today.

WALES

Bovine Somatotropin

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had with the Milk Marketing Board about the use of bovine somatotropin on dairy herds in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: None.

Countryside (Employment)

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has assessed the implications of his agricultural policies on employment in the countryside in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: The level of employment on agricultural holdings in Wales in 1988 was marginally higher than in 1983. Grants and subsidies paid to Welsh farmers in 1988 are provisionally estimated to have amounted to £106 million, significantly contributing both directly and indirectly to rural employment.

Nurses (Regrading)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will make a statement concerning nurses' regrading in Wales;

(2) how many nurses are involved in regrading in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given to the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) on 20 March 1989 by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Welsh Office at column *435*. Some 24,787 posts were involved.

Homelessness

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any proposals to release empty property belonging to his Department for use by homeless people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The Welsh Office currently holds some 150 dwellings. Where practical, they are used for letting or sale to those in need.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on homelessness in Wales.

Mr. Grist: I am concerned as long as there are any families in Wales without permanent homes. That is why the Government have made such a substantial investment in recent years in measures to increase the supply of housing available. We have also encouraged local authorities to make better use of their stock and reduce the number of families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

Singleton Casualty Unit

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to complete the review of the first

year's work of the Singleton casualty unit since it restored a 24-hour service; and when would be an appropriate date to meet a further deputation led by the right hon. Member for Swansea, West to discuss the future development of the unit.

Mr. Grist: The first year of operation of the 24-hour service at the Singleton minor casualty unit will end at the beginning of June. I would therefore expect the review of its work to end by the autumn. If the right hon. Gentleman contacts my office, I shall be happy to arrange a meeting with a deputation led by him.

Mumbles Railway

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which grant systems are available for a project to reopen the Mumbles railway in Swansea; what are their criteria; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Welsh Office officials have not been informed of any firm proposal to reopen the Mumbles railway. Without precise details, we cannot make a statement.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for Wales the number of *(a)* acute beds and *(b)* non-acute beds available since 1979 for each health authority in Wales.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) on 15 May 1989 at column *38*.

Afforestation

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has on the Welsh water authority's attitude towards the proposals to afforest Bara Ceirch and Bwlch-y-Garreg in the Cambrian mountains; and what provisions have been made for the timing of this afforestation.

Mr. Peter Walker: In the light of objections raised by the Welsh water authority to the afforestation proposals for these two sites, the applicants were informed by the Forestry Commission that grant approval would depend on a suitable liming regime being agreed with the water authority. Such an agreement has not so far proved possible.

Cash Limits

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he proposes to make any changes to the cash limits for class XVII, votes 5, 8 and 10 in 1989-90.

Mr. Peter Walker: Yes. Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimates, the cash limit for class XVII, vote 5 will be increased by £100,000, from £273,611,000 to £273,711,000; the cash limit for class XVII, vote 8 will be increased by £6,800,000, from £823,710,000 to £830,510,000; and the cash limit for class XVII, vote 10 will be increased by £47,000, from £1,049,000,000 to £1,049,047,000.

The increases for class XVII, votes 5 and 8 follow the decision to implement the recommendations of the review bodies for nursing staff, midwives, health visitors and professions allied to medicine and on doctors' and dentists' remuneration, as announced by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 16 February 1989. These increases will be charged to the reserve and will not, therefore, add to the planned total of public expenditure.

The increase for class XVII, vote 10 is in respect of an adjustment to a local authority's prior year entitlement to block grant. Expenditure on this vote is not classed as direct public expenditure.

Community Energy Action

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he has taken to ensure that adequate numbers of operatives and trainees are available to undertake community energy action work in draughtproofing and loft insulation in Wales.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 15 May 1989]:* A package of measures was announced on 10 February by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment to help community insulation projects under employment training. Projects which are not suitable for ET might be suitable for providing voluntary work for people who have finished employment training as a means of practising their skills until they find work.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the contribution made to the well-being of elderly people and other vulnerable people in Wales by programmes of community energy action work including draughtproofing and loft insulation in each of the last 10 years; and what targets he intends to set for each of the next five years.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 15 May 1989]:* It is essentially a matter for the placement providers to consider the contribution their projects will make to the well-being of the elderly and other vulnerable people in their areas. The elderly will benefit from recent changes to the homes insulation scheme to improve loft insulation and the installation of thermal insulation under the new home improvement grant arrangements.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects the number of trainees undertaking community energy action work in draughtproofing and loft insulation to equal the number so engaged under the community programme in April 1988.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 15 May 1989]:* It is not possible to compare the numbers on community programme with employment training. Their aims are fundamentally different. Whilst CP provided the long-term unemployed with work experience on projects that benefited the community, ET aims to provide individuals with the skills to meet their own training needs and the needs of the local labour market.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many trainees were employed on community energy action work such as draughtproofing and loft insulation in each district council area in Wales in April 1988 under the community programme; and how many were employed under employment training in April 1989.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 15 May 1989]:* Figures for district council areas are not available. The following refer to Training Agency area office regions:

	Community Programme Nos. of participants April 1988	Employment Training Nos. of trainees April 1989
Wrexham AO (Clwyd, Gwynedd and Powys)	173	130
Cardiff AO (Mid Glamorgan and South Glamorgan)	346	102
Swansea AO (West Glamorgan and Dyfed)	149	62
Newport AO (Gwent)	143	47

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

North-South Campaign

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the representatives who attended the Council of Europe's European public campaign on north-south interdependence and solidarity colloquy, interdependence and cultural development, held in Lisbon, Portugal from 7 to 8 April 1988; and if he will show in his answer *(a)* what country and *(b)* what organisation these representatives were from.

Mr. Chris Patten: From the information available to me, I understand that the colloquy was attended by more than 100 participants and observers from a number of countries. These included the secretary-general of the Council of Europe, the President of the Republic of Portugal, representatives from 17 developing countries and from a variety of international organisations, churches and non-governmental organisations. I have asked the Council of Europe secretariat for a full list which I shall forward to the hon. Member in due course.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Edward Zolofarevsky

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Russians about the continued failure to grant an exit visa to Edward Boris Zolofarevsky of Moscow.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State raised this case with Mr. Shevardnadze in April. We shall continue to press the Soviet authorities until Mr. Zolofarevsky is allowed to leave the USSR.

Abduction

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received during the present Parliament about the abduction and taking abroad by their foreign-born fathers of the children of United Kingdom citizen mothers; what information he has of the numbers of such children and the countries where they are now believed to reside; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office's interest in cases involving the abduction and taking abroad of children stems from the child's British nationality, irrespective of the nationality or place of birth of its parents. Some of the information requested by my hon. Friend is not therefore available—for example, the place of birth of fathers or the nationality of mothers.

The information which can be provided is not immediately available, and a further reply will be given to my hon. Friend in due course.

India

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has received any representations from any organisation about the denial of human rights in the Punjab, India; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Representations received include a report forwarded by the hon. Member, and the matter was the subject of an Adjournment debate in the House on 11 November 1988.

As my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office said on that occasion, the Government have always made clear their views on the need for all Governments to respect human rights. We must, however, recognise that the democratic Government of India faces a violent challenge to the rule of law from ruthless terrorists. The Indian Government none the less announced measures in March aimed at improving the situation in the Punjab.

Public Holidays

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the number of public holidays which now exist in the member states of the Economic Community.

Mr. Waldegrave: The list is as follows:

	Days
Belgium	10
Denmark	10
Federal Republic of Germany	10
France	11
Greece	11
Italy	[1]11
Luxembourg	12
The Netherlands	8
Portugal	13
Republic of Ireland	8
Spain	[2]12

[1] plus 2 falling on Sundays.
[2] plus 1 discretionary day.

US Judiciary Subcommittee (Report)

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek to obtain from the United States Senate for his departmental library the report from the United States judiciary subcommittee on Separation of Powers on Senate Bill 158 of the 97th Congress; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: No. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office library purchases United States Committee reports only if their subject is of interest to the FCO.

Pornography (United States)

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will obtain for his departmental library a copy of the legislation passed by various American States in 1988 to deal with the so-called dial-a-porn problem.

Mr. Eggar: No. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office Library normally obtains only such copies of overseas legislation, other than that of the Commonwealth, as is necessary for day-to-day business.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Private Health Screening

79. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he is taking to control the use of direct mailing advertisements for private health screening services.

Mr. Forth: Direct mail advertisements, including those for private health screening services, are covered by the British code of advertising practice, which is administered by the Advertising Standards Authority.

False statements in advertisements are covered by the provisions of the Trade Descriptions Act 1968. The Control of Misleading Advertisements Regulations 1988 enable the Director General of Fair Trading to seek a court injunction to prevent the publication of a misleading advertisement, where other means of control have failed. I have no plans to introduce any further controls.

Telecommunications

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many premium rate telephone message and one-on-one services were carried by each of the operators licensed under the Telecommunications Act 1984 for each of the last 12 months.

Mr. Atkins: The telecommunications regime does not oblige individual service providers to register such services. These figures are not, therefore, available. The report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on chatline and message services does, however, provide some indications of the size of the premium rate services area. Its report indicated that some 120 service providers were in business, operating about 11,000 lines. A copy of this MMC report is available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many monitoring staff are employed by the independent committee for the supervision of standards of telephone information services; and how many calls they have monitored in each of the past 12 months.

Mr. Atkins: These are matters for the independent committee for the supervision of standards of telephone information services. I understand that the committee is taking an increasingly active role in the monitoring of premium services, but the hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman, Louis Blom-Cooper QC, ICSTIS, 67-69 Whitfield Street, London W1P 5RL to request the details he seeks.

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the documents in which he has given directions to the Director General of Telecommunications under section 47 of the Telecommunications Act 1984; and if he will place them in the Library.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has given no directions under section 47 of the Telecommunications Act 1984.

Regional Assistance (Corby)

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many projects, and at what cost, have been supplied by regional assistance in the Corby development area in each year since 1979-80.

Mr. Atkins: The information is as follows:

Original regional development grant (RDG I)[1][2]

	Payments £ million
1979-80	—
1980-81	0·21
1981-82	2·68
1982-83	6·82
1983-84	6·50
1984-85	2·59
1985-86	1·81
1986-87	3·22
1987-88	2·11
1988-89	1·95

[1] Scheme was not project based
[2] Only payments of over £25,000 included up to 1983-84

Revised regional development grant (RDG II)[1]

	Approvals	Payments	Number of Projects
			£ million
1985-86	10·03	1·5	191
1986-87	24·23	4·7	207
1987-88	23·13	6·4	224
1988-89	15·18	7·3	171

[1] Scheme introduced November 1984 and terminated March 1988

Regional selective assistance

	Offers	Payments	Number of Projects
			£ million
1979-80	—	—	—
1980-81	1·05	0·03	6
1981-82	3·44	0·31	31
1982-83	6·49	1·43	57
1983-84	6·26	4·47	61
1984-85	2·09	3·45	26
1985-86	1·81	2·89	16
1986-87	1·10	1·58	11
1987-88	0·38	0·96	11
1988-89	0·75	0·37	5

Regional enterprise grants[1]

	Offers	Payments	Number of Projects
			£ million
1988-89	0·36	0·01	32

[1] Scheme introduced March 1988

Polyester Silk Plants

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list by year for the last 10 years the

value in current prices of polyester silk plants made in the United Kingdom; and how many companies at the latest date for which he has figures are currently producing this product in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Atkins: The figures are not available.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, further to his reply of 27 April, *Official Report*, columns *614-15*, concerning gross output of finished manufactures and imports of semi-manufactures, intermediate products and basic materials, whether he will provide comparable figures for motor cars; and if he will add figures for 1973 and for exports.

Mr. Alan Clark: The available information is shown in the table:

Motor vehicles[1]

	Gross output £ billion	*Exports £ billion*
1979	7·2	1·5

[1] Activity Heading 3510 of the Standard Industrial Classification (Revised) 1980.
Source: Department of Trade and Industry.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, further to his reply of 27 April, *Official Report*, columns *614-15*, concerning gross output of finished manufactures and imports of semi-manufactures, intermediate products and basic materials, whether he will provide comparable figures for electrical and electronic engineering products; and if he will add figures for 1973 and for exports.

Mr. Alan Clark: The available information is shown in the table:

Electrical and electronic engineering[1]

	Gross output £ billion	*Exports £ billion*
1979	11·5	3·2

[1] Class 34 of the Standard Industrial Classification (Revised) 1980.
Source: Department of Trade and Industry.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, further to his reply of 27 April, *Official Report*, columns *614-15*, concerning gross output of finished manufactures and imports of semi-manufactures, intermediate products and basic materials, whether he will provide comparable figures for mechanical engineering products; and if he will add figures for 1973 and for exports.

Mr. Alan Clark: The available information is shown in the table:

Mechanical engineering[1]

	Gross output £ billion	*Exports £ billion*
1979	18·0	6·1

[1] Class 32 of the Standard Industrial Classification (Revised) 1980.
Source: Department of Trade and Industry.

Inward Investment

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give the total number of inward investment projects in each of the standard regions and Wales for each of the years 1979 to 1988, inclusive.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 19 May 1989]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) on 16 May, at columns *115-16*.

EC Regional Fund

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the precise areas which will now benefit from the EEC regional fund; and if the decision on the boundaries and size of the individual allocations will be made by his Department or by the European Commission.

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the precise areas which will now benefit from the EEC regional fund; and if the decision on the boundaries and size of the individual allocations will be made by his Department or by the European Commission.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 22 May 1989]:* The following areas of the United Kingdom have been designated for eligibility for the European regional development fund (ERDF) with effect from 1 January 1989. Northern Ireland was designated by the Council of the European Communities in its regulation (EEC) 2052/88 of 24 June 1988. The remainder were designated by the Commission, in pursuance of that regulation, on 22 March and 10 May 1989:

Northern Ireland;

The assisted areas of Great Britain, except: Cinderford and Ross-on-Wye, Corby, Kidderminster and Whitby travel-to-work areas, and parts of Birmingham, Bridgend, Cardiff, Coventry and Hinckley, Dudley and Sandwell and Sheffield TTWAs;

The remainder of the Highlands and Islands Development Board and Development Board for Rural Wales areas;

The remainder of Greater Manchester; Nottingham City (UPA); and the following TTWAs: Alnwick and Amble, Burnley, Castleford and Pontefract, Chesterfield, Goole and Selby (part), Mansfield, Pendle, Retford, Stirling (part), Wakefield and Dewsbury, Whitehaven and Worksop.

Both hon. Members' constituencies (Bassetlaw, and Pontefract and Castleford) are thus eligible in their entirety.

The excluded parts of Bridgend, Cardiff and Sheffield TTWAs remain eligible under transitional provisions, at least for the period of ERDF programmes which relate to them. Camarthen and Llandeilo TTWAs are also now eligible in principle; but the terms of the previous ERDF regulation, which still apply transitionally in the case, provide for ERDF grants in non-nationally aided areas only exceptionally. Further areas may become eligible for limited grants under special programmes—Resider (steel areas), Renaval (shipbuilding areas) and others that may be adopted by the Commission.

The allocation of grants is determined by the Commission upon application by the Government. Indicative financial plans for ERDF assistance in the three years 1989-91 are to be contained in Community support framework documents, to be established by the Commission in agreement with the Government by the autumn of 1989 and published in the *Official Journal* of the European Communities.

Europe: Open for Business Campaign

Mr. Gould: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list all outside bodies, consultancies and firms who have received payments for work connected with the Europe: Open for Business campaign; and how they were appointed.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 16 May 1989]:* The following are the main contractors used on the Europe open for business campaign. The list includes all prime contractors (but not their subcontractors) employed by DTI and the Central Office of Information where the work involved had a value of at least £5,000. Firms and others contracted by DTI direct are denoted by an asterisk (*); those providing services via COI are marked thus(†).

ABC Graphics Ltd.†
Atlas Photography Limited†
Avon Exhibitions Bristol Ltd.†
Graham Bannock and Partners*
Birmingham Metropole Hotel†
Ian Blackman†
Vic Brent†
British Airways plc†
British Telecom†
Leo Burnett†
Capital TV Facilities plc†
Carlton Design†
Central Office of Information*
Christian Brann Ltd.†
Clip Exhibitions and Display Systems†
Creative Scene*
Crown Television Productions Ltd.†
D'Arcy Masius Benton and Bowles†
Terence Donovan Production Ltd.†
Dun and Bradstreet Ltd.†
Durrants*
Edit Art Post Production†
FT Business Information†
Griffin Factors Ltd.†
Grundy and Northedge Design*
Peter Hobday Associates Ltd.†
HMSO*†
Hudson Payne and Iddiols†
ITN†
Vincent Kane†
Mike Kaufman (post production) Ltd.†
Leith's Good Food Ltd.†
London Colour Copy Centre*
Look Hear†
MAS Research Marketing†
Peter Matthews Displays Ltd.†
Moore and Mathes*
Multimark Ltd.†
One Point Five Ltd.†
Parkdine Ltd.†
Pearl and Dean Publicity Ltd.*
Peat Marwick McLintock*
Portland Outdoor Advertising Ltd.†
Post Office†
Property Services Agency*
Research Surveys of Great Britain†
Rex Pictures Ltd.†
Adrian Rowbotham Films†
S. D. Systems Ltd.†
Security Pacific Business†
Soundset Ltd.†
Stag Services (Employment) Ltd.†
Sheila Stirrat†
David Suchet†
Teledata Ltd.†
Anna Valley Displays†
Video Arts Ltd.*†
Video Tape Recording Plc†
WCRS Mathews Marcantonio Ltd.†
Richard Whiteley†
Yound & Rubicam Ltd.†

DEFENCE

Computer Language (ADA)

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will issue a complete list of projects using the mandatory computer programme language Ada; if he will give the Ada specific costs involved in those projects; and whether the use of Ada has helped to control software development and maintenance costs.

Mr. Sainsbury: The adoption of Ada as MOD's preferred language for new operational software, together with improvements in the management of those projects which have a large and complex software content, is helping to control the costs of software development and maintenance.

We do not insist inflexibly on the use of Ada. There will be particular circumstances where Ada cannot be used or where an alternative approach might offer better value for money. Information concerning those projects which do use Ada, and the Ada specific costs involved in these projects, is not held centrally. To obtain that information would require a special survey, and would incur disproportionate cost.

Buccaneer

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects agreement on the air staff requirement for the Buccaneer replacement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Initial studies into possible replacement options are currently in hand. It is too early to say when a staff requirement is likely to be agreed.

Nimrod

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) when he expects agreement on the air staff requirement for the Nimrod MR2 replacement;

(2) if he will make a statement on the effects of corrosion on the fatigue lives of the RAF Nimrod maritime reconnaissance fleet.

Mr. Sainsbury: The fatigue life of an airframe is affected by a number of factors, of which corrosion is only one. In the case of the Nimrod MR2, it is too early to assess the effect of corrosion on the aircraft's fatigue life, but we expect the Nimrod to give many more years of useful service. It will be some time before a staff requirement for a replacement aircraft needs to be agreed.

Harrier

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Harrier GR5 squadrons will be based in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: One.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the Harrier GR/7 to enter service with the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In the early 1990s.

RAF Pilots

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the average number of hours flown by RAF fast jet pilots per month.

Mr. Neubert: The information requested is classified.

Low-Flying Aircraft

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the names, dates and locations of all low-flying exercises conducted since 6 November 1987, advance notice of which was given to hon. Members in affected constituencies.

Mr. Neubert: Advance notice of the following exercises has been given to hon. Members whose constituencies were likely to experience unusual low-flying activity:

Exercise Name	*Exercise Dates*	*Exercise Location*
1988		
Key Lift 88	5-13 March	North Yorkshire
Mallet Blow 88/1	14-18 March	Northern England/Borders
Red Lanyard	9-12 April	Many areas with centre on Salisbury Plain
Elder Forest 88	18-21 April	East Anglia/Lincolnshire/ Northern England/Eastern Scotland
Hammer 88/1	10 May	Northern England/Southern Scotland
OSEX 15	16-20 May	Wales
Roaring Lion	20-26 May	Many areas with centre on Northumberland
Central Enterprise	6 June	East Anglia/Lincolnshire/ Northern England/Eastern Scotland
Fast Buzzard	13-24 July	Many areas with centre on Salisbury Plain
Mallet Blow 88/2	25-29 July	Northern England/Borders
Green Lanyard	1-8 October	Many areas with centre on South West Wales
Elder Joust 88[1]	4-6 October	East Anglia/Lincolnshire/ North eastern England/ South eastern Scotland
Hammer 88/2	11 October	East Anglia/Northern England/ Southern Scotland
1989		
Red Lanyard	17-23 February	Many areas with centre on Norfolk
Mallet Blow 89/1	3-7 April	Northern England/Borders
Salty Hammer 89[2]	9 May	Northern England/Southern Scotland
Equipment Trial	25 April-19 May	Northern England/Borders
OSEX 16[3]	10-19 May	Wales

Notes:
[1] Formerly called Exercise Priory.
[2] Formerly called Exercise Hammer.
[3] Including Highland Cardinal work-up exercise.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the locations and dates of covert surveys of low flying by the RAF police since 25 September 1987.

Mr. Neubert: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him in response to his similar question on 16 March 1989, at column *241*. Since 22 February covert monitoring of low-flying activity has additionally been conducted at the following locations over the periods stated:

25-27 April	Liskeard
2-4 May	Gloucester
8-11 May	Blencarn

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what maximum speed and minimum height will be permitted during mock interception manoeuvres and run-ups to simulated targets, for aircraft participating in the OSEX 16 exercise.

Mr. Neubert: The normal height and speed regulations for low flying in the United Kingdom will apply to aircraft participating in OSEX 16.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what use will be made of the 100 ft low-flying area in central Wales during *(a)* Exercise Highland Cardinal and *(b)* Exercise OSEX 16.

Mr. Neubert: None.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-level sorties will be carried out during exercises Highland Cardinal and OSEX 16.

Mr. Neubert: A maximum of 40 low-level sorties daily are planned for Exercise Highland Cardinal and a maximum of 120 daily for Exercise OSEX 16.

Nuclear Tests

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, pursuant to his answer to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South of 16 May, *Official Report*, column *140*, he will outline in the *Official Report* the considerable differences in the situations pertaining to British and United States of America nuclear tests.

Mr. Sainsbury: The temporal and special variations of the potential radiation hazards that may arise from nuclear tests depend, in a complex manner, on various factors, including device type and disposition, topography of the location, meteorological conditions and the test objectives. The doses of radiation received by individuals depend on the position and movement of individuals relative to the hazards, making due allowance for any protective measures taken. It is thus inevitable that the situations pertaining to United Kingdom and United States were considerably different.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to seek support of the Governments of the United States and France to introduce an amendment to the London dumping convention to allow the sea dumping of military radioactive waste arising, including submarine hulls.

Mr Sainsbury *[holding answer 4 May 1989]:* The London dumping convention allows the disposal at sea of low and intermediate-level radioactive waste, in accordance with internationally agreed guidelines and procedures, although a non-binding moratorium has been in place since 1983. The Government have decided not to resume sea-disposal of drummed radioactive waste, including waste of military origin. None the less, the Government intend to keep open this option for large items arising from decommissioning operations, although they have taken no decisions about how redundant nuclear submarines will be disposed of.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Income Support

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many children were in families on income support in 1988-89.

Mr. Needham: The appropriate analysis of the income support caseload has not yet been completed.I shall let the hon. Member have the information as soon as it is available

Hospital Beds

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list for each year since 1979 *(a)* the number of acute beds available and (b) the number of non-acute beds available in each health board; and if he will give the total for each year.

Mr. Needham: The information is set out in the table:

Year	*Northern Ireland*	*Eastern Board*	*Northern Board*	*Southern Board*	*Western Board*
Total acute beds available					
1979	7,173	4,198	1,049	998	928
1980	7,167	4,222	1,056	974	915
1981	7,074	4,199	1,013	963	899
1982[1]	—	—	—	—	—
1983	7,036	4,206	979	973	878
1984	6,973	4,140	1,000	977	856
1985	6,997	4,090	1,051	1,001	855
1986	6,506	3,652	1,023	984	847
1987	6,221	3,520	989	895	817
Total non-acute beds					
1979	9,953	4,532	1,406	1,663	2,352
1980	9,894	4,547	1,417	1,632	2,298
1981	9,942	4,605	1,472	1,622	2,243
1982[1]	—	—	—	—	—
1983	9,943	4,710	1,377	1,633	2,223
1984	9,744	4,485	1,444	1,630	2,185
1985	9,601	4,354	1,457	1,608	2,182
1986	9,457	4,345	1,434	1,572	2,106
1987	9,191	4,208	1,384	1,537	2,062
Total beds available					
1979	17,126	8,730	2,433	2,661	3,280
1980	17,061	8,769	2,473	2,606	3,213
1981	17,016	8,804	2,485	2,585	3,142
1982[1]	—	—	—	—	—
1983	16,979	8,916	2,356	2,606	3,101
1984	16,717	8,625	2,444	2,607	3,041
1985	16,598	8,444	2,508	2,609	3,037
1986	15,963	7,997	2,457	2,556	2,953
1987	15,412	7,728	2,373	2,432	2,879

[1] Not available due to industrial action.
1988 figures are not yet available.

Environmental Protection

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his statement in the First Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, *Official Report*, 15 February, column 16, concerning the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 1988, whether written consents under that order from the Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland) to owners or occupiers of areas of special scientific interest for the carrying out of notifiable operations on such land will specify the exact nature of the consented operation, its limits in time and area, and such other conditions as may be deemed appropriate.

Mr. Needham: Written consents issued to owners or occupiers of land with within areas of special scientific interest under the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 will specify the exact nature of the consented operations and, where relevant, any limits in time and area. Consents will also specify such other conditions as may be deemed appropriate.

There will be no difference in the form of consents issued under this order from those issued under the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985.

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his statement in the First Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, *Official Report*, 15 February, column 16, whether he has now considered further the matter of progress in designing special protection areas in Northern Ireland under EC directive 79/409 on the conservation of wild birds, and if he will make a statement on measures to speed up the process.

Mr. Needham: The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland has re-examined the procedures for the designation of special protection areas under the terms of EC directive 79/409 on the conservation of wild birds. While priority is being given to the declaration of areas of special scientific interest under the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, where ASSIs are also potential SPAs, the Department will proceed towards SPA designation as soon as is practicable after such ASSI declarations have been confirmed.

It is expected that a small number of SPAs will be designated under the above arrangements during the next two years.

Social Security Payments

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what figures are available to indicate the distribution of single payments and caseloads at social security offices during the period 16 December 1986 to 28 July 1987.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 16 May 1989]:* The information is set out in the table.

Single payments and supplementary benefit caseloads for the period 18 December 1986 to 28 July 1987

Social Security office	*Single payments*		*Supplementary benefit caseloads at*[1]		
	Number	*£*	*10 February 1987*	*8 May 1987*	*28 July 1987*
Andersonstown	7,504	899,549·64	7,775	7,600	7,754
Antrim	9,163	419,947·62	5,597	5,448	5,487
Armagh	3,426	307,000·02	4,941	4,814	5,078
Ballymena	3,984	356,515·64	6,263	5,971	6,547
Ballymoney	3,635	255,552·61	4,363	4,552	4,358
Ballynahinch	476	34,043·00	1,418	1,463	1,502
Banbridge	1,961	145,245·38	3,378	3,268	3,358
Bangor	2,279	155,179·84	4,520	4,519	4,848
Carrickfergus	2,520	152,719·20	3,075	3,021	3,078
Coleraine	5,982	409,362·68	6,220	5,973	6,066

Social Security office	Single payments Number	£	Supplementary benefit caseloads at[1] 10 February 1987	8 May 1987	28 July 1987
Cookstown	2,260	250,337·70	3,559	3,444	3,586
Corporation Street	9,486	1,051,663·53	12,359	12,159	12,596
Downpatrick	3,086	155,807·16	2,300	2,458	2,797
Dungannon	4,821	386,850·35	5,965	5,873	6,137
Enniskillen	2,895	261,338·69	8,266	8,290	8,490
Falls	9,884	727,109·01	9,485	9,034	9,390
Holywood Road	6,928	453,436·27	9,018	8,783	9,286
Kilkeel	676	51,275·48	1,437	1,440	1,480
Knockbreda	2,760	225,072·52	6,357	6,223	6,657
Larne	3,052	151,624·30	2,888	2,799	2,965
Limavady	2,084	127,109·04	3,202	3,136	3,227
Lisburn	7,108	728,054·03	6,540	6,628	6,694
Londonderry	11,470	1,118,808·56	14,786	14,818	15,901
Lurgan	5,854	856,702·31	5,806	5,688	6,100
Magherafelt	3,027	425,225·75	5,080	5,175	5,289
Newcastle	1,339	67,989·42	1,888	1,861	1,941
Newry	5,010	669,516·30	9,600	9,457	9,748
Newtownabbey	4,840	247,413·38	5,774	5,415	5,941
Newtownards	1,702	123,481·10	3,840	3,986	3,910
Omagh	3,783	378,413·86	5,577	5,530	6,039
Portadown	2,268	194,414·67	3,837	3,728	3,992
Shaftesbury Squar	6,465	565,737·83	6,662	6,896	8,152
Shankill	4,220	365,981·69	5,367	5,209	5,328
Strabane	5,193	381,830·67	6,045	6,121	6,039
Total	151,141	13,100,309·25	193,183	190,780	199,761

[1] During the period in question there were three counts of the caseload as shown.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information is available to indicate the total numbers in receipt of *(a)* mobility allowance *(b)* attendance allowance and *(c)* invalid care allowance and to indicate the total number of claims received for each allowance in each of the past five years indicating the number of claims from each year which were successful.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 16 May 1989]:* The total numbers of people in Northern Ireland in receipt of mobility allowance, attendance allowance and invalid care allowance at the latest date for which information is available are 13,530, 29,394 and 6,174 respectively. The total numbers of claims received for each allowance in each of the last five years and the total numbers of claims allowed in those years are as follows:

Year	Claims received	Claims allowed
	Mobility Allowance	
1984	4,544	2,055
1985	5,017	2,330
1986	5,427	2,959
1987	6,382	2,838
1988	6,278	2,866
	Attendance Allowance	
1984	12,043	8,697
1985	12,285	8,186
1986	12,409	9,078
1987	13,951	8,651
1988	15,709	10,852
	Invalid Care	
1984	208	183
1985	391	156
1986	5,072	1,264
1987	2,995	3,528
1988	1,873	1,849

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information is available to indicate the age profile of those receiving *(a)* mobility allowance *(b)* attendance allowance and *(c)* invalidity care allowance.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 16 May 1989]:* The latest available information is as follows:

(a) Mobility Allowance

Age at 31 December 1988	Number
Under 5	8
5– 9	365
10–14	351
15–19	472
20–24	493
25–29	465
30–34	528
35–39	580
40–44	757
45–49	942
50–54	1,232
55–59	1,760
60–64	2,354
65+	2,615
Total	12,922

(b) Attendance Allowance

Age at 29 December 1988	Number
2-4	577
5-9	1,246
10-14	1,032
15	190
16-19	776
20-24	910
25-29	812
30-34	695
35-39	716
40-44	694
45-49	798
50-54	901
55-59	1,168
60-64	1,499
65-69	2,147
70-74	2,524
75-79	3,444
80-84	3,828
85-89	3,039
90-94	1,663

Age at 29 December 1988	Number
95+	735
Total	29,394

(c) Invalid Care Allowance

Age at 23 February 1989	Number
16-20	46
21-25	162
26-30	427
31-35	628
36-40	805
41-45	1,061
46-50	969
51-55	890
56-60	881
61-65	269
66-70	24
70+	12
Total	6,174

Attendance Allowance Board

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information is available to indicate the number of adjudication officer decisions reviewed by the Attendance Allowance Board in each of the past five years, the number of the board's own decisions which were further reviewed and the outcome of such reviews.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 17 May 1989]:* The numbers of decisions reviewed by the Attendance Allowance Board in each of the last five years and the outcomes of the reviews are as follows:

Year	Decisions Reviewed	Claims allowed on Review
1984	1,663	899
1985	1,665	866
1986	2,079	830
1987	2,982	1,219
1988	3,055	1,487

The number of appeals on a point of law heard by the social security commissioner against decisions of the Attendance Allowance Board in each of the last five years and the outcomes of such appeals are as follows:

Year	Appeals Heard	Appeals Allowed
1984	6	3
1985	16	5
1986	22	7
1987	33	8
1988	71	17

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information is available to indicate the number of adjudication officer decisions in respect of mobility allowance which were reviewed on appeal by the medical board in each of the past four years, the outcome of such reviews, the number of such decisions further appealed to the medical appeal tribunal and the outcome of such appeals.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 17 May 1989]:* The numbers of appeals heard by medical boards and medical appeal tribunals in respect of claims to mobility allowance in Northern Ireland in each of the last four years and the outcome of such appeals are as follows:

Year	Appeals heard	Appeals allowed
Appeals to medical boards		
1985	733	188
1986	822	186
1987	697	135
1988	987	210
Appeals to medical appeal tribunals		
1985	226	83
1986	273	75
1987	277	97
1988	292	117

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary have lost their lives in the course of their duty in Northern Ireland during each of the past five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 18 May 1989]:* The information is as follows:

Year	Number of Officers
1984	10
1985	23
1986	15
1987	17
1988	7

These figures include members of the RUC and RUC Reserve.

Medical Cards

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many medical cards were issued in Northern Ireland in each of the five weeks beginning 16 April, 23 April and 30 April, 7 May and 14 May and the five corresponding weeks in 1988.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 22 May 1989]:* The information is as follows:

Week Commencing	Number of Medical Cards issued 1989	1988
16 April	1,372	527
23 April	785	516
30 April	845	555
7 May	1,789	840
14 May[1]	1,148	786

[1] Up to and including 18 May.

Vehicles

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many vehicles and at what value

were purchased by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* other public sector agencies for which he is responsible, in 1988; and how many of these vehicles were British made within the definition of British as set out by the Department of Trade and Industry in its arrangement on content with the European Community.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 17 April 1989]:* The information available is as follows:

Department	*Vehicles purchased by department*		*Vehicles purchased by public sector agencies*		*Number of British made vehicles*[1]
	Number	*Value*[2]	*Number*	*Value*[2]	
DANI	74	918,705	—	—	52
DOE	134	1,691,242	135	2,992,866	237
DENI[3]	1	11,000	134	2,626,734	—
DHSS[4]	183	2,067,550	—	—	118
DED	3	22,902	213	2,120,527	161

[1] This list is based on the definition employed by the Department of Trade and Industry for statistical purposes, under which a vehicle is classified as United Kingdom—produced if the United Kingdom context exceeds 50 per cent. of the ex-works value.
[2] Includes VAT.
[3] Department of Education was unable to establish number of British made vehicles.
[4] Department of Health and Social Services could provide only a total figure for both Departments and the public sector.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fishing Industry

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his assessment of the current financial position of the fishing industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: After a series of good years the United Kingdom fishing industry is on a strong financial footing. Although landings so far this year are down compared with 1988, their average value remains high. And fuel prices, a major cost item for most fishermen, have fallen substantially over the past five years.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the level of third country fish imports since the beginning of the current year; and what assessment he has made of possible breaches of the reference pricing system.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Imports of fresh, chilled and frozen fish from countries outside the European Community in the first three months of 1989 were 47,552 tonnes at a value of £59 million. A small number of consignments have been below the reference price but none has been significant enough to trigger Community action .

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what will be the areas of priority in the fishing industry which he will seek to raise at the Council of Ministers on 21 June; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: There are a number of issues of concern to the industry which I expect to be discussed by the Council and I will take a view on what else I need to raise when I see the draft agenda.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on tonnage and horsepower in the United Kingdom fishing fleet and on how these relate to the targets accepted by Her Majesty's Government under the multi-annual guidance programme.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The size of the United Kingdom fishing fleet, as at 1 January 1989, was 174,774 gross registered tonnage (GRT) and 890,995 kilowatts (kw) (1,211,753 horsepower). Under our multi-annual guidance programme the United Kingdom is obliged to reduce fleet capacity to 161,231 GRT and 831,708 kw by the end of this year, to 150,336 GRT and 785,340 kw by the end of 1990, and to 141,620 GRT and 748,245 kw by the end of the programme on 31 December 1991.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will reconsider the decision to grant an extension of registration and licensing facilities to the flags-of-convenience vessels currently under legal debate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: There has been no decision to grant an extension of registration to any flag-of-convenience vessels. With effect from 1 April 1989 any vessels which failed to satisfy the new registration rules for fishing vessels under part II of the Merchant Shipping Act 1988 have been removed from the register, and cannot lawfully fish against United Kingdom quotas.

Provided they do not fish in the meantime, the owners of those vessels party to the legal challenge to the new registration rules (in the Factortame case) have until 1 October 1989 to transfer their licences upon the sale of the vessels to genuine British owners who meet the new registration rules.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further consideration he has given to the introduction of a scheme of decommissioning of the fishing fleet under European Community regulation No. 4028/86.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on Monday 22 May to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), at column *372*.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on licensing policy for the United Kingdom fishing fleet.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Access to United Kingdom quota species continues to be governed by the restrictive licensing scheme first introduced in 1984 and subsequently amended on several occasions. Fisheries Departments are considering whether further amendments might be

desirable in the light of the wide-ranging and diverse responses from the fishing industry to our consultation exercise last year.

Brogdale Experimental Horticulture Station

Mr. Straw: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food why the Brogdale experimental horticulture station is to be closed; and what arrangements will be made for the care and maintenance of the national fruit variety collection there.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The proposal to close Brogdale experimental horticulture station, which was announced to the House on 21 March, stems from the withdrawal of public funding from near market R and D. Final decisions on the closure of Brogdale will not be taken until consultations with industry have been concluded. We intend however to ensure that the national fruit collection is preserved, and we are considering what arrangements should be made in the event that the station is closed.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the total cost to public funds of *(a)* the Brogdale experimental horticulture station and *(b)* the national fruit variety collection there, for each of the years 1979 to date in (i) current prices and (ii) constant prices.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information relating to the gross full economic cost of Brogdale experimental husbandry station from 1981-82 is as follows:

Gross full economic cost (£ thousands)

Year	*(a) current prices*	*(b) constant prices (1987-88 base)*
1981-82	502	672
1982-83	656	820
1983-84	739	882
1984-85	785	892
1985-86	917	984
1986-87	876	911
1987-88	881	881

Important elements of the overall cost of maintaining the national fruit collection are undertaken in common with support to other work undertaken at Brogdale EHS. Separate NFC costings have not been collected throughout the period in question, but on the basis of manpower required to maintain the NFC it is estimated that, as part of Brogdale EHS, the NFC accounted for some 7 per cent. of Brogdale's total costs in 1987-88, equivalent to some £60,000. It is not thought likely that this relative cost has been significantly different in earlier years.

Cash Limits

Mr. Gill: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether it is intended to change the cash and running cost limits on any Department vote for which he has responsibility.

Mr. MacGregor: Yes. Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary revised Estimate the cash limit for class IV, vote 2, (Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce; administration) will be reduced by £1,284,000 from £39,509,000 to £38,225,000, and that for class IV, vote 5 (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food; departmental research, advisory services and administration) will be reduced by £72,000 from £257,014,000 to £256,942,000. The running cost limit for class IV, vote 2 will also be reduced by £76,000 from £19,957,000 to £19,881,000 and that for class IV, vote 5 will be reduced by £72,000 from £262,458,000 to £262,386,000.

The reductions in the running cost limits on votes 2 and 5 reflect the transfer of provision to the Scottish Office administration vote (class XVI, vote 21) for processing data from England and Wales in connection with the beef special premium scheme. The remainder of the reduction to the cash limit of £1,208,000 on vote 2 arises on IBAP's agency payments to DANI in respect of the beef variable premium scheme which has ended.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will place in the Library copies of the letters he received on 22 June 1988 and 15 November 1988 from Sir Richard Southwood which contained the interim recommendations of his committee and Government action on bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 22 May 1989]:* Yes, I have arranged for copies of the letters to be placed in the Library of the House today.

Meat Products (Animal Brains)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether any statutory restrictions exist on the use of animal brains in the manufacture of human foodstuffs.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 22 May 1989]:* The Meat Products and Spreadable Fish Products Regulations 1984 prohibit the use of brains in the manufacture of uncooked meat products. I shall shortly be issuing proposals for legislation which would prohibit the sale of baby foods containing brains and other specified offal. I understand through trade sources that brains are not used in baby foods.

Pollution

Mr. Speller: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will now ban the discharge into waters off the north Devon coast of untreated sewage and chemical waste.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The discharge of waste by pipeline is regulated by water authorities. Water authorities' own discharges of sewage by pipeline are regulated by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution on behalf of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

My Ministry licenses deposits from vessels. There are no licences for deposit off the north Devon coast of chemical waste. Most of the sewage sludge which is licensed has been treated. The disposal site is periodically monitored and no significant adverse effects have been identified.

HEALTH

NHS Reform

8. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what he estimates will be the average capital charge to self-governing hospital trusts in London.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Self-governing trusts will not pay capital charges, but they will be given a financial regime similar to the capital charging system for district managed hospitals. The precise details are still being finalised and I expect to give further details within the next few weeks.

12. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the number and location of those hospitals considering self-governing status.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Regional health authorities have been asked to send expressions of interest to the Department by 31 May. But I understand that well over 100 expressions of interest have been received throughout the country.

13. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received on the White Paper proposals for medical audit.

36. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received on the proposals for medical audit outlined in the White Paper "Working for Patients".

60. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the proposals in the White Paper "Working for Patients" on medical audit.

Mr. Mellor: Our proposals on medical audit have been widely welcomed by doctors. The White Paper made it clear that there would be discussions with the medical profession and first meetings have already been held in a constructive manner.

23. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether National Health Service self-governing hospitals will have to retain emergency services.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Yes, unless it would be better for these services to be provided elsewhere.

24. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he has taken to ensure that copies of the White Paper "Working for Patients" are available to doctors.

Mr. Mellor: Copies of "Working for Patients" were sent to health authorities and family practitioner committees to explain the proposals to doctors in their management role. Copies of the three working papers directly relevant to the family doctor service were sent to all GPs. Individual copies of the White Paper are available from Her Majesty's Stationery Office, price £8·80, or by order through public libraries.

29. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many representations he has received from members of the public about his White Paper "Working for Patients".

Mr. Mellor: In excess of 4,000 letters.

31. **Mr. Day:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received on the proposals to allow hospitals to become self governing National Health Service hospitals.

47. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received on his proposals to allow hospitals to become self governing.

Mr. Mellor: We have received a large number of letters from members of the public and many responses from representational bodies on the White Paper proposals including those relating to enabling hospitals to become self governing within the NHS. Many people find the proposals attractive.

32. **Mr. Janman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the consequences of allowing general practitioners' practices to hold their own budgets.

53. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how the proposals to allow general practitioners' practices to hold their own budgets will affect patient care.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Practice budgets will offer general medical practitioners new opportunities to improve the quality and standard of service to their patients. GPs with budgets will have control over large sums of taxpayers' money which they will be able to use as they judge best for the provision of care to their patients. This means that GPs will, for the first time, be able to back their referral decisions for those conditions covered by the budget with taxpayers' money to provide the chosen hospital with finance for the treatment. As a result hospitals will be encouraged to be more responsive to the needs of individual GPs and their patients, and GPs in the practice budget scheme will have a much greater role than at present in influencing the provision of hospital services. This can only be of benefit to patients and to the NHS as a whole.

33. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received from professional bodies and trades unions concerning the review of the National Health Service.

Mr. Mellor: A good many expressing many different views.

34. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what will be the effect on doctors who choose to operate a practice budget, as proposed in the White Paper "Working for Patients" of an overspend in their budget.

Mr. Mellor: There is of course no question of patients not receiving the treatment they need as a result of a budget overspend. Larger practices which volunteer to hold a practice budget will be allowed to overspend by up to 5 per cent. a year on the basis that a corresponding reduction will be made the following year. Where the overspend is due to the changed cirumstances of a practice such as an increase in the number of patients or in their relative need for services, the practice may ask for a review of its budget. If a practice overspends by more than 5 per cent., or persistently overspends at a lower level, the family practitioner committee will initiate a thorough audit. An overspend greater than 5 per cent. for two years in succession may lead to the practice losing the right to hold its own budget.

35. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of Health how will patients be affected by the proposals in the White Paper "Working for Patients".

55. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the consequences for patient care of the proposals in the White Paper "Working for Patients."

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Our proposals will produce a better quality of care for all NHS patients, including elderly and chronically sick people. We intend to bring all services up to the standard of the very best and to make certain that taxpayers' money is used to best effect from the patients' point of view. The proposals reflect our strong commitment to the principles on which the NHS was founded and will ensure that it is more than ready to face the rapidly changing and rising demands upon it as medical science progresses and the average age of the population rises.

37. **Mr. Ground:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether under the proposals in the White Paper, "Working for Patients", a patient could go without necessary drugs if a general practitioner overspends on his or her drug budget.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No. As a result of our proposals no patient could ever go without necessary drugs in any circumstances. Indicative prescribing budgets for GPs will be set at sensible and realistic levels and in discussion with each practice to reflect the needs for drugs of patients in that practice. While general medical practitioners will be expected to aim to contain their prescribing within their indicative budgets, we fully accept that the legitimate demand for drugs may not follow a consistent pattern at practice level and that some practices may exceed their indicative budgets with good reason. There will be no question of any doctor ever being prevented from prescribing necessary medicine for any patient, whether or not he or she has overspent or will overspend his indicative budget.

39. **Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the consequences of the new general practitioners' contract for rural practices.

50. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how rural practices will be affected by the new general practitioners' contract.

51. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement of the future of general practitioners' practices in rural areas.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: As I announced to the House on 5 May, we have now reached agreement with the general medical services committee's negotiators on all the major outstanding issues on the new contract for GPs. We have modified our proposals in several ways which will be welcomed by GPs serving rural areas. We have agreed to retain the present rural practice payments scheme pending its revision by the Central Advisory Committee on Rural Practice Payments. We have included home visits in the hours of availability to patients required of GPs, although in consequence we have raised the number of hours to 26 per week. We have agreed that the requirement for GPs to be available over five days a week may be reduced to four days where the GP carries out other health-related activity in the public service (for example, service in a community hospital).

We have also agreed that ad hoc minor surgical operations may be aggregated for the purpose of claiming entitlement to the new minor surgery sessional payments. Many GPs serving rural areas will benefit from retention of seniority payments (though reduced in value) and from the extension of the higher night visit fee to rotas of up to 10 GPs. Retention of partnership average list size for calculating entitlement to basic practice allowance, and the lowering of the threshold for full basic practice allowance to 1,200 patients rather than 1,500 as previously proposed, will also benefit GPs in rural areas.

The general medical services committee has agreed to put the agreement to the annual conference of local medical committee representatives in June on the basis recommended by its negotiators.

45. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received on the proposals affecting family practitioner committees in the White Paper, "Working for Patients".

Mr. Mellor: We have received responses to the White Paper "Working for Patients" from a large number of organisations and individuals. Many of these have included comments on the proposals affecting family practitioner committees.

46. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received on allowing district health authorities to purchase health care from hospitals.

57. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations he has received on his proposals to allow health authorities to purchase health care from hospitals.

Mr. Mellor: We have received a large number of representations on the White Paper proposals, from statutory, voluntary and professional bodies and from individuals including right hon. and hon. Members. Many have welcomed the proposed relationship between health authorities and general practitioner practice budget holders on the one hand and hospitals as the providers of services on the other since this will allow contracts to specify services, quality of standards and levels of agreed funding, enabling money to follow patient choice. We will take careful note of these comments in taking forward our plans for implementing our policies.

49. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will commission any pilot studies of general practitioner practices operating practice budgets similar to those proposed in the White Paper "Working for Patients".

Mr. Mellor: Eligibility for practice budgets will be confined, at least initially, to practices or groups of practices with a registered list of at least 11,000 patients to provide sufficient budgetary flexibility. Practices will also need to be able to demonstrate the ability to manage budgets including having adequate administrative support and IT and information systems. On this basis we see no need for separate pilot studies of practice budgets but we will of course keep the system under review once it has started to operate in April 1991 and make any improvements which are necessary in the light of experience.

61. **Mr. Robert Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many representations he has received to date in response to his proposals for National Health Service reforms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) earlier today.

65. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what expressions of interest he has received from hospitals in Shropshire for the granting of National Health Service hospital trust status.

Mr. Mellor: None. However, I understand that the West Midlands regional health authority has received a number of expressions of interest in self government from hospitals in the region; these will be sent to the Department by 31 May.

66. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how the proposed indicative drugs budgets for general practitioners will affect patient care.

Mr. Mellor: Indicative prescribing budgets will improve patient care. They will provide a further incentive to general practitioners to examine their prescribing patterns critically to ensure that they prescribe in the most effective way possible. This includes prescribing only when and for as long as necessary. More effective prescribing is better for patients. All patients will always get the drugs they need.

69. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the progress made on his proposals to cash limit general practitioners' budgets.

Mr. Mellor: We are making good progress in developing details plans for implementing practice budgets for GPs from 1 April 1991. These budgets will be available to GPs who fulfil the eligibility criteria and choose to opt for them in view of the new freedoms of choice they will confer on the practice.

74. **Mr. Batiste:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether National Health Service self governing hospitals will have to retain core services.

Mr. Mellor: Yes, unless it would be better for these services to be provided elsewhere.

75. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospitals have applied for self-budgeting status in accordance with the provisions in the White Paper "Working for Patients".

76. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many requests for information he has received from National Health Service hospitals interested in achieving self governing status.

Mr. Mellor: Regional health authorities are currently considering expressions of interest in individual hospitals becoming self governing. They have been asked to send the expressions of interest to the Department, together with their comments, by 31 May.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what he estimates to be the optimum size of practice for a general practitioner in an average urban area; and if he will make a statement.

38. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the effects of the increased capitation element in the general practitioners' contract on doctor-patient relationships.

43. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what detailed assessment he has made of the effect of the new general practitioners' contract on list sizes.

73. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what detailed assessment he has made of the implications of the new general practitioners' contract for doctors' list sizes.

Mr. Mellor: We believe that the increase to 60 per cent. of the proportion of general practitioners' income represented by capitation payments will stimulate greater competition among general practitioners and make services more responsive to patients' needs.

Our proposals for making more information available to patients and making it easier to change doctors will encourage patients to choose the general practitioner who provides the best service. We expect therefore that general practitioners who provide a wide range of high-quality services will gain patients, and those who do not will have to improve their services in order to maintain income. List sizes will, however, settle at levels consistent with the provision and maintenance of high-quality services, because patients will not join or remain on the list of a general practitioner whose services are below standard. We do not consider that there is an optimum list size, because the quality of services depends on a range of factors (for example, the size and skills of the practice team) of which list size is only one.

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what detailed assessment he has made of the implication of the new general practitioners' contract for women doctors.

44. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received on the proposed contract for general practitioners.

54. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to attract more women doctors into general practice.

56. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what further representations he has received from the British Medical Association relating to the general practitioners' contract.

Mr. Mellor: I refer my hon. Friends and the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friends the Members for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed) and Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) earlier today.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate the Government have made of the effects of the proposed changes in the remuneration of general practitioners on the gross income of those who do not opt for their own budgets; and what is the intended effect of the new arrangements in terms of *(a)* the number of patients per doctor and *(b)* the number of staff employed by doctors, and their remuneration.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friends the Members for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway), for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown),

for Slough (Mr. Watts) and for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) today. Under the proposals for GP practice budgets set out in the White Paper "Working for Patients" and working paper 3, practices that opt to become budget holders may invest any savings on their annual budget in improving the services they offer to patients. The Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration will continue, as now, to recommend the average net income and indirectly reimbursed expenses of all GPs, whether budget holders or not. Other expenses incurred by GPs are reimbursed directly.

We expect the number of staff employed by GPs to increase as a result of our intention to invest more in practice teams, and to remove the present restraints on their number and the range of qualifying duties. By enabling FPCs to target funds on areas of greatest need, the deployment of practice team staff will become more cost effective.

Halton General Hospital

14. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to visit Halton general hospital to discuss the future of the hospital.

Mr. Freeman: I look forward to a visit when convenient.

Ministers make special efforts to visit as many hospitals as possible.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the target number of patients to be treated in Halton district general hospital in 1988-89; and what was the actual outcome in that year.

Mr. Freeman: We do not hold this information centrally. My hon. Friend may care to contact the chairman of the Halton district health authority.

Competitive Tendering

15. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many non-medical services provided within National Health Service hospitals are now subject to competitive tendering.

Mr. Freeman: I am aware of at least 20 different non-medical services which health authorities have subjected to competitive tendering, most frequently as the result of local initiatives.

NHS Funding

16. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received regarding the level of funding of the National Health Service.

Mr. Freeman: The level of funding for the NHS is a matter of considerable interest, often raised in correspondence and at meetings and visits; since 1979 expenditure has increased by some 40 per cent. in real terms and we are now spending more on the National Health Service than ever before.

62. **Mr. McCrindle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health to what extent the additional funds allocated to the National Health Service this year are to be used to repay deficits accumulated in earlier years.

Mr. Freeman: Within the additional resources allocated to the National Health Service, combined with continued improvements in efficiency, including planned rationalisations of service, authorities are expected to plan to bring income and expenditure into balance. Where a region has funded excess spending by districts in earlier years the repayment of such funding, including use of the additional resources made available this year, is a matter for agreement between the region and districts concerned.

Medical Control Agency

17. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health to what extent the pharmaceutical industry contributes to the financing of the Medical Control Agency.

Mr. Mellor: From 1 April 1989 the full cost of the Medicines Control Agency work is to be funded by the pharmaceutical industry, save for the costs of the work of the British Pharmacopoeia Commission whose staff are provided by the agency, the cost of NHS inspection work and certain other minor matters. Payment will be made through licence and inspection fees.

Nurses

18. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many appeal cases concerning nurses' gradings have been *(a)* lodged, *(b)* upheld and *(c)* refused since 1 April 1988, by authority.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) earlier today.

68. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on nursing staff levels in Oxfordshire.

Mr. Mellor: As at 31 March 1989 the Oxfordshire DHA had 4,232.1 "worked whole time equivalent" nursing and midwifery staff. Recruitment of trained nursing staff is satisfactory in most specialties and an additional £200,000 has been made available by the district to the John Radcliffe hospital to deploy additional staff on medical and surgical wards. A new nurse training scheme, due to start in October, has attracted a large number of applicants.

Bassetlaw Hospital

19. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many letters he has had from members of the public or local organisations in Bassetlaw supporting the application from the Bassetlaw health authority to turn the Bassetlaw hospital, Worksop into a self governing trust.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: None, but only one against. If an application is made for Bassetlaw health authority to become self governing I will look to the Trent regional health authority to seek the views of all those with an interest.

Human Placenta

20. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his policy on the sale of human placenta by National Health Service hospitals.

Mr. Freeman: There is a long-standing arrangement under which health authorities can make available

placenta to a commercial organisation. I understand this is used for therapeutic purposes (for example the manufacture of albumen and gamma globulin) and that a small handling charge is paid to participating health authorities to cover storage costs.

Family Practitioner Committees

21. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the intended effects of the changes in composition of the family practitioner committees proposed in the White Paper "Working for Patients".

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Family practitioner committees will have a greatly enhanced management role in future as a result of the implementation of the proposals in the two White Papers: "Promoting Better Health" and "Working for Patients". I therefore intend to create committees more suited to taking the necessary decisions and managing the contracts of the doctors, dentists, opticians and pharmacists in contract with the NHS in their area. I believe that FPCs should play a significant role in protecting and raising the standards of primary health care for patients.

British Medical Association

22. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met representatives of the British Medical Association; and what matters were discussed.

28. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met the chairman of the British Medical Association; and what was discussed.

Mr. Mellor: I refer my hon. Friends to my right hon. and learned Friend's reply earlier today to my hon. Friends the Members for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) and Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind).

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he next expects to meet the British Medical Association; and what he expects to discuss.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I understand from newspaper reports that the BMA wishes to meet me again to discuss the White Paper on NHS reforms. I expect therefore to have a meeting with it on that subject in the near future.

Disabled People

25. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the financing of local authority and health authority services for the disabled for which his Department has responsibility.

41. **Mr. Alfred Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current level of expenditure on those services for disabled people for which his Department is responsible.

Mr. Mellor: It is not possible to identify separately the financing of National Health Service expenditure on services for this client group. They will have benefited, however, from the growth in expenditure on the National Health Service by around 40 per cent. in real terms since 1979. The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy estimates that in 1988-89 gross expenditure on local authority personal social services for physically and sensorily handicapped people will total over £200 million.

NHS Expenditure

26. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total amount of National Health Service health care expenditure spent in the north-west region as a percentage of total National Health Service health care expenditure, for the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Freeman: In 1987-88 total revenue and capital expenditure by health authorities comprising the north-western region was £1,078·4 million, which represented 9 per cent. of the total expenditure of all regional and district health authorities in England.

Fair Hearing Campaign

27. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to respond to the recommendations put to him by the Royal National Institute for the Deaf in the fair hearing campaign; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The Royal National Institute for the Deaf is currently refining its proposals in the light of comments it has received from a number of organisations concerned with the provision of hearing aids. We shall need to consider the very complex issues involved in the context of RNID's revised proposals.

Contracting Out

30. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he can give an estimate of the savings made in the last available year from the contracting out of services within the National Health Service.

Mr. Freeman: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply on 21 March to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King), at column *564*.

Tobacco Advertising

40. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the second report of the committee for monitoring arrangements on tobacco advertising and sponsorship.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) on 18 April, at columns *119-20*.

Midwives

42. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a further statement on midwives regrading.

Mr. Mellor: All midwives have been regraded within the new clinical grading structure with effect from 1 April 1988. Information on the assimilation from old grades to the new has been placed in the Library. A number of appeals against gradings are outstanding. Assimilation to the new structure resulted in an average pay increase for 1988-89 of over 20 per cent. The new structure provides greatly improved career opportunities.

Griffiths Report

48. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations he has received on the recommendations of the Griffiths report.

Mr. Mellor: We have received over 270 representations from hon. Members, organisations and members of the public about Sir Roy's recommendations. Recent responses have been received from a number of national organisations and professional groups. We are studying all responses carefully as we formulate our own proposals.

Occupational Health Facilities

52. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the health authorities which are providing occupational health facilities to private companies and public bodies.

Mr. Freeman: We do not collect this information centrally. It is for individual health authorities to decide whether to enter into such arrangements.

Registered Homes Act 1984

58. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he plans to review the scope of the Registered Homes Act 1984.

Mr. Mellor: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to him on 23 February, at column *793*.

In Vitro Fertilisation

59. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the availability of IVF within the south-west region, with particular reference to *(a)* its availability free of charge in Bristol and *(b)* its non-availability in the North Devon health area.

Mr. Freeman: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to him on 15 May, at columns *80-81*, and my pursuant reply to him yesterday.

Homeless and Rootless (Wakefield)

63. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has received from the Wakefield family practitioner committee on action taken to help the homeless and rootless; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The family practitioner committee has secured the provision of general medical services on the one official travellers' camp in the Wakefield area. The service, which began on 5 April using the Wakefield health authority's mobile clinic, is provided by a local doctor supported by community nursing staff. No other problems have been encountered.

Hospital Closures

64. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospital closures proposals have been confirmed by his Department since 1979.

Mr. Freeman: Ministerial approval has been given to 85 proposals for total closures of hospitals/units from 1979 to end 1988.

Childhood Cancer

67. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made by research teams funded by his Department in identifying the causes of childhood cancer incidence.

Mr. Freeman: The Department's commissioned research into childhood cancer complements a wide range of studies internationally. A variety of possible factors have been investigated, and while some progress is being made, in general, specific causes are not fully understood.

Consultants (Dismissals)

71. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* consultants and *(b)* other doctors in hospitals were dismissed in each of the past 20 years.

Mr. Mellor: We do not collect this information routinely and could obtain it only at disproportionate cost.

Medical Schools

72. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received about the role of university medical schools in relation to the proposals in "Working for Patients."

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have received representations from various organisations and individuals, including the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, and the Joint Committee of Metropolitan and Provincial Deans, which represents the deans of United Kingdom medical schools and clinical facilities. Both these bodies have welcomed the commitment in "Working for Patients" to maintaining the quality of medical education. I will be considering their comments very carefully in developing our proposals.

In addition, paragraph 4.30 of "Working for Patients" explains that the steering group on undergraduate medical and dental education will carry forward its work and make recommendations in the light of the proposals in the White Paper. The steering group contains representatives of all the major bodies with responsibility for medical and dental education, and is making a constructive contribution to the implementation of "Working for Patients".

Dental and Eye Tests (Changes)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if there has been any change in the number of people having dental examinations and eye tests since the introduction of charges.

70. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the impact of the introduction of dental charges on the number of patients attending for dental checks.

Mr. Mellor: Demand for dental treatment is subject to short-term fluctuation irrespective of changes made to charges. The Department monitors the number of courses scheduled for payment each month. It is unlikely that an assessment of whether there has been an effect on demand following the introduction of the examination charge can be made until figures are available for the quarter July-September 1989.

There is no charge for NHS sight tests. We shall be monitoring the position in respect of private sight tests in the autumn.

Grading

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many appeals in respect of clinical regrading are outstanding at the latest date; and when he expects the appeals to be concluded.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold this information centrally.

Electoral Registers

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the 25 constituencies with the lowest electorate in 1989 in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* England.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is as follows:

Constituencies with smallest electorate in 1989

	Electors
(a) United Kingdom	
Western Isles	23,097
Caithness and Sutherland	31,031
Orkney and Shetland	31,116
Meirionnydd Nant Conwy	32,556
Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale	38,773
Montgomery	41,022
Glasgow, Provan	41,086
Roxburgh and Berwickshire	43,484
Surbiton	44,344
Chelsea	44,381
Kensington	44,393
Glasgow, Garscadden	44,828
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	46,345
Caernarfon	46,510
Liverpool, Riverside	46,563
Hammersmith	47,198
Newham North West	47,591
Glasgow, Cathcart	47,702
Edinburgh East	47,802
Paisley North	48,213
Argyll and Bute	48,695
Walthamstow	48,744
Clackmannan	48,757
Glasgow, Springburn	48,785
Glasgow, Govan	48,908
(b) England	
Surbiton	44,344
Chelsea	44,381
Kensington	44,393
Liverpool, Riverside	46,563
Hammersmith	47,198
Newham North West	47,591
Walthamstow	48,744
Greenwich	49,007
Plymouth, Drake	49,930
Coventry South East	50,333
Old Bexley and Sidcup	50,507
Knowsley North	50,538
Barking	51,501
Richmond and Barnes	51,746
Birmingham, Sparkbrook	51,788
Newham South	52,000
Fulham	52,107
Hendon South	52,242
Coventry North West	52,665
Kingston upon Thames	53,048
Barnsley East	53,324
Eltham	53,542
Birmingham, Erdington	53,552
Hendon North	54,059
Liverpool, Garston	54,059

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list in the *Official Report* each parliamentary constituency in England where electoral registrations have declined by more than 4 per cent. between 1988 and 1989, together with the size of the decline in each case in percentage and absolute figures.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is as follows:

Parliamentary constituency	*Change in total parliamentary electorate, 1988-89*	
	Number	*Percentage*
Manchester, Blackley	−2,421	−4·1
Harrow East	−3,742	−4·6
Finchley	−2,710	−4·6
Wolverhampton North East	−3,101	−4·9
Bristol West	−3,471	−4·9
Chelsea	−2,382	−5·1
Southend West	−4,110	−5·9
Mid Kent	−4,846	−6·5
Manchester Central	−4,078	−6·6
Southend East	−4,658	−7·7
Liverpool, Mossley Hill	−4,865	−8·1
Liverpool, West Derby	−5,263	−8·8
Liverpool, Riverside	−4,707	−9·2
Liverpool, Walton	−7,200	−9·9
Liverpool, Garston	−6,121	−10·2
Liverpool, Broadgreen	−6,825	−11·1
Medway	−7,311	−11·3

Transplants

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the General Medical Council has ever disciplined a doctor for breach of ethics relating to transplants.

Mr. Freeman: The General Medical Council is an independent statutory authority: I suggest that the hon. Member approaches the council for this information.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will specify which will be the next supra-regionally funded heart transplant centre.

Mr. Freeman: We have asked the supra regional services advisory group for advice, and expect to make an announcement later in the year.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people now hold donor cards.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) on 20 December 1988, at column *241*.

Body Scanners

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, which NHS hospitals in the West Midlands RHA at present have whole body scanner facilities; when the equipment was installed in each case; which hospitals it is planned to provide with such facilities as new, or to replace obsolete facilities, in the next 12 months; and which hospitals have paid for equipment in whole or part from voluntary and charitable sources.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman of the West Midlands regional health authority.

ENVIRONMENT

Coventry Evening Telegraph (Article)

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the publications in which the Minister for Local Government; the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer) had printed any article in the form, length or content as that which appeared on Tuesday 9 May in the *Coventry Evening Telegraph*.

Mr. Ridley: My right hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government distributed more than 500 articles to newspapers throughout the country. Whether their editors chose to print the articles is a matter for them.

African Elephant

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what fresh initiatives his Department is taking both in respect of unilateral action by Britain and to mobilise international support for action to protect the African elephant and to outlaw the use of ivory in developed nations.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 18 May 1989]:* I shall write to the hon. Member shortly.

Ozone Layer

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he will take to reduce chlorofluorocarbon damage to the ozone layer by arranging for the collection of redundant domestic and commercial refrigerators; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I have been asked to reply.

I am aware of only one nationwide retailer of domestic refrigerators which has arrangements to collect old appliances when delivering new ones, and for recovery of the CFC refrigerants for recycling. The Government are encouraging others to do the same, and officials are discussing with local authority associations what can be done with the appliances which end up with them. Warren Spring laboratory is currently considering the possibility of economic recovery from domestic appliances and the Department is assessing the need for further research in this area.

CFCs in domestic refrigerators account for only about 3 per cent. of total CFC use in the United Kingdom. There are considerable technical and logistical difficulties in recovering and recycling CFCs from the coolant systems and particularly from the foam insulation in such appliances.

Community Charge

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement clarifying the sentence in his Department's leaflet "The Community Charge—How It Will Work For You", which reads

"Filling in the form does not mean you will have to pay the community charge for anyone else"

in relation to the provision in the Act for joint liability.

Mr. Gummer: The section of the leaflet to which the hon. Member refers deals with the process of registration. The High Court said in the judgment given on 16 May

"The filling in of a registration form does not in itself mean that you will have to pay the community charge for anyone else or indeed yourself. As a matter of law it is no more than the first step in a process which, subject to rights of appeal, will result in names appearing in the register."

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all the illustrative figures for the poll tax in Nottingham given since 1987; and when he now expects to estimate the figure to be levied in May 1990.

Mr. Gummer: The Government have no plans to introduce a poll tax.

Published illustrative figures show a community charge in Nottingham of £207 in 1987-88 and £251 in 1988-89. With the proposed transitional safety net arrangements fully in place, the published illustrative figures are £195 for 1987-88 and £231 for 1988-89. Illustrative 1989-90 community charges in England will be published once data needed from local authorities have been received and analysed.

The illustrative figure for Nottingham will be dependent on spending by Nottinghamshire county council and Nottingham city council. If both the county council and the city council had budgeted to spend according to the assumptions used in the 1989-90 rate support grant settlement and had rated accordingly, the 1989-90 illustrative community charge in Nottingham (disregarding the transitional arrangements) would be £251.

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on progress in implementing the community charge in England and Wales.

Mr. Gummer: The overwhelming majority of local authorities are making good progress in preparing for the introduction of the community charge. Registration began this week in most areas of England and Wales. The leaflet informing people of their rights and duties has been distributed, despite an attempt to stop it.

Sea Dredged Aggregates

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the principles upon which he monitors the effect of aggregate dredging on coastal defences and erosion of beaches.

Mr. Chope: Government policy, set out in minerals planning guidance note 6, is that licences to dredge for sand and gravel are not and will not be granted by the Crown Estate if it is likely that coastal erosion would result.

The arrangements for consulting Government Departments and other bodies on applications to dredge minerals from United Kingdom territorial waters and the United Kingdom continental shelf ensure that all proposals are referred to consultants for professional advice at an early stage. If these investigations demonstrate an unavoidable risk of coast erosion, the Crown Estate would reject the application without further consideration.

The responsibility for the monitoring of coastal defences and erosion of beaches lies with the appropriate individual local authority.

Football Stadiums

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what financial assistance his Department will give to football clubs to encourage all-seater stadiums.

Mr. Moynihan: I have no plans to provide financial assistance to football clubs. I shall be discussing the question of all-seater stadiums with the football authorities shortly.

Tourism

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to have a report on the experiment of deemed consent for directional advertising signs for tourist attractions and facilities.

Mr. Chope: The part-time consultant who is monitoring the experiment in east Kent has submitted an interim report, which is now being considered.

Pollution Inspectorate

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what proposals he has to monitor the consequences for local authorities of the reorganisation of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution;

(2) what plans he has for monitoring the effect on the relationship between Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and local authorities of the reorganisation of the inspectorate.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We recognise the importance of regular links with local authorities. We shall give high priority to maintaining good communications with them as we develop the reorganisation proposals. The effectiveness of the reorganised inspectorate will be kept under close review.

The Government's 1986 consultation document on air pollution control in Great Britain set out new control powers for local authorities dealing with a second tier of scheduled processes. These powers will establish new working relationships between the inspectorate and local authorities. We have set up a local authority unit to monitor the effectiveness of the operation of the proposed controls. The inspectorate of pollution liaison committee will also continue to discuss matters of common interest between local authorities and HMIP and the Environment Departments.

Homelessness

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any proposals to release empty residential property belonging to his Department for use by homeless people.

Mr. Chope: There are no empty properties owned by the Department of the Environment at present suitable for use as temporary accommodation for the homeless.

Should empty residential properties not be required for further Government use and they cannot be sold because of legal restrictions or sold within six months due to market conditions they are offered first to the local housing authority and then to a housing association.

Playgrounds

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received any representations regarding safety standards for the surfaces of public playgrounds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I have received 34 written representations on this matter since the beginning of March and I have met my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) to discuss his Bill.

Water Standards

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information his Department holds for the *(a)* Yorkshire water authority and *(b)* Severn-Trent water authority, that enables him to assess the extent to which potable water in these water authorities complies with the European Community directive relating to the quality of water intended for human consumption (80/77/EEC); and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The Department has information about supplies made by the Yorkshire water authority and the Severn-Trent water authority which regularly do not comply with one or other of the standards in the EC drinking water directive and about programmes to achieve compliance. Information concerning supplies where there is occasional non-compliance is being submitted by these authorities in the context of further improvement programmes.

M20 Service Area (Maidstone)

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the report of the inquiry carried out by his inspector into the motorway service area proposed for the M20 in the Maidstone area to be published.

Mr. Chope: The inspector's reports on the public inquiry into planning applications in respect of two proposals for motorway service areas at Hollingbourne, and into a related draft compulsory purchase order, will be published when the decision letter on these matters is issued. We hope to make these decisions in the near future.

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the remit of his inspector carrying out the inquiry into the proposal for a motorway service area on the M20 in the Maidstone area has been amended to take account of the proposed route for the high-speed rail link passing through the same area.

Mr. Chope: No. British Rail published its proposed route after the public inquiry into the motorway service area proposals had closed. I understand that discussions between British Rail and the Department of Transport indicate that the proposed route could be accommodated under the proposed motorway service area site and that it would not materially affect the land use planning questions considered at the inquiry.

Registers of Financial Interests

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received regarding the desirability of establishing registers of financial interests for *(a)* county and *(b)* district councillors; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We said in the "Conduct of Local Authority Business—Government Response to the Widdicombe Committee of Inquiry" (Cm. 433) that we propose to introduce legislation for statutory registers of pecuniary interests for councillors (see paragraphs 4.3-4.4). We have set up a working group with the local authority associations to consider what such registers should contain. We hope to introduce amendments on this subject to the current Local Government and Housing Bill.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total sum spent since 1983 by the Nature Conservancy Council on management agreements under section 15 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to prevent damage to sites of special scientific interest by afforestation; and if he will state the number of sites of special scientific interest involved.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Nature Conservancy Council has spent some £1·3 million since 1983 on management agreements under section 15 of the Countryside Act 1968 to prevent damage to 21 sites of special scientific interest by afforestation.

Aveley Methane Ltd.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the ownership of Aveley Methane Ltd.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I understand that Aveley Methane Ltd. is a joint venture involving the East London waste authority, Coal Processing Ltd. and merchant banking interests to utilise landfill gas from a site at Aveley, for which the East London waste authority holds the freehold.

Barking and Dagenham (Financial Assistance)

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the London borough of Barking and Dagenham, seeking a policy of prior consultation before a statutory order under clause 30(5) and (6) of the Local Government and Housing Bill is made.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received a letter from the clerk of the East London waste authority (who is also the town clerk of the London borough of Barking and Dagenham) on the subject. We have already made it clear that we intend to consult local government about such an order before it is made.

Planning Law

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations are taking place, and with whom, on potential changes to planning legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: In January my right hon. Friend published a White Paper on the future of development plans. In March he consulted interested bodies about proposed improvements to land compensation and compulsory purchase legislation, and about possible changes to the enforcement of planning control arising from the report of Mr. Robert Carnwath, QC.

The Department is also currently inviting views on the following consultation papers:

	Final date for comments
Permitted use rights in the countryside	30 June
Planning application forms	31 May
Review of Special Industrial Use Classes (B3 to B7)	14 July
Compulsory purchase by public authorities (Inquiries Procedure) rules	21 June
Planning control over hazardous substances	17 July

In addition, my right hon. Friend is currently undertaking on behalf of the Law Commission a limited consultation with organisations with an interest in the proposed consolidation of the Planning Acts. Consolidation is a clarifying exercise and entails only minor changes and improvements to the existing statutes.

Severn-Trent Water Authority

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment by how much the Severn-Trent water authority's capital expenditure has changed since 1979.

Mr. Howard: The information requested by my hon. Friend is contained in the table:

Severn-Trent Capital Expenditure

	1979-80 £ million	*1988-89 £ million*
Cash	75·8	193·8
1988-89 prices	120·9	193·0
1988-89 estimated outturn	—	—

Inner London Education Authority

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the outcome of the recent consultation exercise on the application of the competition legislation to the functions transferred from the Inner London education authority to the inner boroughs and the City of London.

Mr. Gummer: The Government have decided to make regulations which will introduce a phased implementation programme for the introduction of competition under the Local Government Act 1988 between 1 August 1991 and 1 August 1992 and provide that competition under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 will apply from 1 April 1990. Of the functions which will transfer to the inner London boroughs and the City of London after ILEA's abolition on 1 April 1990 the following functions will be subject to competitive tender: vehicle maintenance, ground maintenance, school catering, building cleaning; and building maintenance.

Groundwater Levels (London)

Mr. Charles Wardle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action her Majesty's Government propose, following the recent publication of the construction industry research and information report entitled, "The Engineering Implications of Rising Groundwater Levels in the Deep Aquifer Beneath London".

Mr. Howard: My Department, which was one of the sponsors of the research and is the lead Department on this matter, welcomes the report and is examinig its conclusions and recommendations carefully. We have asked the National Rivers Authority advisory committee to arrange for the National Rivers Authority, when it is established, to undertake the monitoring and predictive modelling of the water levels and the publication of the results; to examine the potential for increasing water abstractions from the aquifer below London; and to examine the feasibility and costs of a permanent dewatering scheme.

Water Bill

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library a copy of Commissioner Ripa de Meana's letter of 16 May about clause 20 of the Water Bill.

Mr. Howard: I am arranging for copies of the letter to be placed in the Library of the House today.

Marine Habitats

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) which marine habitats are being studied by the North sea task force; if these include inter-tidal and estuarine habitats; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how much funding for North sea research, under the direction of the North sea task force, has been directed towards research into the importance of inter-tidal and estuarine habitats to the well being of the North sea biological system; which particular aspects are being examined; and if he will make a statement;

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 22 May 1989]:* it is not envisaged that the North sea task force will itself commission research into the marine environment, but rather that it will act as a co-ordinating body to bring together the work of all the North sea states. Studies on the coastal margin and inter-tidal areas have been identified by the task force as a priority area and more detailed proposals will be considered at its third meeting in September 1989. Research on inter-tidal and estuarine habitats has also been identified as an sea research programme: detailed proposals are now being drawn up to supplement existing work in this area.

Shiplift Project (Faslane)

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what length of delays will be experienced in the shiplift project at Faslane as a result of the construction difficulties being experienced by the contractor.

Mr. Chope: The delay to the shiplift construction programme is about six months but this will be contained within the float from the overall works programme.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what will the extra costs involved as a result of the delay in construction of the shiplift project at Faslane; and who will bear these costs.

Mr. Chope: This is commercial and confidential at this stage.

Palace of Westminster (Space)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many square feet within the Palace of Westminster are currently used for *(a)* office space for Members, *(b)* office space for peers, *(c)* office space for staff, *(d)* bars and *(e)* restaurants/dining areas.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

This information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. If the hon. Gentleman has a particular point in mind and would like to write to me I will see what I can do.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Obscene Telephone Calls

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many reports the police received of obscene telephone calls; and how many prosecutions in relation to obscene telephone calls were brought under section 43 of the Telecommunications Act 1984 in each of the years 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1988.

Mr. John Patten: Information is not available centrally on the number of reports that the police receive of obscene telephone calls or for prosecutions under section 43 of the Telecommunications Act 1984. Such prosecutions are classified with other offences under this act and therefore cannot be separately identified.

Heatherington Report

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to place in the Vote Office copies of the Heatherington report on war crimes upon publication; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Patten: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, North (Mr. Gorst) on 18 April at column *92*.

Police Constables

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total number of police constables in *(a)* the Basildon area, and *(b)* England and Wales; what were the comparable figures in 1974, 1976, and each year from 1979 to 1988; and what is the provisional figure for 1989.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested is as follows:

Constables strength at 31 December	[1] *Basildon sub-division*	*England and Wales*
1974	103	74,740
1976	114	81,342
1979	119	83,684
1980	120	87,516
1981	120	89,509
1982	121	90,581
1983	123	90,512
1984	125	89,946
1985	123	89,775
1986	129	90,379
1987	132	92,850
1988	134	93,508
1989[3]	133	[2]94,300

[1] Deployment of officers between sub-divisions and to other police functions is a matter for the Chief Constable to decide.

[2] This figure is an estimate and includes around 800 new constable posts approved for 1989-90.

[3] Provisional.

Capital Punishment

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received regarding the reintroduction of capital punishment.

Mr. John Patten: We receive many letters about capital punishment, both from the public and from Members of Parliament on behalf of their constituents. The precise figures are not available.

Bingo Clubs

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the weekly attendances at licensed bingo clubs; how many arrests have taken place in bingo clubs over the last 12 months; and how many complaints about the membership scheme for those attending bingo clubs he has received over the last five years.

Mr. John Patten: The Gaming Board for Great Britain believes that in total there may be in excess of 2 million attendances weekly at licensed bingo clubs in Great Britain. There is no power of arrest for offences under the Gaming Act 1968, which regulates licensed bingo. Representations about this system of regulation which have been made to the Home Office or the board in the past five years are not categorised routinely by those referring to the requirement for gaming in licensed bingo clubs to be operated under a membership scheme.

Immigration

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent arrangements have been made for United Kingdom immigration controls to take place prior to embarkation at airports abroad; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The immigration service operated successful trials over a one-week period at the end of March and the beginning of April in conjunction with Trans World Airlines operating into Heathrow terminal 3 from J. F. Kennedy airport in New York and with Piedmont airlines operating into Gatwick south from Charlotte. Both trials were successful and were well received by both the passengers and the companies involved. As far as any future activity is concerned the Immigration Act 1988 allows for the provision of additional services against full cost recovery and any applications for pre-clearance will be considered in this context.

Recent press reports have linked pre-clearance with enhanced security arrangements both here and in the United States of America. Whilst this may be an additional benefit, the arrangements are principally designed to ease congestion on arrival at United Kingdom airports.

Police Forces

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will be holding a review within the next five years to reduce the number of separate police forces in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. I refer the hon. Member to the reply which was given to questions from my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) and the hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) on 11 May at column *529*.

Female Police Officers (Firearms)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many female police officers in England and Wales are currently qualified to carry firearms; what are the figures for five and 10 years ago; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list by year for the last 10 years in England and Wales *(a)* in how many operations firearms were issued to female police officers and *(b)* in how many of these operations shots were fired by female police officers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hurd: Information in the form requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Female Prisoners

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many female prisoners are serving sentences under the protection of rule 43; and what is the percentage in relation to the numbers of female prisoners, by prison.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information as at 31 March 1989 is set out in the table. The percentages relate to the total sentenced population at each establishment.

Sentenced female prisoners at 31 March 1989

Establishment	*Number on Rule 43 (own protection)*	*Percentage of total*
Cookham Wood Prison	2	1·7
Holloway Prison	5	2·2
New Hall Prison	8	18·2
Styal Prison	1	0·5

There were no prisoners on rule 43 for their own protection at any of the other eight establishments holding sentenced female prisoners.

Police (Racial Equality)

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will commit funds for updating the police initial recruitment test as recommended by the Commission for Racial Equality.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) on 11 May, at column *526*. The question of funding may have to be considered when the police advisory board has completed its work.

Asylum

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the total number of asylum applications submitted at ports of entry subsequent to the applicant being refused entry to the United Kingdom on other grounds in each of the last three years;

(2) what was the average decision time taken by his Department for port applications for asylum in each of the last three years; and what is the current position;

(3) how many people were refused entry to the United Kingdom at ports of entry in each of the last three years.

Mr. Renton: I refer my hon. Friend to the replies given to questions from the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) on 19 May, at columns *316-17*.

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum applications were made at United Kingdom ports of entry in each of the last three years; and how many applicants were granted asylum.

Mr. Renton: The available information is given in the following table. Information for 1988 is not yet available.

Applications[1] for refugee status at United Kingdom ports, and grants[1] of refugee status or exceptional leave to enter in port application cases

Number of cases[1]

	Applications received	*Grants of refugee status[2]*	*Refused asylum but granted leave to enter on exceptional grounds[2]*
1985	1,634	40	315
1986	1,102	30	1,118
1987	1,053	57	735

[1] Excluding dependants.
[2] The grant figures include, where relevant, grants on applications made in earlier years.

These figures do not include south-east Asian refugees who are dealt with under separate arrangements and are granted settlement on their arrival in the United Kingdom. The number granted settlement in the years 1985 to 1988 is published in table 18 of "Control of Immigration: Statistics United Kingdom 1987" (Cm. 415) and in table 3 of Home Office Statistical Bulletin, issue 10/89 "Control of Immigration: Statistics—Fourth Quarter and Year 1988", copies of which are in the Library.

Television Licences

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been prosecuted for non-payment of televison licence fees in Warrington, Widnes, Crewe and the whole of Cheshire in 1986, 1987, 1988 and since the start of 1989.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 22 May 1989]:* Information available to me supplied by the national television licence records office relates to the number of prosecutions for television licence evasion by area of the television licence enquiry offices only. These area offices are based on the post code system. Information for

Warrington, Widnes and Crewe and the whole of Cheshire is therefore not readily available. Data for the area offices covering the county of Cheshire are as follows:

Prosecution for television licence evasion by area television licence enquiry office covering the county of Cheshire

Area	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
Altrincham	2,388	3,834	4,220	5,380
Preston	4,432	5,065	5,204	4,660
Shrewsbury	1,007	1,423	2,067	2,004

Note: Figures given are for financial year (April to March).

TRANSPORT

Level Crossings

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many accidents have taken place in each of the past five years for which figures are available on unmanned and unlit railway crossings involving (i) foot users, (ii) vehicle users and (iii) cattle or other farm animals;

(2) how many accidents have taken place in each of the past five years for which figures are available on railway crossings which are lit involving (i) foot users, (ii) vehicle users (iii) cattle or other farm animals.

Mr. Portillo: This information is not readily available in the form requested. The total numbers of accidents at all level crossings (manually-operated automatic and unprotected) during the period 1984-88 are as shown. These categories comprise:

Manual: manned gates or barriers, including barriers remotely controlled by closed circuit television.

Automatic: half-barriers and open crossings protected by road traffic signals; user-worked gates (UWG) protected by miniature warning lights.

Unprotected: UWG: UWG with telephone; open crossings; footpath crossings.

The Department's accident records do not show whether a crossing is lit. All manually operated public crossings have some form of illumination and it is a requirement that where the road approaches are lit, all manual and automatic crossings must be lit at least to the same standard.

Level crossing accidents

	1984	1985	1986	1987	[1]1988
Manual	30	25	22	14	13
Automatic	16	26	22	21	32
Unprotected	30	28	32	29	31

[1] Provisional

London Underground (Safety)

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he plans to publish the report of the chief safety inspector on safety arrangements on London Underground, in line with recommendations 56 and 57 of the Fennell report into the King's Cross Underground fire.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It is for London Underground Ltd. to consider whether any reports which may be produced in response to these recommendations should be published.

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish the railway inspectorate's report on the safety management systems for London Underground stations.

Mr. Channon: As I told the House on 10 November 1988, at columns 496-97, I commissioned the chief inspecting officer of railways to carry out an urgent survey of the safety management systems applying to stations on London Underground. The report has now been completed and I am arranging for it to be published this afternoon, together with London Underground's written response to it. Copies are being placed in the Library of the House.

London Underground's first priority, after the King's Cross fire and, later, Mr. Fennell's report on it, was to take immediate action to deal with potentially unsafe equipment and conditions. This includes, for example, fitting fire detection and alarm systems on escalators and the removal of wood panelling as part of a safety programme costing nearly £300 millions over three years.

Safety is not, however, only about equipment and investment. It is now increasingly recognised that formal management systems to promote and monitor health and safety are required. Mr. Fennell recommended that the railway inspectorate should keep the Underground's management of safety under review. Today's report is the result of action taken on that recommendation.

The report is based on a survey conducted by a team drawn from the railway inspectorate, the Health and Safety Executive and the London fire brigade.

It assessed London Underground's safety management systems against the standards of the international safety rating system (ISRS), one of several recognised methods for safety audit, but one which has previously been applied mainly in other industries. The ISRS is designed to provide a progressive safety management programme. The optimum standards within the ISRS represent excellence in safety management, which should be achieved some five to 10 years after the introduction of the programme.

During its field work in January and February, the team found that some aspects were well managed. These included the Underground's controls on purchasing, employment of contractors, and the arrangements for recruiting and placing staff.

However, the team also found that much work still remains to be done. This includes the need for major improvements in leadership in safety management; in training for managers in health and safety; and in preparation of procedures for critical tasks, engineering controls and behavioural aspects.

The team's report makes 26 major recommendations together with a large number that are more detailed. The team consider that the priority areas for action, in addition to leadership in health and safety management, are job analysis and observation, organisational rules, engineering control and preparedness for emergencies. These recommendations set the course for a long-term programme of improvements to the Underground's safety management systems.

I have discussed the report with the chairman of London Regional Transport, Mr. Wilfrid Newton. I expressed my serious concern at some of the findings and made clear that decisive and sustained action is required. Mr. Newton has responded positively and quickly.

London Underground's written response shows that it accepts, in whole or part, all but one of the 71 recommendations. London Underground does not accept, however, the recommendations that the board's safety committee should be chaired by the managing director. Although the managing director has line management responsibility for safety and the safety staff report directly to him, London Underground believes that the safety committee should be chaired by an independent non-executive director who, in accordance with one of Mr. Fennell's recommendations, has special responsibility for safety.

The chairman of LRT has welcomed my proposal that the railway inspectorate should conduct a further survey in about 18 months' time. Meantime, the inspectorate will be monitoring progress closely through its programme of visits to stations and contacts with managers at all levels.

Road Humps

Mr. Neale: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he proposes to review the road hump regulations.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Consultation on new regulations offering significant relaxations to those of 1986 will begin on 24 May. A copy of the consultation letter will be placed in the Library of the House. We hope to make the new regulations in the autumn of this year.

Road Assessment Studies

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what road assessment studies for South Yorkshire *(a)* have been undertaken during the last five years and *(b)* are to be carried out in the near future; which are now under consideration by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A major study of the A1 through the county was carried out in 1987. We plan to commission studies later this year to investigate the need for improved highway links between south Lancashire and Yorkshire and to look at the A57 from east of the M1 to the A1 (Worksop). These were announced in the White Paper "Roads for Prosperity" which has just been published.

A47

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) when he intends to commence improvements on the A47 trunk road at Skeffington bend in Leicestershire, as envisaged in his letter to the hon. Member for Harborough on 28 May 1987;

(2) if he will give a timetable for the completion of the improvements needed to the A47 at Skeffington bend in Leicestershire.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Following the publication of draft orders in 1987, we have given careful consideration to the need for this scheme. We have concluded that the likely accident savings do not, at present, justify the costs involved. We must target our funds towards those schemes where the potential for reducing accidents is greatest. We shall keep the situation under review.

Dial-a-Ride

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the Government contribution to dial-a-ride for each year available to date.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Grants made by London Regional Transport to London dial-a-ride services are as follows:

Year	*Grant £ million*
1986-87	5·0
1987-88	6·0
1988-89	6·27
1989-90	7·27

The grant for 1989-90 is over 40 per cent. higher in real terms than the grant of £4·2 million provided by the GLC in 1985-86 (the last year it funded these services).

Naval Accidents

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out the key statistics for naval accidents over the last 10 years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department's annual publication "Casualties to Vessels and Accidents to Men" contains key statistics on casualties to merchant and fishing vessels registered in the United Kingdom. Copies of CVAM from 1979 to 1987 are available in the Library. CVAM 1988 will be published within the next few months.

Severn Bridge

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the total cost of repairs and renewals on the Severn bridge at the latest available date.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: £44 million since 1984.

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the total amount collected in tolls on the Severn bridge at the latest available date.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The total amount collected in tolls is estimated to be some £58 million up to March 1989.

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the total outstanding debt on the Severn bridge at the latest available date.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: £85·2 million at 31 March 1988.

M1-M69 Junction

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects works to begin to improve the M1-M69 junction.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The expanded trunk road construction programme published in the White Paper "Roads for Prosperity" includes widening and junction improvements on the M1. A major improvement to junction 21 will be part of this.

Work should start this financial year on an interim scheme at the M1-M69 interchange (junction 21 of the M1) to prevent peak time queuing on the M1.

EMPLOYMENT

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many proposals he has received to set up training and enterprise councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: Twenty-two applications have been received by the national training task force which will review these proposals and forward its recommendations to me. This is an excellent response.

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many proposals he has received from groups seeking to become training and enterprise councils; and when he expects to announce his decisions.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 16 May 1989]:* Twenty two applications have been received by the national training task force. It will forward its recommendations to Ministers who will announce which TECs have been awarded development funding shortly thereafter.

97. **Mr. Ground:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received from employers on training and enterprise councils in the south-east; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 16 May 1989]:* I have been very encouraged by the excellent response from employers in the south-east and throughout the country to our invitation to form training and enterprise councils (TECs).

Since the launch of TECs on 10 March no fewer than 22 groups of senior employers from around the country have come forward to apply for TEC development funding, of which five applications are from employers in the south-east.

Job Clubs

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many job clubs have been closed since his decision to reduce their number; where they were located; how many had been run by *(a)* jobcentres and *(b)* external agencies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Between my announcements to the House on 27 January 1989 and 28 April 1989, 131 job clubs had closed. They were located in the following regions:

	Number
Northern	1
Yorkshire and Humberside	7
East Midlands and Eastern	20
London and South East	20
South West	21
Wales	5
West Midlands	34
North West	22
Scotland	1

A total of 114 of these job clubs had been run by jobcentres and 17 by external agencies. Around 90 more closures are expected by 30 June 1989 in order to bring the network down to the 1,000 or so needed following the substantial and continuing fall in long-term unemployment.

The number of job club places available in 1989-90 will be some 25 per cent. higher than the number of participants in the programme last year. I hope that long-term unemployed people will take advantage of the opportunities open to them to join this valuable programme which has already helped more than 150,000 back into work.

Job Start

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have applied for job start allowance; how many have had their applications granted and refused; how many are currently receiving the allowance; and of those no longer receiving the allowance how long had they received it on average before termination, for Great Britain, and for each standard region.

Mr. Lee: In the period from July 1986 to March 1989, 41,676 people applied for the job start allowance. A total of 31,951 were accepted and 9,725 were rejected because they were not eligible. There are currently 3,989 people receiving the allowance.

The information requested about how long people received the allowance before termination is not readily available. However, it is estimated that in 1988 two thirds of job start participants received the allowance for the full 26 weeks. People may receive the allowance for a shorter period for a number of reasons, including a pay increase beyond the limit allowed.

New Businesses (Derbyshire)

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many new businesses in Derbyshire have registered for value added tax in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Lee: In 1986, the estimated number of new registrations for value added tax in Derbyshire was 2,500. The net increase in the number of VAT-registered businesses in 1987 was 300, or 1·4 per cent.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in Derbyshire are currently unemployed; and by what percentage this figure has decreased in the last year.

Mr. Lee: In April 1989 the number of unemployed claimants in Derbyshire was 30,391, a fall of 11,641, or 27·7 per cent., in the year since April 1988. The comparison is slightly affected by the change in the coverage of the count from September 1988 due to the new benefit regulations affecting people aged under 18 years.

Wages Councils

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett), *Official Report*, 15 May, column *51*, he will list the sources, authors, publishers, methodology of assessment, scope and time scale of study of the evidence that removal of wages councils for young people has resulted in increased job opportunities.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 22 May 1989]:* The information sought by the hon. Member is almost entirely irrelevant to the evidence referred to in my reply to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) on 15 May.

Labour force survey data for 1986, 1987 and 1988 show an increase in the level of employment of young people

under 21 in the retail distribution and hotel and catering industries. There is also evidence from employers in wages council trades that they are more ready to offer young people employment. It is also relevant that during the past two years unemployment among those aged under 20 has fallen from 21 per cent. to just above 12 per cent.

Social Charter

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement outlining the European Economic Community proposals for a social charter and the consequences for employers and employees if the Council approves the proposals; and if such proposals fall to be considered by majority vote or by unanimity in the Council.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 22 May 1989]:* Commissioner Papandreou outlined at a press conference in Brussels on 17 May proposals for a charter of basic social rights. We are still awaiting a formal text from the Commission, but I have placed in the Library a copy of the press release.

The Commission announced that it would be putting forward a proposal for a formal declaration which would contain some generalised statements and invite the Commission to draw up an action programme by June 1990. The action programme would include proposals for series of regulations mainly in the employment and industrial relations field.

As the Commission is proposing a declaration by heads of state or Government, it follows that all heads of state or Government will have to agree to it. The voting arrangements for the specific proposals on particular issues depend on the subject matter and legal treaty base; in our view many will fall to be adopted by unanimity.

As far as we can tell from the information that we have on the proposals so far, the consequences will include retrictions on the freedom of employers and employees to negotiate the agreements that suit them both; reductions in the flexibility of the labour market; and the slowing down of economic growth and of the creation of jobs.

Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of the expenditure, by economic region, by private industry on training.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 15 May 1989]:* This information is not available.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the estimated expenditure by private industry on training.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 15 May 1989]:* It is estimated from a study by management consultants to be published by the autumn, that in Great Britain in 1986-87 (the latest year for which information is available) about £11 billion was invested by private industry in training.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures currently exist for quantifying the amount of money spent on training by private industry.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 15 May 1989]:* Estimates of the amount of money spent on training by private industry can be obtained only from detailed surveys of employers. The latest such survey was carried out in 1987 providing information for the year 1986-87.

Tyneside Training and Enterprise Council

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he proposes to announce his assessment of the Tyneside training and enterprise council submission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: The submission by the Tyneside TEC steering group will be considered by a panel of members of the national training task force shortly. Ministers will consider its recommendations and will announce which TECs have been awarded development funding shortly thereafter.

Income Support

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of whether the present income support scheme gives sufficient incentive to retrain mature people with families.

Mr. Nicholls: All trainees on employment training (the Government's main programme to give unemployed people, particularly the long-term unemployed, the skills they need to compete in the jobs market) receive an allowance which amounts to £10 more than their previous weekly benefit entitlement. Help is also given with travel costs and certain other expenses. In contrast to the situation under some previous programmes therefore, all ET trainees secure a higher income than if they had remained unemployed and claiming benefit.

I am satisfied that these arrangements offer a clear incentive to unemployed people whatever their family circumstances to undertake training. Of course we keep this and other aspects of the scheme under review.

Dock Labour Scheme

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has as to the number of strikes and days lost in the dock labour scheme ports in each year since 1959; and what are the comparable figures for non-scheme ports.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 8 May 1989]:* The number of stoppages and days lost in the dock labour scheme ports in each year since 1959 are listed in the table. Comparable figures for non-scheme ports are not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, national figures for working days lost per thousand employees from stoppages in all industries and services are also listed, alongside figures for dock labour scheme ports. There is a minor difference in coverage between these two series, because the figures for all industries and services exclude stoppages involving fewer than 10 workers or lasting less than one day, where the total number of working days lost is 100 or less.

Year	*Dock Labour Scheme ports*			*All industries and services*
	Number of stoppages	*Number of days lost*	*Days lost per 1,000 employees*	*Days lost per 1,000 employees*
1959	70	39,322	547	246
1960	128	245,813	3,388	138
1961	97	155,346	2,167	137

Year	Dock Labour Scheme ports			All industries and services
	Number of stoppages	Number of days lost	Days lost per 1,000 employees	Days lost per 1,000 employees
1962	76	93,949	1,406	258
1963	104	35,850	555	78
1964	141	130,637	2,039	99
1965	130	106,037	1,628	127
1966	147	108,895	1,742	103
1967	172	571,578	9,625	122
1968	284	74,439	1,316	207
1969	376	242,220	4,593	303
1970	374	656,100	13,985	489
1971	288	159,402	3,504	612
1972	309	854,132	20,708	1,080
1973	241	159,788	4,631	317
1974	138	75,090	2,171	647
1975	156	299,884	8,915	265
1976	111	27,959	900	146
1977	159	76,783	2,605	448
1978	100	59,519	2,075	413
1979	108	88,278	3,282	1,273
1980	90	116,813	4,769	521
1981	119	99,421	4,729	195
1982	189	105,231	6,268	248
1983	60	91,501	6,254	178
1984	188	259,950	19,395	1,278
1985	43	4,826	396	298
1986	28	6,074	544	89
1987	41	6,616	644	162
1988	24	10,663	1,105	[1]164

[1] Provisional.

Sources: Figures for Dock Labour Scheme provided by the National Dock Labour Board.
Figures for all industries and services provided by the Employment Department.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Procedure Committee

Mr. Amess: To ask the Lord President of the Council what representations he has received *(a)* supporting and *(b)* opposing the implementation of the second report from the Select Committee on Procedure on private Members' time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: Apart from exchanges in the House during business questions, I have received one letter supporting the recommendations of the Select Committee on Procedure and none opposing them. I hope that there will be an opportunity before the end of this Session for the House to debate the report.

Bills

Mr. Amess: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list those personal Bills which received Royal Assent in each Session since 1970.

Mr. Wakeham: The information requested is as follows:

1974-75: James Hugh Marwell (Naturalisation) *[Lords]*
1979-80: Edward Berry and Doris Eileen Ward (Marriage Enabling) *[Lords]*
1981-82: Hugh Small and Norma Small (Marriage Enabling) *[Lords]*
1981-82: John Francis Dare and Gillian Loder Dare (Marriage Enabling) *[Lords]*
1984-85: Valerie Mary Hill and Alan Monk (Marriage Enabling) *[Lords]*
1986-87: George Donald Evans and Deborah Jane Evans (Marriage Enabling) *[Lords]*
1986-87: John Ernest Rolfe and Florence Iveen Rolfe Marriage Enabling) *[Lords]*

Mr. Amess: To ask the Lord President of the Council what information and assistance is available to individuals desirous of promoting a personal Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: Personal Bills may be promoted only through a registered parliamentary agent, duly authorised by Mr. Speaker. A list of agents is available from the Private Bill Office.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many personal Bills were introduced in each Session since 1970; how many received Royal Assent; and what percentage the latter represents of the former.

Mr. Wakeham: Since 1970 seven personal Bills have been introduced, all of which have received Royal Assent.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list the occasions when Bills have been committed *(a)* under Standing Order No. 90(1) and *(b)* under Standing Order No. 90(2) in each Session since 1970, together with the title of each Bill.

Mr. Wakeham: The information requested is as follows:

Bills committed under Standing Order No. 90(1)

Names of Bills	Number in each Session
1970-71	10
Animals *[Lords]*	
Criminal Damage *[Lords]*	
Land Registration and Land Charges *[Lords]*	
Merchant Shipping (Oil Pollution) *[Lords]*	
Mineral Workings (Offshore Installations) *[Lords]*	
Mines Management *[Lords]*	
Pool Competitions	
Recognition of Divorces and Legal Separation *[Lords]*	
Rural Water Supplies and Sewerage	
Wild Creatures and Forest Laws *[Lords]*	
1971-72	6
British Library *[Lords]*	
Children *[Lords]*	
Field Monuments *[Lords]*	
Maintenance Orders (Reciprocal Enforcement) *[Lords]*	
Overseas Investment and Export Guarantees	
Road Traffic (Foreign Vehicles) *[Lords]*	
1972-73	3
Government Trading Funds	
Guardianship *[Lords]*	
Nature Conservancy Council *[Lords]*	
1973-74	5
Biological Weapons	
International Organisations (Land)	
Land Registry *[Lords]*	
Rabies	
Unit Pricing	
1974	1
Road Traffic *[Lords]*	
1974-75	8
Arbitration *[Lords]*	
Biological Standards	
Diseases of Animals *[Lords]*	
Industrial and Provident Societies *[Lords]*	
Inheritance (Provision for Family and Dependants *[Lords]*	

Names of Bills	Number in each Session
Limitation *[Lords]*	
Local Land Charges *[Lords]*	
Reservoirs *[Lords]*	
1975-76	8
Companies (No. 2) *[Lords]*	
Education (School-leaving Dates) *[Lords]*	
Insolvency *[Lords]*	
International Carriage of Perishable Foodstuffs *[Lords]*	
Land Drainage (Amendment) *[Lords]*	
Maplin Development Authority (Dissolution) *[Lords]*	
National Health Service (Vocational Training) *[Lords]*	
Rating (Charity Shops) *[Lords]*	
1976-77	5
Administration of Justice *[Lords]*	
General Rate (Public Utilities) *[Lords]*	
Merchant Shipping (Safety Convention) *[Lords]*	
Passenger Vehicles (Experimental Areas) *[Lords]*	
Torts (Interference with Goods) *[Lords]*	
1977-78	6
Domestic Proceedings and Magistrates' Courts *[Lords]*	
Gun Barrel Proof *[Lords]*	
House of Commons (Administration)	
Medical *[Lords]*	
State Immunity	
Suppression of Terrorism *[Lords]*	
1978-79	3
Arbitration *[Lords]*	
Consents to Prosecutions	
Forestry *[Lords]*	
1979-80	1
Insurance Companies *[Lords]*	
1980-81	4
International Organisations *[Lords]*	
Merchant Shipping *[Lords]*	
Parliamentary Commissioner (Consular Complaints) *[Lords]*	
Town and Country Planning (Minerals) *[Lords]*	
1981-82	9
Administration of Justice *[Lords]*	
Currency	
Duchy of Cornwall Management (Committee discharged)	
Fire Service College Board (Abolition) *[Lords]*	
Legal Aid *[Lords]*	
Merchant Shipping (Liner Conferences)	
Reserve Forces *[Lords]*	
Stock Transfer	
Taking of Hostages *[Lords]*	
1982-83	7
Civil Aviation (Eurocontrol)	
Currency	
Dentists *[Lords]*	
International Transport Convention *[Lords]*	
Marriage *[Lords]*	
Merchant Shipping *[Lords]*	
Plant Varieties *[Lords]*	
1983-84	6
Foreign Limitation Periods *[Lords]*	
Fosdyke Bridge *[Lords]*	
Merchant Shipping (Miscellaneous Provisions) *[Lords]*	
Occupiers' Liability *[Lords]*	
Repatriation of Prisoners *[Lords]*	
Somerset House *[Lords]*	

Names of Bills	Number in each Session
1984-85	4
Child Abduction and Custody *[Lords]*	
Enduring Powers of Attorney *[Lords]*	
Industrial Development *[Lords]*	
Insurance (Fees)	
1985-86	8
British Council and Commonwealth Institute Superannuation	
Commonwealth Development Corporation *[Lords]*	
Crown Agents (Amendment)	
Education (No. 2)	
Land Registration *[Lords]*	
Outer Space *[Lords]*	
Patents, Designs and Marks *[Lords]*	
Public Trustee and Administration of Funds *[Lords]*	
1986-87	5
Chevening Estate *[Lords]*	
Minors' Contracts *[Lords]*	
Recognition of Trusts *[Lords]*	
Reverter of Sites *[Lords]*	
Territorial Sea *[Lords]*	
1987-88	3
Duchy of Lancaster	
Foreign Marriage (Amendment) *[Lords]*	
Matrimonial Proceedings (Transfers) *[Lords]*	
1988-89, to 19 May	5
Civil Aviation (Air Navigation Charges) *[Lords]*	
Human Organ Transplants	
Law of Property (Miscellaneous Provision) *[Lords]*	
National Maritime Museum *[Lords]*	
Pesticides (Fees and Enforcement)	

Bills committed under Standing Order No. 90(2)

No Bills have been committed under Standing Order No. 90(2).

SCOTLAND

St. Mungo's Primary School, Glasgow

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what communications he has received from parents of hearing impaired children who attend the unit at St. Mungo's primary school, Glasgow; whether he will take action to ensure medical tests are made to allay parental anxiety about children having inhaled asbestos dust; whether the parents made him aware of their concern about *(a)* the lack of specialist staff, *(b)* the standard of equipment, and *(c)* the physical conditions under which their children are taught; and if he will make a statement on (i) the opportunities available to him to seek improvements, and (ii) whether his Department will make additional funding available to the education authority.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this unit lies with Strathclyde regional council. Parents of children who attend the unit have written to my right hon. and learned Friend and inquiries are being made into the complaints that they have raised. I shall arrange to send the hon. Member a copy of the reply which will be sent to the parents shortly.

Fraud

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide figures for the number of prosecutions for *(a)* tax fraud and *(b)* social security fraud and the total sums of money involved for the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Rifkind: *(a)* There were 26 prosecutions in Scotland for tax fraud, involving a minimum sum of £420,000, in the period from 1 April 1988 to 31 March 1989.

(b) 986 persons were proceeded against in the Scottish courts for social security fraud in the period from 10 February 1988 to 28 February 1989. The cost of social security fraud in these cases is not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Ambulance Service

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for the Scottish ambulance service *(a)* the total number of vehicles owned and *(b)* the total number of man hours worked for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is as follows:

Year ending 31 March	*Number of vehicles owned*	*Man hours worked (excluding overtime)*
1979	n/a	3,240,640
1980	968	3,382,080
1981	968	3,425,760
1982	965	3,463,200
1983	967	3,531,840
1984	977	3,527,680
1985	988	3,577,600
1986	1,007	3,627,520
1987	1,004	3,642,080
1988	1,011	3,721,120
1989	1,051	3,704,844

The decrease in the man hours worked in 1989 is a result of the reduction of one hour in the working week which was an integral part of the 1988 ambulance men's pay agreement.

In the year ending 31 March 1989 a total of 234,156 hours overtime was worked. Figures for overtime worked are not readily available for earlier years.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total expenditure for the Scottish ambulance service for each year since 1979 at 1979 prices.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Total expenditure for the Scottish ambulance service since 1979 at constant 1979 prices, calculated by applying the gross domestic product deflator, is as follows:

Year Ending 31 March	*Expenditure £*
1979	12,865,100
1980	15,104,623
1981	14,299,108
1982	14,334,212
1983	14,237,182
1984	14,530,689
1985	15,444,525
1986	15,214,675
1987	16,596,507
1988	17,467,219
1989	n/a

Doctors (Crown Indemnity)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the cost of the proposed Crown indemnity for doctors.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The NHS in Scotland currently spends about £3 million per year on a scheme for reimbursing two thirds of the costs of the medical defence organisation subscriptions of hospital and community doctors and dentists. The cost of providing an NHS indemnity is expected to be comparable.

Teachers

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of teachers in Scotland leave the profession within five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is not readily available.

Electoral Registers

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* each parliamentary constituency in Scotland where electoral registrations have declined by more than 4 per cent. between 1987 and 1989, together with the size of the decline in each case in percentage and absolute figures.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is as follows:

Constituency	*Numerical change*	*Percentage change*
Aberdeen North	−3,147	−4·9
Aberdeen South	−4,347	−6·9
Edinburgh Central	−2,688	−4·5
Glasgow Cathcart	−2,130	−4·3
Glasgow Garscadden	−3,658	−7·5
Glasgow Govan	−2,243	−4·4
Glasgow Maryhill	−2,359	−4·5
Glasgow Pollok	−2,524	−4·9
Glasgow Provan	−3,308	−7·5
Glasgow Rutherglen	−2,380	−4·1
Glasgow Springburn	−3,379	−6·5
Greenock and Port Glasgow	−2,878	−4·9
Paisley South	−2,239	−4·3

Forestry

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will instruct the Forestry Commission to notify all local authorities of the outcome of applications for forestry planting grant within their area of jurisdiction; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is the Forestry Commission's normal practice to notify local authorities of the outcome of those planting grant applications over which they have been consulted, where objections have

been raised. The Commission also informs local authorities of the outcome in other cases where they have requested that this should be done. I consider this to be a fair and reasonable procedure and I am not persuaded that it would be right for me to add to the Commission's administrative costs by instructing it to notify local authorities of the outcome of all grant applications as a matter of course.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to require local authorities to prepare regional indicative forestry strategies.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No. My right hon. and learned Friend has already made it clear that it will be for each local authority in Scotland to decide whether or not an indicative forestry strategy is needed for its area. The situation including the potential for new planting varies considerably from one region to another.

Fishing

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the impact of imposing precautionary total allowable catches on west of Scotland plaice, monkfish and megrims; and what scientific evidence is available on stocks of these species.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Precautionary total allowable catches (TACs) are fixed for species for which there is insufficient scientific data to set a full analytical TAC, primarily to protect stocks from serious damage by over-exploitation. Concern has been expressed that some precautionary TACs may be unduly restrictive. Fisheries departments are looking at the situation and will consider whether to approach the European Commission to seek an appropriate increase in the level of precautionary TACs.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the Fisheries Department expect to publish fund proposals for a revised pressure stock licensing scheme.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Fisheries departments are considering comments received from the industry in response to the consultation paper issued last year on possible amendments to the United Kingdom licensing system. The comments received raised a number of wider issues and further consultations seem likely to be necessary before final decisions can be taken.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the impact of Scottish fishermen's earnings of the quota cuts introduced in the current year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Earnings are determined by a number of factors which include the quantity and quality of landings, prices and costs. Quota cuts influence only one of these elements and it is not possible to separate out their impact.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate interest rate charges paid by the Scottish fishing fleet in the first six months of *(a)* 1989 and *(b)* 1988; and what is his estimate of the impact this has had on the financial position of the fleet.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The capital structure and sources of funding for investment in the Scottish fishing fleet reflect the pattern of share ownership and the mixture of business and way of life that characterises the fishing industry. In consequence it is not possible to estimate the level of charges or the impact on the financial position of the fleet.

Fish Processing

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the impact of the current fisheries suppliers' position on the processing sector.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Lower catch levels, largely associated with reduced fishing opportunities but also as a result of adverse weather conditions earlier in the year, have caused problems for the fish processing sector and for fishermen. Unlike the latter, however, the processors can make up the shortfall in supplies by purchases on the international market, much of which can be brought into the United Kingdom at concessionary rates of duty. In addition the processing sector is looking to create a wider range of added value products, taking increased quantities of pelagic fish when available and also turning to species such as farmed salmon. These are encouraging developments.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on recent employment patterns in the Scottish fish processing section and his assessment of its future prospects.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The gradual shift away from highly labour intensive operations to increased mechanisation, combined with seasonal considerations and the industry's use of temporary employees, makes it difficult to draw any meaningful conclusions on recent employment patterns in the Scottish fish processing industry. The future prospects for the industry remain good and this is reflected in the fact that since 1985 investment in the industry has totalled around £20 million including EC grant aid of some £5 million.

Broadleaved Woodland

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will ensure that the Forestry Commission's review of the broadleaved woodland grant scheme will consider fully the financial aspects of grants, their means of application and purpose, and the guidelines for the management of broadleaved woodlands.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The review of the policy for broadleaved woodlands is under way and covers the aspects referred to by the hon. Member.

Farm Cottages

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland why Scottish farmers are receiving poll tax demands at the standard charge rate in respect of empty farm cottages.

Mr. Lang: Everybody who is liable to pay the standard charge in respect of a property will receive a demand notice from the appropriate levying authority. However, if the property is unoccupied and unfurnished and the person liable for the charge has notified the levying authority under section 10(8A)(b) of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 that this is the case, no

charge will be payable in respect of that property for three months or such longer period as the levying authority has determined, subject to the other provisions of section 10 of the Act. These arrangements apply in respect of owners and long-term tenants of empty farm cottages. We have however announced our intention to remove these properties from the standard community charge arrangements and have consulted on proposals for doing so. We are studying the responses to that consultation and hope to be in a position shortly to announce what the new arrangements will be.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish *(a)* what information he has on the number of seasonally let farm cottages in Scotland, *(b)* the average occupancy of let in terms of weeks and *(c)* the percentage of annual income attributable to Scottish farmers from holiday letting of farm cottages.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I regret that the information sought is not available.

Prisons (Firearms)

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland under what authority firearms and ammunition can be requisitioned by the governor of a Scottish prison.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 19 May 1989]:* The carrying or use of firearms in or on prison service property is normally strictly forbidden. Permission to do so may, however, be granted—to control vermin on prison service agricultural and horticultural land—but only by means of prior written authorisation from the director of the Scottish prison service and subject to the issue by the police of a permit for the use by a named prison officer of such a firearm.

Prison Staff (Boots)

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pairs of boots for staff were ordered for Glenochil penal establishments in each of the past five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 19 May 1989]:* The number of pairs of boots and shoes issued to personnel at Her Majesty's prison and the young offenders institution Glenochil over the past five years was:

	Boots	*Shoes*
1984-85	11	12
1985-86	7	4
1986-87	5	10
1987-88	4	5
1988-89	12	Nil

All eligible prison staff are provided with free issue footwear or are paid a boot or shoe allowance for the purchase of approved footwear.

Mrs. Margaret Sinclair (Minister's Visit)

Mr. Harry Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if the Scottish Information Office was involved in any way in arranging the visit and subsequent press coverage involving the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), to the home of Mrs. Margaret Sinclair of Stirling on Sunday 14 May; and whether any member of the Scottish Information Office staff attended this visit.

Mr. Rifkind *[holding answer 19 May 1989]:* The Scottish Information Office did not arrange the visit and no member of SIO staff was present at it. The SIO arranged for media representatives to be told of the visit, and issued a press statement on behalf of my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State responsible for health and education.

Dr. William Young

Mr. Harry Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if every right hon. and hon. Member representing a Scottish constituency will be able to arrange for an official from the Scottish Home and Health Department to discuss with each general practitioner in their constituency their concern for the future of the general practitioner service, following the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), instructing an official from the Scottish Home and Health Department to contact Dr. William Young of Stirling;

(2) if he will make a statement on the circumstances in which an official of the Scottish Home and Health Department has been instructed to contact Dr. William Young of Stirling following his commenting on the proposed changes affecting general practitioners and the National Health Service.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 19 May 1989]:* On 14 May it was reported in the press that Dr. Young's views on the implications of the Government's proposals for the reform of the NHS had dismayed two of his patients. They were said to be particularly alarmed by the statements attributed to Dr. Young that all GPs would be given drug budgets from 1991; that if they exceeded them the money would be clawed back the next year; and that patients requiring expensive treatment might have to come off his list on the ground of cost. I wrote to Dr. Young on 15 May expressing my concern about these reports pointing out that when indicative prescribing budgets are introduced in Scotland in 1992 they will reflect the health and age of the patients on the GPs list and that more money will be allowed for the chronically sick and the elderly. If, nevertheless, the budget turns out to be not enough for the cost of treatment which the doctor's patients justifiably require, the budget will be reviewed and the doctor will not be penalised. There should therefore be no question of a doctor being unable to prescribe for a sick person because he or she has run out of money or of removing patients from the list because of the cost of their treatment.

Because these particular events have been drawn to the attention of the general public in this way and were likely to cause widespread alarm, I released my letter to Dr. Young to the press. I also asked a medical officer in the Scottish Home and Health Department to meet Dr. Young to discuss his interpretation of the Government's plans. It will not be necessary for similar arrangements to be made in respect of every GP in Scotland as I have already been in direct contact with each of them to supply them with the full facts of the Government's plans for making the National Health Service in Scotland even better than it is at present.

Employment Training

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of trainees on each employment training scheme operating in Scotland and give the name of each scheme and the total allowances paid on each scheme.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 17 May 1989]:* Information about the number of people in training with individual training managers employment training in Scotland can be provided only at disproportionate cost. The names and addresses of training managers are held in the "Employment Training Directory of Training Agents and Training Managers", a copy of which is held in the House of Commons Library. Information about the amounts of trainee allowances paid to trainees with individual training managers is not available.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many places for trainees has each employment training scheme management agency in Scotland contracted to fill for each month since the inception of the scheme; and what percentage of these places have actually been filled in each case on a monthly basis.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 17 May 1989]:* This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cases of fraud his Department has detected among employment training scheme management agencies and employers in Scotland; what sums were involved; and how many prosecutions have proceeded.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 17 May 1989]:* There have been no such cases.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many employment training scheme management agencies and employers in Scotland have been terminated because of fraud or other malpractice.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 17 May 1989]:* None.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the steps taken to ensure that employment training scheme management agencies and employers in Scotland do not continue to receive an allowance from his Department after trainees have left the scheme.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 17 May 1989]:* Claims for training fees submitted by training managers are subject to checks both within Training Agency area offices and at the training manager's premises. The checks include the comparison of claims with individual trainee records and information notified to unemployment benefit offices.

Roads

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the total moneys received by the Scottish Office from the European regional development fund in each of the past five years; and what percentage of these was spent on road improvements, listing the projects completed and projects currently under construction.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 16 May 1989]:* The following awards have been obtained by the Scottish Office for projects and programmes in Scotland:

	Award £ million
1984	103
1985	69
1986	84
1987	93
1988	95
	444

Some £109 million, almost 25 per cent., of the awards have been for road improvements and new construction. It is not feasible to list all 250-plus roads projects but some significant examples are:

	Award £ million
Edinburgh City Bypass	6·3
Realignment of A71 near Kilmarnock	5·9
Eastern Distributor Road—Stirling	2·4
Inverness Inner Relief Road Phase 2	2·3
Northern Distributor Road—East Kilbride	2·1
A82 Improvement—Phase 1—Loch Lomondside	1·7
A836 Lairg to Auction Mart—Sutherland	0·9
A95 Broomhill Road Improvement—Grantown-on-Spey	0·5

Manufacturing Exports

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what measures he is taking in order to support increased manufacturing exports from Scottish industries.

Mr. Lang: An extensive and comprehensive package of support is available to industry in Scotland under the enterprise initiative, which is administered by my Department. This includes selective financial assistance for investment projects in the assisted areas, and the consultancy initiatives which can provide firms with financial support towards the costs of specialist consultancy in a number of key management functions. In addition, the Scottish export office of my Department provides a wide range of advice, information and assistance under the export initiative, to help Scottish companies expand into export markets or develop their existing overseas business.

Glasgow Garden Festival

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he is satisfied with progress on the after use of Glasgow garden festival site; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Yes. The various elements of the after use plan are currently being discussed with the planning authority. I expect these to make a permanent contribution to the regeneration of Glasgow.

Press Material (Perth City Halls)

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many press officers from his Department were

involved in the preparation and distribution of press material within the Perth city halls during the period from 10 to 12 May.

Mr. Rifkind: No press officers from my Department were involved in the preparation and distribution of press material within Perth city halls during the period 10 to 12 May.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 24 May 1989

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement on the outcome of the Foreign Affairs Council held on 22 May.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Foreign Affairs Council met in Brussels on 22 May. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State represented the United Kingdom in the Council and at an EC-Israel Co-operation Council later on the same day.

The council reviewed progress in the Community's negotiations with Poland on a trade and co-operation agreement and agreed on the need for further flexibility in the Community position. In particular, my right hon. Friend the Minister of State pressed for a Community proposal on phasing out quantitative restrictions, which took full account of Polish reform efforts, and for early help with management training. The Commission introduced its draft mandate for negotiations with the USSR on a trade and co-operation agreement and the council agreed to consider it further at its next meeting in June.

The council discussed the Community's trade relations with the United States. Progress on resolving the dispute over hormones in meat, and setting up GATT panels on soya and sugar, was noted. The council expressed its concern over the implementation of section "Super 301" of the 1988 United States Trade Act, and reaffirmed its intention to refer to GATT any United States action affecting the Community which might appear to be in breach of GATT obligations.

The council discussed a proposal to complete the annex to the council regulation adopted in December 1987 laying down maximum levels of radioactive contamination of foodstuffs and of feedingstuffs following a nuclear accident or other radiological emergency. A related proposal on the special conditions applying to exports of foodstuffs and feedingstuffs following a nuclear accident was also discussed.

The Commission reported on the progress in the renegotiation of the Lomé convention and on preparations for the next EC-ACP ministerial meeting in Brussels on 3-5 June.

The council adopted conclusions on the renegotiation of the international coffee agreement which will form the basis of the Community's position at the special session of the International Coffee Council in London on 5-9 June.

Remains of General Sikorski

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to refuse requests that the remains of General Sikorski be removed from the Polish war cemetery at Newark; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The matter is a difficult and delicate one which divides the Polish people, both in Poland and in this country. We periodically receive representations, both for and against the transfer of the remains to Poland, and we review them in the light of the circumstances prevailing at the time. The Prime Minister said in Warsaw in November that the time was not yet right for such a transfer.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Vehicle Exports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is his estimate of the import content of United Kingdom exports of (i) cars and (ii) commercial vehicles in 1970, 1979 and 1988.

Mr. Maude: The information is not available.

Weights and Measures (Wine)

Sir David Price: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he intends to take steps to implement the voluntary code of practice on the sale of wine by the glass in licensed premises.

Mr. Forth: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) on 16 May at column *115*.

Radio

Mr. Gale: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether the review of the civil use of radio frequency spectrum between 470 and 3400 MHz has been completed; and whether he will publish the report.

Mr. Atkins: The committee studying civil use of the radio frequency spectrum from 470 to 3400 MHz has completed its review and my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is today publishing the report. Copies of the report have been placed in the Library.

This review was initiated as part of a rolling programme recommended by the Merriman committee, to audit present use of the radio spectrum, to analyse emerging developments and to assess potential new demands. The report on the corresponding independent review of defence use of this part of the radio spectrum, chaired by Sir Kenneth Corfield, was published in June 1988.

I am sure that industry and users will welcome this report for its in-depth analysis of the current uses and future demands in this key portion of the radio spectrum. The United Kingdom is already at the forefront in exploring innovative ways of exploiting this crucial, finite, natural resource, and I believe the report makes a significant contribution to the technical base from which United Kingdom can maintain its position at the leading edge of telecommunications exploitation throughout the 1990s and beyond.

The review was conducted on the basis of existing policy regarding management and allocation of the radio

spectrum, and is being published in advance of detailed consideration by Government to stimulate interest and to promote discussion.

PRIME MINISTER

Soviet Diplomats (Expulsion)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if she will refer the matters which led to the recent expulsion of Soviet diplomats to the Security Commission.

The Prime Minister: No.

Cabinet Office (Cash Limits)

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Prime Minister if there are any proposals to change the 1989-90 cash limit and running costs limit for the Cabinet Office: other services.

The Prime Minister: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary revised estimate the cash limit for the Cabinet Office: Other Services (class XX, vote 2) has been reduced by £2,764,000 from £19,403,000 to £16,639,000. This decrease will be offset by a corresponding increase in the cash limit for the Central Statistical Office (class XIX, vote 18) and reflects the transfer of part provision between the Cabinet Office and Central Statistical Office as a result of the reorganisation of the statistical services which I announced on 5 April 1989.

The running costs limit for the Cabinet Office: Other Services has been reduced by £2,901,000 from £20,984,000 to £18,083,000 in the main as a result of the functions transferred to the Central Statistical Office (£2,898,000) and also to provide £3,000, reclassified from running costs, as a grant in aid to the British national committee for the history of the second world war.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police Operational Procedures

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make a statement on the implications for police operational procedures following the conviction of those involved with the killing of PC Frank Mason;

(2) if he will announce a new inquiry into police operational procedures following the conviction of armed robbers for causing the death of PC Frank Mason;

(3) whether, in the light of recent experience, new guidelines on stake-out procedures are to be issued to police authorities.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. Police operational procedures are a matter for chief officers.

Woolwich Prison

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what response he has received to his invitation to the London borough of Greenwich to suggest a name for the new Woolwich prison; what opportunities will be given to local people to put forward suggestions; and when he expects to announce his decision.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have not yet received a formal response from the London borough of Greenwich to our invitation to it to suggest a suitable name for the new prison at Woolwich. We understand that arrangements have been made as is considered necessary. I shall write to the hon. Member once a formal decision has been taken.

European Elections (Electoral Registers)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will instruct the election officers, in each of the European election constituencies, to issue to the agents of each prospective candidate a full set of electoral registers for the constituency free of charge; and if he will make a statement on the practice currently being adopted in the north Wales constituency for the June 1989 Euro-elections.

Mr, Douglas Hogg: No. The Representation of the People Regulations 1986 (as applied by the European Parliamentary Elections Regulations 1986) include the provision of two free copies of each electoral register in force to each candidate at a European Parliamentary election, and it is the duty of electoral registration officers and acting returning officers to comply with this provision. We are considering the possible need for some further guidance on this point,.

Barry McKay

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when Barry McKay, detained at Risley remand centre, will have his case brought to court; what information he has on *(a)* this detainee's dietary habits, *(b)* whether he has lodged any formal complaint and *(c)* what action has been taken; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Mr. Barry McKay has been at Manchester prison since 29 March and his trial will take place at Chester Crown court on a date yet to be fixed.

Mr. McKay is a practising Moslem and every effort has been made to meet his dietary requirements since the date of his reception at Risley remand centre on 12 September 1988. However, Mr. McKay refused all food from 27 March until 9 April on which day he requested, and was provided with, food in accordance with the restrictions imposed by Ramadan.

I understand that Mr. McKay has made no formal complaints about his diet and that he is now accepting food appropriate to the needs of his faith.

Women Police Officers (South Yorkshire)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of South Yorkshire as to why women police officers in the South Yorkshire police force, who have been on maternity leave or time off to attend to their young children, are reinstated at a lower rank when they return; what is the policy of other police forces in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Under the Police Regulations 1987, women police officers have the right to return to their force after maternity leave (which is limited to nine months after the birth) without any reduction in rank. An officer who has resigned from the service will normally be considered for reappointment only in the rank of constable, although previous service counts for pay purposes.

Probation Officers

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many probation officers have been employed in England and Wales during each of the last 10 years.

Mr. John Patten: The number of probation officers employed in England and Wales at 31 December in each of the last 10 years was:

	Number
1979	5,467
1980	5,602
1981	5,656
1982	5,801
1983	5,994
1984	6,161
1985	6,343
1986	6,471
1987	6,651
1988	6,792

This is an increase of 1,325, or 24 per cent., in the period in question.

Hull Prison

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when Hull prison was built; what was the originally intended maximum number of prisoners; what is the number on remand or serving custodial sentences there now; and for how many hours daily an inmate is confined to his cell.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Her Majesty's prison Hull was opened in 1870. The accommodation originally comprised 304 single cells (not including those used to house prisoners on reception and undergoing punishment). The establishment's certified normal accommodation is currently 406. On Friday 19 May 621 prisoners were held there, 354 on remand and 267 under sentence.

The daily routine varies widely as between individual inmates. On average adult inmates at Hull spend at least three and a half hours out of their cells each day for regular purposes such as exercise, ablutions, meals bathing and kit changing, canteen, association and library. The average for young inmates, who receive additional association, is at least four and a half hours. Individual inmates spend additional periods out of their cells for activities such as voluntary education and physical education, work, domestic and official visits and religious services.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people currently at Hull prison have ever been in-patients at a psychiatric hospital or clinic, showing *(a)* serving a custodial sentence and *(b)* those on remand.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested is not readily available in respect of the total population of Hull prison and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost, as records there are not yet computerised. Of the 12 prisoners in the prison hospital on 22 May, five unconvicted prisoners and two convicted prisoners have been in-patients in a psychiatric hospital.

Horse Race Reporting

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to seek power to enable him to ensure that the BBC and independent television spread out their horse racing coverage evenly throughout the United Kingdom.

Mr. Renton: No. It is a long-standing principle that the Government do not intervene in programming matters. Subject to the obligations placed on them by Parliament, it is for the broadcasting authorities to decide which programmes to broadcast and from which locations.

Litter Act

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will discuss with representatives of the Association of Chief Police Officers the practicalities of introducing legislation to allow the police to levy on-the-spot fines for breaches of the Litter Act.

Mr. John Patten: We are currently considering a number of proposals for dealing with the litter nuisance. The results of the year-long fixed penalty scheme in Westminster will be available soon, and we shall want to consider these before contemplating the introduction to an on-the-spot fine regime nationally.

Latchmere House (Detainees)

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a further statement on his proposals to transfer detainees from Latchmere house to Haslar in Gosport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We intend to relocate Immigration Act detainees from Latchmere house remand centre to the prison service establishment at Haslar, Gosport as soon as the necessary arrangements can be made, probably in early July.

We are taking great care to ensure that facilities at Haslar adequately meet the needs of the detainees. Haslar will offer a better regime in more suitable premises and will cater for the inmates' religious and welfare needs.

The accommodation at Latchmere house will be used to hold remand prisoners from the London area. This measure will make a substantial contribution to our aim of clearing remand prisoners from police cells.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Value Added Tax

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received concerning the imposition of value added tax on pitch fees for static caravans; and if he will make it his policy to achieve consistency between the exemption from value added tax of retired people staying at hotels for periods in excess of four weeks, and such people staying at static caravans for similar periods of time.

Mr. Lilley: I have received a number of representations via right hon. and hon. Members and I met representatives of the British Holiday and Home Parks Association and the National Caravan Council on 3 May. There is no direct connection between the long-stay VAT relief for retired people living in hotels and VAT on static caravan pitch rentals at seasonal sites. The relief was introduced to protect retired people living in hotels as their permanent accommodation. There is no VAT at all on pitch rentals in

non-seasonal caravan sites which may be used as permanent accommodation. Moreover, VAT on seasonal caravan sites applies not to the accommodation as such (the caravans are zero-rated) but only to the pitch rental —which is the right to locate the caravan on the park and have access to all the facilities of the holiday park.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the loss of value added tax or of the shortfall on the yield of value added tax as a result of shortages in the number of VAT control officers available for service.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 23 May 1989]:* In their management plan for 1989-90 published in March, the commissioners of Customs and Excise estimated that if there was no improvement in the levels of recruitment and retention of staff, and if each additional control officer could secure the average yield of existing officers some £60 million of additional tax could be at stake: around 0·2 per cent. of the total VAT yield. Although Customs and Excise have been facing difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff, continuous efforts are being made to offset any potential loss of tax by the increasingly effective targeting of available resources.

Overseas Assets

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for the identified stock of United Kingdom net overseas assets; and what these represent as a share of gross domestic product.

Mr. Major: An estimate of the value of the stock of United Kingdom net overseas assets identified at end-1988 will be included in the Pink Book in August. The latest estimate is of the order of £115 billion to £120 billion, which represents about one quarter of money GDP.

Balance of Payments

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the balance of payments for the first quarter of 1989.

Mr. Major: The provisional estimate of the current account balance for the first quarter of 1989 was a deficit of £4·5 billion. This is likely to be revised when the full balance of payments accounts are published on 15 June.

PSA Staff (Pay)

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what local pay additions have been, or are being, negotiated with the trade union side of the Whitley council in respect of Property Services Agency civil servants employed in Cambridge; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table of any such supplementary local pay additions as are paid to Cambridge-based officials, but not Newmarket-based staff, by the Property Services Agency, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Department of Trade and Industry, Forestry Commission, Department of the Environment, and other bodies such as the National Institute of Agricultural Botany, in respect of the following grades: AA, AO, Typist, PA and EO.

Mr. Brooke: LPA payments are not a matter for negotiation with the trade union side. However, the trade union side in each Department concerned is consulted prior to their introduction.

The following local pay additions are currently being paid in Cambridge:

Administrative Assistant
DTI
£300 on entry;
£600 after 1 year; reducing to £400 on the maximum of the pay scale.
LCD
£300 after 6 months.
MAFF
£300 on entry.
PSA
£300 on entry.

Administrative Officer
DTI
£300 on entry;
£600 after 1 year; reducing to £400 on the maximum of the pay scale.

Forestry Commission
£400 after 1 year.
LCD
£300 after 6 months.

Typist
Forestry Commission
£400 after 1 year.
LCD
£300 after 6 months.
NIAB
£500 on entry;
£600 after 1 year.

Personal Secretary
DTI
£600 on entry.

Executive Officer
LCD
£300 after 6 months.

THE ARTS

Printed Matter (Preservation)

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Minister for the Arts what is his policy towards the recruitment of technically competent staff able to study, develop and manage the preservation and conservation of large quantities of printed and written material in the nation's galleries and archives; and how many qualified technical staff are currently employed in *(a)* the British museum, *(b)* the Victoria and Albert museum, *(c)* the national maritime museum, and *(d)* the science museum including the national museum of film photography and television in Bradford and the British library.

Mr. Luce: Recruitment policy and staff numbers in the British library and the national museums and galleries are matters for their directors, board members and trustees. I attach great importance to the care of items in the national collections and to that end have allocated half of the £13 million increase for the national museums and galleries from 1990-91 to 1991-92 to the management of their collections. I have also set aside up to £100,000 a year for the three years 1989-90 to 1991-92 towards a national manuscript conservation fund, to be administered by the British Library.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Special Education

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schoolchildren are likely to receive some form of special education in each of the next three years; and what will be the cost of meeting those needs.

Mr. Butcher: The Department does not project the total number of school pupils likely to receive special education. The number of pupils in special schools (maintained and non-maintained) in England is projected to be:

	Full-time equivalent pupil numbers
1989	100,892
1990	98,366
1991	96,734
1992	95,852

As to costs, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 24 January at column *473*. Comparable figures for the financial year 1990-91 and subsequent years have still to be determined as part of the yearly review of future needs. The total spent on special education will partly depend on decisions taken by individual local authorities about the pattern of delivery in their areas.

School Sizes

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will publish a list showing the numbers of primary schools by size, in each region *(a)* in relation to pupil numbers and *(b)* in relation to the group size defined in the schoolteachers' pay and conditions document;

(2) if he will publish a list showing the numbers of secondary schools by size, in each region *(a)* in relation to pupil numbers and *(b)* in relation to the group size defined in the schoolteachers' pay and conditions document;

(3) if he will publish a list showing the numbers of middle schools by size, in each region *(a)* in relation to pupil numbers and *(b)* in relation to the group size defined in the schoolteachers' pay and conditions document.

Mrs. Rumbold: The following tables show numbers of primary, middle and secondary schools respectively in each region, by size according to *(a)* pupil numbers and *(b)* group size as defined in the schoolteachers' pay and conditions document.

The figures for primary schools by pupil numbers, include seven centres for teaching English as a second language. Four of these centres do not have school group numbers and therefore do not appear on the table for primary schools by group number.

Number of maintained primary schools by size January 1988

	North	*Yorkshire and Humberside*	*North West*	*East Midlands*	*West Midlands*	*East Anglia*	*Greater London*	*Other South-East*	*South West*	*England*
Pupils on roll										
0- 25	32	39	21	29	28	14	2	46	45	256
26- 50	96	147	77	173	134	123	2	236	250	1,238
51-100	184	276	255	314	228	207	38	555	436	2,493
101-200	546	846	1,111	628	693	292	854	1,519	638	7,127
201-300	372	536	909	435	625	176	798	1,074	491	5,416
301-400	121	128	240	155	234	53	257	309	150	1,647
401-500	27	32	68	38	82	16	81	81	29	454
501-600	0	9	15	3	10	4	8	25	7	81
601-700	0	1	5	3	4	0	3	4	1	21
701-800	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	3
Over 800	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	1,378	2,014	2,701	1,778	2,041	885	2,043	3,849	2,047	18,736

Number of maintained middle schools by size January 1988

	North	*Yorkshire and Humberside*	*North West*	*East Midlands*	*West Midlands*	*East Anglia*	*Greater London*	*Other South-East*	*South West*	*England*
Pupils on roll										
0 to 25	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
26 to 50	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
51 to 100	3	8	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	14
101 to 200	10	108	1	2	24	12	13	74	10	254
201 to 300	20	110	1	10	54	38	27	169	13	442
301 to 400	21	64	2	8	38	31	13	81	16	274
401 to 500	11	20	6	9	21	16	7	44	9	143
501 to 600	5	10	0	4	5	3	1	11	2	41
601 to 700	0	1	0	4	3	1	0	1	5	15
701 to 800	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	4
Over 800	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	70	323	11	40	146	101	63	380	56	1,190

Number of maintained secondary schools by size January 1988

	North	Yorkshire and Humberside	North West	East Midlands	West Midlands	East Anglia	Greater London	Other South-East	South West	England
Pupils on roll										
0 to 25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
26 to 50	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
51 to 100	1	0	3	1	3	1	2	2	0	13
101 to 200	1	2	3	2	3	0	5	2	13	31
201 to 300	11	9	13	11	7	2	7	9	4	73
301 to 400	8	11	18	25	17	7	20	27	13	146
401 to 500	8	29	30	36	33	6	30	62	14	248
501 to 600	21	47	52	38	54	21	60	96	39	428
601 to 700	29	38	57	50	61	21	45	89	36	426
701 to 800	35	39	82	42	51	24	70	104	40	487
Over 800	123	177	254	137	194	59	210	375	164	1,693
TOTAL	237	352	512	342	423	141	449	766	324	3,546

Number of maintained primary schools by school group number January 1988

	North	Yorkshire and Humberside	North West	East Midlands	West Midlands	East Anglia	Greater London	Other South-East	South West	England
School Group										
1	129	183	101	198	144	146	2	285	314	1,502
2	163	257	220	289	225	190	37	538	422	2,341
3	215	320	426	256	250	147	191	648	330	2,783
4	515	815	1,256	572	793	245	1,116	1,459	592	7,363
5	262	311	480	336	427	112	493	656	306	3,383
6	89	115	193	113	174	40	189	236	76	1,225
7	5	10	23	13	21	5	12	25	5	119
8	0	2	2	0	5	0	3	2	2	16
9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	1,378	2,013	2,701	1,777	2,039	885	2,043	3,849	2,047	18,732

Number of maintained middle schools by school group number—January 1988

	North	Yorkshire and Humberside	North West	East Midlands	West Midlands	East Anglia	Greater London	Other South-East	South West	England
School group										
1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
2	3	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	5
3	1	9	0	0	6	2	3	5	3	29
4	11	82	0	2	41	15	23	100	10	284
5	14	101	0	7	42	34	18	151	10	377
6	33	99	5	16	41	37	13	98	21	363
7	5	27	6	9	15	13	5	25	9	114
8	3	4	0	5	0	0	0	1	3	16
9	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	70	323	11	40	146	101	63	380	56	1,190

Number of maintained secondary schools by school group number January 1988

	North	Yorkshire and Humberside	North West	East Midlands	West Midlands	East Anglia	Greater London	Other South-East	South West	England
School Group										
1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
4	—	—	2	2	—	—	—	—	1	5
5	3	1	1	—	3	1	—	2	3	14
6	3	3	2	6	4	3	1	5	7	34
7	2	9	8	14	8	4	7	18	8	78
8	6	15	28	47	38	7	28	45	31	245
9	30	46	62	49	63	39	60	108	51	508
10	76	96	197	91	133	28	151	260	88	1,120

	North	Yorkshire and Humberside	North West	East Midlands	West Midlands	East Anglia	Greater London	Other South-East	South West	England
11	85	88	134	85	118	33	149	230	80	1,002
12	24	75	65	33	49	20	46	72	47	431
13	8	18	12	13	5	5	6	18	7	92
14	—	1	1	2	2	1	1	8	1	17
Total	237	352	512	342	423	141	449	766	324	3,546

Teachers

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of teachers who qualify in *(a)* Surrey and *(b)* England and Wales do not go into teaching the following year.

Mrs. Rumbold: The latest information on the destinations of students successfully completing initial teacher training in England and Wales relates to 1988 for the university departments of education and to 1987 for the other training institutions. These data indicate that 19 per cent. of those qualifying and whose destination was known had not taken up a teaching post anywhere in the United Kingdom by the end of the same year. Some of these were still seeking a teaching post and will have entered teaching subsequently.

There are no initial teacher training institutions in the Surrey education authority area.

Small Schools

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to help maintain small schools in rural areas of the three counties of Yorkshire, and Humberside.

Mr. Butcher: It is for the individual local education authorities concerned to decide their policies in relation to small schools in rural areas; but my right hon. Friend provides an education support grant for the support of small rural primary schools. My right hon. Friend is also supporting a research project by the university of Leicester to evaluate the pilot projects with a view to making recommendations on practices which could be replicated successfully in other local education authorities.

Pupil Records (Access)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to be able to make regulations providing parents and older pupils with a right of access to school records, and students with a right of access to further education records.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend hopes shortly to make regulations about the keeping, disclosure and transfer of education records on pupils. A consultative document on access to further education student records will issue later this year.

Superannuation Contributions

Mr. Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information is available to his Department as to the assumptions made by local education authorities concerning employers' superannuation contributions for teachers in drawing up their budgets for 1989-90; how many authorities are known to have made no adjustment at that time for the reduction in contribution rates taken into account in the block grant settlement; if he will estimate the number of authorities likely to have *(a)* 1·4 per cent. and *(b)* 0·4 per cent. reductions in superannuation contributions in hand to offset the underfunding of the school teachers' pay rise for 1989-90; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The local authority settlement for 1989-90, which preceded the report of the Government actuary assumed savings of about 1 per cent. in employers' contributions to the teachers' superannuation scheme. We do not know how many authorities took the 1 per cent. savings into account in drawing up their budgets for 1989-90. Following the actuary's report authorities generally were able to take into account the additional saving of 0·4 per cent.

School Governors

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has received any representations about the guidance being given to school governors on their new responsibilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Various representations have been received. In particular, many school governors and others have commended the DES publication "School Governors: A Guide To The Law".

Women Teachers (Pensions)

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will exempt women teachers from the payment of additional superannuation contributions to cover equal pension rights in the period 1982 to 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: No. When the inequality between widows and widowers benefits was removed in respect of service after 6 April 1988, it was agreed that women teachers should be given the opportunity to pay additional contributions to cover their service before that date for widowers benefits. Contributions before 6 April 1988 did not cover service for widowers' benefits and such service must therefore be paid for.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the outcome of the meeting of Education Ministers in Brussels on 22 May including the negotiations over the Lingua programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: European Community Education Ministers reached agreement on 22 May over a Lingua programme which is expected to cost £130 million from

the European Community budget over the period 1990-1994. In support of policies adopted by member states to promote increased competence in modern languages, the programme will support periods of integrated study in another member state for foreign languages students in higher education; assist teachers of foreign languages in schools and in further and adult education to extend their professional skills, particularly through periods spent in another member state; provide support in the field of language training for the existing work force; and encourage the development of exchanges with institutions in other member states for young people in professional, vocational or technical training.

The Select Committee on European Legislation, having considered my Department's explanatory memoranda dated 17 February and 8 May 1989, on 10 May recommended a debate, but it was found impossible to arrange this before the Education Ministers' meeting on 22 May. Given the possible danger of a vote being taken on the basis of article 128, which requires a simple majority, I had informed the Chairman of the Select Committee on 17 May that, if unanimity could be secured under article 235 on a proposal acceptable to the Government, I judged I should not withhold United Kingdom agreement. This proved to be the case and the programme I have described was adopted by unanimity under articles 128 and 235. I regret that in these circumstances it was impossible to complete the normal scrutiny process.

Education Ministers also agreed to negotiation of the extension to EFTA countries of the Community programme on co-operation between universities and industry in technology training. It was accepted that agreement was without prejudice to our case before the European Court of Justice, contesting the legal validity of the Council's adoption of the second phase of the programme under article 128. Ministers also agreed to resolutions on educational provision for the children of gipsies and other travelling groups.

Science Base

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what objectives the Government hope to achieve from its £1·6 billion expenditure in the current year on the science base.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The purposes and objectives of DES expenditure on research are set out in a document on the new system of resource management introduced on 1 April by the research councils, Her Majesty's Treasury and my Department. A copy has been placed in the Library but the relevant section is reproduced below:

1. The purposes of DES expenditure on research are, and should continue to be:

For the good of the United Kingdom:

to advance knowledge and technological capability;

to help produce qualified manpower at postgraduate level; and in these and other ways;

to help achieve economic, social and cultural benefits.

The overall strategy objective should therefore be:

"To develop and maintain a world competitive United Kingdom Science Base in higher education and the Research Councils, characterised by creativity and vitality, which: delivers high-quality basic and strategic research output predominantly in areas with promise of commercial exploitability and other useful applications; and contributes to the preparation of the well-educated manpower which the United Kingdom economy needs."

2. The main objectives are:

Quality

(a) to increase the output of high quality research from the Science Base; and

(b) to increase the quality and utility of postgraduate education; by

(c) enhancing the research capability of the Science Base, notably through greater concentration of research activities and more selective allocation of resources;

(d) ensuring that basic research is properly and adequately sustained, so that creative scientists have opportunity to develop the original insights from which new inventions flow;

(e) increasing the responsiveness of the Science Base, having regard both to scientific opportunities and perceived national needs, and the balance between them;

(f) increasing international collaboration in science where this gives good value for money—for instance where necessary concentration cannot be achieved at the national level—and having particular regard to possibilities for co-operation within the EC.

Exploitability

In collaboration with industry and other Departments as appropriate:

(g) to move the balance of research activity towards exploitable areas, having regard both to commercial uses and to those which bring other benefits, such as in health and in the environment;

(h) to promote greater common purpose between the Science Base and its users—in industry, commerce and government;

(i) to be more selective in the choice of research activities, with particular regard to exploitability as well as quality;

(j) to increase inderdisciplinary collaboration in research and related postgraduate education;

(k) to increase the commercial exploitation and other uses of research outputs;

(l) to further commercial and other use of Science Base facilities and capabilities where appropriate.

Manpower

In addition to the manpower aspects of the preceding objectives:

(m) to secure a better match between support for postgraduate training and the needs of United Kingdom employers;

(n) to secure an adequate supply of, and better mobility for, very highly qualified manpower for research in industry and the Science Base;

(o) to improve opportunities for the most able researchers who might otherwise leave research or emigrate;

(p) to improve the management, career development and training of scientists in the Science Base.

A Coherent, Efficient and Effective System

As a means to achieving the former objectives:

(q) to bring about greater coherence between higher education and the Research Councils, by promoting shared objectives, concerted planning, and where appropriate shared resources;

(r) to develop better communication and understanding between the Science Base and the users of its outputs, notably industry and commerce;

(s) to increase the efficiency and quality of research management and administration in the Science Base;

(t) to increase accountability for the allocation and use of expenditure on research, notably in higher education;

(u) to promote further development of monitoring and evaluation of research policy and performance by the Science Base itself;

(v) to develop, monitor and evaluate policy for DES expenditure on research;

(w) to raise the level of United Kingdom understanding of, and regard for, the role of the Science Base in national life and especially in wealth creation.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Anglo-Irish Agreement

Mr. Temple-Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on developments since the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Tom King: I have arranged for a paper to be prepared outlining developments since the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Copies of the paper are being placed in the Library. The text is as follows:

DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THE SIGNING OF THE ANGLO-IRISH AGREEMENT

Introduction—The Agreement

1. The Prime Minister, the Right Hon. Margaret Thatcher, FRS, MP, and the then Taoiseach, Dr. Garret FitzGerald TD, signed a formal and binding agreement between their two Governments on 15 November 1985 with the aims of promoting peace and stability in Northern Ireland; creating a new climate of friendship and co-operation between the people of the two countries; and improving co-operation in combating terrorism. The agreement deals in particular with the status of Northern Ireland, (article 1), in which both Governments:

(a) affirm that any change in the status of Northern Ireland would only come about with the consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland.

(b) recognise that the present wish of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland is for no change in the status of Northern Ireland.

(c) declare that, if in the future a majority of the people of Northern Ireland clearly wish for and formally consent to the establishment of a united Ireland, they will introduce and support in the respective Parliaments legislation to give effect to that wish.

The agreement also provides for the establishment of an intergovernmental conference in which the Irish Government put forward views and proposals concerning stated aspects of Northern Ireland affairs and in which the promotion of cross-border co-operation is discussed and in which determined efforts are made to resolve any differences between the two Governments.

2. Since the signature of the agreement a number of measures and new arrangements have been introduced affecting the lives of both sections of the community in Northern Ireland. While it is true that some of these were already in hand before the agreement was signed, it is clear that there has been great benefit from the new and substantive co-operation and dialogue between the British and Irish governments established under the agreement.

The work of the Intergovernmental Conference and its Secretariat

3. The intergovernmental conference was set up, under article 2 of the agreement, to deal, on a regular basis, with political matters; security and related matters; legal matters (including the administration of justice); and the promotion of cross-border co-operation. It has provided a valuable framework for the conduct of Anglo-Irish relations with particular regard to Northern Ireland. The conference, supported by the secretariat, has provided a forum which has enabled Ministers and senior officials of both sides to maintain close and frequent contact, which has given them a greater awareness of the political and other realities against which the other side has to operate. It has thus reduced the risk of misunderstandings arising over particular incidents and increased the likelihood of problems being resolved in a spirit of co-operation and without acrimony. It has enabled each side to take decisions within its jurisdiction with greater knowledge and awareness of the likely impact and reactions on the other side. It has also been welcomed internationally, where it has been recognised as establishing a better relationship between the British and Irish Governments and as making a very positive contribution to addressing the fundamental problems of Northern Ireland.

4. The conference has met frequently since its first meeting on 11 December 1985. The issues discussed by the conference have been summarised in the joint statements published after each conference meeting. The continuing effort to improve cross-border security co-operation is an important and regular item on the agenda of conference meetings. A wide range of other matters has also been considered; and the discussions in the conference are helpful, among other things, in ensuring that minority concerns are taken into account in subsequent policy decisions by the Government. Thus, for example, the Government's proposals which have led to the introduction of further fair employment legislation for Northern Ireland have been discussed at many conference meetings. Other subjects which have benefited from regular discussion include the enhancement of confidence in the system of justice and relations between the community and the security forces. The outcome of many of these discussions is reflected in the body of this paper.

5. Another area in which discussions have proved valuable is the "Making Belfast Work" project launched by the Government in July 1988. The project is aimed at increasing progress in tackling the problems in the disadvantaged areas of Belfast; additional resources have been provided and the "Strategy for Action" was published in January 1989. A detailed programme of further action planned in these areas in the financial year 1989-90, amounting to £15 million in government expenditure, was announced in March 1989. An initiative to stimulate the regeneration of Londonderry was launched in December 1988.

6. Article 3 of the agreement states that:

A Secretariat shall be established by the two Governments to service the Conference on a continuing basis in the discharge of its functions as set out in this Agreement."

The secretariat is responsible for making the arrangements for conference meetings. This includes the holding of preparatory discussions between officials, agreeing the agenda between the two sides, recording the discussions at the conference itself, and, as appropriate, ensuring that work agreed on at the conference is taken forward.

7. The Secretariat was established at Maryfield outside Belfast. It is headed by British and Irish joint secretaries, with a small supporting staff. As agreed by the two Governments at the first meeting of the conference, the secretariat has functioned as a continuing channel of communication between the two sides on all matters covered by the articles of the agreement. It enables messages to be passed promptly and potential problems to be swiftly addressed. It has also served as a forum for each side to explain the broad aspects of its security policy and as a channel to convey to the British authorities at high levels the views of the Irish Government in respect of the interests of the nationalist community.

8. The secretariat is not a "complaints bureau" nor does it have executive or operational responsibilities.

9. Set out below is a summary of the progress made under each main area of activity of the agreement.

Rights and identities of the two traditions; human rights and the prevention of discrimination.

10. Progress has been achieved in the following areas:

(i) Legislation has been enacted ending the anomaly whereby "I" voters have been unable to vote in district council elections. (The Elected Authorities (NI) Act 1989).

(ii) The Flags and Emblems Act (NI) 1954 has been repealed.

(iii) The Fair Employment (NI) Bill which has been introduced in the current parliamentary Session provides for further measures to eliminate religious discrimination and promote equality of opportunity in employment, including:

(a) compulsory monitoring of religious composition of workforce and periodic review of employment practices;

(b) establishing a new, and strengthened Fair Employment Commission (and a new Fair Employment Tribunal with wide enforcement powers);

(c) economic sanctions—those in breach of statutory obligations ineligible to tender for public sector business or for Government grants;

(d) a new code of practice to be drawn up by the new commission;

(e) The commission may issue enforceable directions obliging employers to take affirmative action measures and may issue notices relating to goals and timetables.

(iv) The police have been given greater powers to control parades and marches which are likely to give rise to provocation. (Public Order (NI) Order 1987);

(v) The law on prevention of incitement to hatred has been strengthened. (Public Order (NI) Order 1987).

(vi) *Irish Language*

Irish views on the place in the curriculum of the Irish language were taken into account during the formal consultation on education reform in Northern Ireland;Gpidance has been issued to Government Departments on the use in official business of Irish personal names and on the handling of correspondence in Irish;Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland (OSNI) has produced and published a dual-language map and gazetteer of Northern Ireland;

A question on the Irish language will be included in the 1991 census.

Role and Composition of Public Bodies

11. The British side has provided the Irish side with briefing on the arrangements for public appointments in Northern Ireland and provides information about forthcoming vacancies, and has considered any suggestions made by the Irish side.

Security Policy, Relations between the Security Forces and the Community, and Prisons Policy

12. The Government believe that creating wider and stronger public support for the police and the armed forces in Northern Ireland is as essential as progress in political, security and economic policies. Security force commanders seek to ensure through training and briefing that the security forces treat members of the public with the highest standards of courtesy at all times. The conference has devoted considerable attention to ways of improving relations between the security forces and the community. The Irish side have put forward a number of proposals in this area. Measures taken include:

Explicit confirmation of the policy pursued since 1984 that, wherever possible, patrols by the armed forces that are likely to come into contact with the public should be accompanied by a member of the RUC;

Improvements in the procedure for handling complaints against the police, including the establishment of an independent commission for police complaints. (Police (NI) Order 1987);

The RUC has made considerable efforts to increase the level of recruitment from the minority community;

The RUC Chief Constable has introduced a new code of conduct for all RUC officers (placed in the House of Commons Library on 15 March 1988);

The Police Authority for Northern Ireland and the Chief Constable of the RUC have jointly written to district councils proposing a widely representative scheme of police/community liaison committees based on police sub-divisions;

The forthcoming Police and Criminal Evidence (NI) Order will introduce a statutory requirement for the police to liaise with the local community;

The Army has introduced new procedures to ensure that, wherever possible, allegations of misbehaviour against members of the armed forces will be resolved with a response to the complainant within three to four weeks;

A committee of British officials has been established to keep under review the number and nature of allegations of misbehaviour by members of the security forces and the speed and effectiveness with which they are handled.

13. In June 1988 the Secretary of State announced a special review of all the remaining special category life sentence prisoners, and shortly afterwards a special review of the remaining Secretary of State's pleasure prisoners who had served more than eight years. Details of the initial results of the SOSP review were made public shortly before Christmas, and the initial results of the special category review were announced in March.

Legal matters, including the Administration of Justice

14. A number of improvements have been made in the system of justice in Northern Ireland, which help improve the confidence of the minority community in that system. These include:

Making all arrest powers exercisable only on the basis of reasonable suspicion—Northern Ireland Emergency Provisions Act (EPA) 1987

Reducing the maximum period that a suspect can be held without further ministerial authority from 72 to 48 hours (EPA 1987)

Establishing a statutory right of access to a solicitor within 48 hours of arrest (EPA 1987)

Providing that suspects are entitled at the time of their arrest to inform a friend or relative of their arrest and whereabouts (EPA 1987)

Instituting annual independent reviews of the Emergency Provisions Acts, and establishing a fixed term of five years on those Acts (EPA 1987)

Statutory changes to the admissibility of confession evidence, to make clear that confessions obtained by the use or threat of violence are not admissible and that confessions can be excluded in the interests of justice (EPA 1987)

new powers for scheduled offences to be heard outside Belfast. (EPA 1987).

regular publication of statistics on the operation of the EPA.

a number of measures have been taken in recent years to reduce the delay between first remand and trial, which for most cases has been significantly reduced since 1985.

under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 (Amendment) Order 1986, a number of offences were added to those which the Attorney-General is capable of certifying out of the scheduled mode of trial.

And in the near future

the Police and Criminal Evidence (NI) Order will, subject to the approval of Parliament, provide the same safeguards for persons detained for police questioning under the ordinary criminal law as are provided in England and Wales in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

a guide to the exercise of emergency powers will be publishd and made widely available.

15. There has been continuous discussion of extradition and related matters to ensure that fugitive offenders are brought to justice. The conference is concerned with policy aspects of extradition and extraterritorial jurisdiction as between north and south and its discussions have improved the understanding of the relevant authorities on these matters. This has helped to ensure that agreement on the need for fair and effective procedures for extradition and for the exercise of extraterritorial jurisdiction is matched by understanding of the procedural and other requirements. Significant developments have been the ratification by the Irish Government of the European convention on the suppression of terrorism, and the narrowing down of the political offence exception, initially by the Irish courts. The two Governments have also reaffirmed the importance of making use of the Criminal Law (Jurisdiction) Act 1976 and the Criminal Jurisdiction Act 1975 in appropriate cases. To try to ensure effective procedures for dealing with the problem of fugitive offenders, a wide range of issues concerning extradition law and procedure have been kept under review. These have included the provision for arrest and detention, the arrangements for the transfer of prisoners where extradition is ordered, and the procedural and other requirements which must be satisfied before extradition can be ordered.

Security Co-operation

16. The conference has provided the framework through which security co-operation has been developed and extended. Much of the detail must obviously remain confidential but progress has been made in each of the areas identified in the agreement including joint threat assessments, the exchange of information, liaison structures, technical co-operation, training and operational planning. As well as the provision for regular ministerial discussion of security matters at the conference, there is now a series of regular meetings between the two police forces at headquarters and

operational levels under the direction of the Chief Constable of the RUC and the Commissioner of the Garda Siochana with whom the operational responsibility lies. These meetings are concerned with a wide range of operational, technical and communications matters to improve the day to day co-operation between the two forces. Among the procedures agreed is one for close co-operation in dealing with suspect terrorist devices located near the border. This procedure has been used on a number of occasions and has proved of great benefit to the bomb disposal experts on both sides. It is the firm intention of both police forces to achieve further improvements in co-operation using the new structures which have been established under the auspices of the conference.

Cross-Border Co-operation on Economic, Social and Cultural Matters

17. The most significant achievement in the field of economic and social co-operation under article 10 has been the establishment of the International Fund for Ireland. This has already received contributions of more than $120 million from the United States, Canada and New Zealand. The fund has also received the bulk of the first instalment of the European Community contribution of 15 million ecu a year (about £10 million). By the end of February 1989 the fund had approved support of over UK £52 million to over 1,000 projects, which hold out the prospect of some 4,500 new permanent jobs, the preservation of 1,500 more, and the provision of 4,000 jobs in specific construction projects. The work of the fund has involved close, practical cross border co-operation at many levels. As it moves into its second phase the fund is devoting a greater proportion of its resources to the areas of greatest need, both in Northern Ireland (which receives 75 per cent. of the resources disbursed by the fund), and in the six border counties of the Republic: of the grants approved by end-February 1989, some two thirds are located in areas of greatest need. The fund has also established investment companies in both Northern Ireland and the Republic to provide venture capital, either through equity or loan, on the basis of structly commercial criteria.

18. There has also been discussion, under the auspices of the agreement, of further cross-border co-operation on tourism, roads, transport, water quality, fisheries, education and social welfare, as well as consideration of social and economic problems in the north-west. In the field of health, Ministers have introduced arrangemets for referrals for certain specialised treatments between Belfast and Dublin; undertaken co-ordinated health promotion and immunisation campaigns; and ensured exchange of contracts and plans to deal with major accidents. The possibilities of joint investment in specialised equipment and of co-operation in procurement of supplies are being pursued.

19. This paper concerns the main areas of activity of the conference. It shows that, under the agreement, there have been constructive and useful exchanges on a wide range of matters. The review of the working of the conference, now being completed, looks to the further development of co-operation within the framework of the agreement.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Payroll Giving

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much was raised for charity through the payroll giving scheme in (i) 1987-88 and (ii) 1988-89.

Mr. Scott: The amounts raised through the joint payroll giving schemes solely of the Departments of Health and of Social Security were as follows:

Year	*Amount £*
1987-88	[1]1,582
1988-89	45,624

[1]The scheme became operational from 1 March 1988.

Residential Care

Mr. Wolfson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what action is open to him to ensure that the necessary funds are available to provide residential care for the severely handicapped when top-up funding from the local authority is not available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Income support is available to help people in private and voluntary residential care and nursing homes meet the fees they pay. The same help is available to temporary residents as to permanent ones.

Homelessness

Mr. Wolfson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what studies have been done to monitor the effects of changes in social security benefits on the number of homeless living rough in London and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We are not aware of any study specifically of this issue. The causes of living rough are complex and we believe it would be difficult to isolate the effects of any single factor.

Pensioners

Mr. Wolfson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many men and women who have reached retirement age before 1 October will fall outside the scope of the abolition of the retirement pensions earnings rule.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The earnings rule only applies for the first five years after pension age (65 for a man and 60 for a woman). Individuals aged over 70 (men) and 65 (women) have always been able to earn as much as they wish, with no reduction in state retirement pension; and they will continue to be able to do so after 1 October. There are approximately 7·7 million retirement pensioners aged over 70 (men) and 65 (women) who will not be affected by the abolition of the retirement pension earnings rule.

Community Care Grants

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will state the community care grants budget for each of the Liverpool Department of Social Security offices for each of the past two years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Details of the social fund budget allocations for 1988-89 and 1989-90 are in the Library.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will extend the scope of the community care grants; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has any plans to allow persons on invalidity benefit who have been institutionalised to receive community care grants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to my hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) on 16 December at columns *750-51*.

Social Fund

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if his Department has established any procedures for monitoring claimants who apply for social fund payments.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have commissioned the social policy research unit at the university of York to carry out research into the operation of the social fund. This research will include studies of samples of social fund applicants.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to start the social fund consolidation training courses for social fund officers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Consideration is currently being given to deciding what further training might be required by social fund officers and what form such training might take. At present, social fund officers receive a comprehensive three week training course covering all aspects of the social fund.

Computers

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the current use and effectiveness of the microcomputer projects in his local offices.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The microcomputer projects have been in daily use in local offices for some time. The micros help calculate new income support claims, help process social fund applications, automate bulk payments of claimants' fuel bills, collate management information statistics and aid the speedy location of claimants' files. Since their introduction, significant enhancements have been added to improve performance.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the number of occasions on which there has been a breakdown of micro-computers used in all his local offices since the inception of the social fund; and if he will make a statement on the effects of such breakdowns on the efficiency of the service.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is as follows:

A11 LOMP systems: The number of breakdown faults reported to the LOMP central help desk for the period 1 April 1988 to 31 March 1989 was 2,161 for all LOMP systems. Contingency arrangements for ensuring the efficiency of the service exist for all systems and these were complemented when necessary.

Social Fund System: The number of breakdown faults reported to the LOMP central help desk for the period 1 April 1988 to 31 March 1989 was 992 for the social fund system. Contingency arrangements for ensuring the efficiency of the service exist for social fund and these were implemented when necessary.

Disability

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to receive and publish the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys reports to his Department relating to the potential demand from persons with disabilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: In the period up to July 1989 the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys is publishing a series of reports on the findings of the surveys of disability in Great Britain carried out between 1985 and 1988. Three reports have already been published covering the prevalance of disability among adults, the financial circumstances of disabled adults in private households and the prevalence of disability among children. The remaining reports will cover further aspects of the circumstances of disabled adults, including use of services, transport and employment; the financial circumstances of families with a disabled child living in private households and further aspects of the circumstances of disabled children, including use of services, transport and education. Taken together, the six reports will provide the most comprehensive and detailed information ever collected about disabled people in this country.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to review the disability benefit system; and what plans he has to consult on this.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my replies to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) on 17 April 1988 at columns 10-11 and 22 May 1988 at column *428*.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many complaints have been received by his Department concerning doctors' conduct in examining claimants for disability benefits; how many have been removed from approved Department of Social Security lists; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Doctors working on behalf of the Department conduct almost 700,000 medical examinations each year on claimants for disability benefits. Although a central register is not kept on the number of complaints received concerning the conduct of doctors in examining claimants, those which are received are all thoroughly investigated and represent but a very small fraction of the total numbers of medical examinations undertaken. Very occasionally it has proved necessary to cease using a doctor whose conduct continues to provoke complaints, but, again, no central register is kept of the numbers.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will tabulate the number of successful applications for the review of attendance allowance and break down these figures into those who sought review because they were dissatisfied with the original decision and those who did so because their condition had deteriorated; and if he will give the figures for 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is in the table.

Number of decisions reviewed and revised by the Attendance Allowance Board and its delegates by reason for review 1985-88

Year	*Number of decisions reviewed and revised*	*Reason for review*	
		Dissatisfaction	*Relevant change of circumstances*
1985	30,101	12,737	17,364
1986[1]	30,248	13,644	16,604
1987[2]	43,123	19,190	23,933
1988[3]	39,513	17,473	22,040

[1] To 14 November 1986.
[2] From 15 November 1986 to 8 January 1988.
[3] From 9 January 1988.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is the average cost per claim for attendance allowance per year for each year since 1985 for

those claims that were *(a)* granted, *(b)* granted on review and *(c)* refused on review; and if he will break this down into the costs of arbitration and of fees;

(2) what is the average cost per claim for mobility allowance per year for each year since 1985 for those claims that were *(a)* granted, *(b)* granted on review, *(c)* granted on appeal and *(d)* refused on review; and if he will break this down into the cost of administration and doctors' fees.

Mr. Scott: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by what methods doctors are recruited to examine claimants for attendance and mobility allowances; how their performance is monitored; if he has any plans to recruit other suitably qualified persons to perform this role; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Claimants for the attendance allowance and mobility allowance are examined by doctors selected and trained by the regional office senior medical officer (ROSMO) from registered medical practitioners who will have either made an application to be considered for this role or been nominated by their peers for this task.

The doctors selected are usually recruited from among general practitioners within the locality who will have demonstrable knowledge of local socio-economic conditions, established experience in general medical practice and evident expertise in conducting medical examinations. Before a doctor undertakes examinations on claimants for the attendance and mobility allowance guidance is given by the ROSMO, or regional office medical officer (ROMO), on the background of, and requirements for, that particular benefit. This instruction is supplemented by written guidance notes for reference. Initially, the performance of the examining doctor is closely monitored by the ROSMO who will institute further training sessions as appropriate; thereafter, there is some monitoring of reports by the ROSMO to identify any further need for guidance. The form, nature and pattern of such monitoring may vary and are dictated by the individual ROSMO.

By their very nature the medical examinations required for the purpose of determining eligibility for these allowances need the expertise and experience possessed by general medical practitioners who are able to provide a consistency of advice across a wide range of disabilities and age groups. In the small number of cases where a specialist opinion is required to determine diagnosis, or assist in resolving complex cases, an independent report is solicited from a consultant clinician who would possess the necessary specialist knowledge applicable to the individual case. Moreover, the Attendance Allowance Board or its delegate in the case of attendance allowance, or an independent adjudicating officer in the matter of mobility allowance, has access not only to the examining doctor's report but other evidence considered necessary, such as psychological, head teacher's and hospital's reports and so on. The present arrangements thus allow for suitably qualified persons to be approached, as necessary, in an individual case.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total number of registered disabled persons for the latest date available.

Mr. Scott: The total number of physically disabled persons registered with local authorities in England at 31 March 1987 was 1,230,632.

Loans and Grants

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total number and percentage of *(a)* budgetary loans and *(b)* community care grants awarded to the 15 client groups defined by his Department for (i) Great Britain, (ii) the northern Department of Social Security region and (iii) each of the departments of Social Security serving the Tyne and Wear area for the financial year 1988-89.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 15 May 1989]:* Provisional estimates for the year 1988-89 based on data for the period June 1988 to March 1989 are as follows:

Budgeting Loans and Community Care Grants: Numbers and percentage awards by client groups for year 1988-89

	Client Groups (see Key)																
	00	*01*	*02*	*03*	*04*	*05*	*06*	*07*	*08*	*09*	*10*	*11*	*12*	*13*	*14*	*15*	*Total awards*
Budgeting Loans																	
Great Britain	0·5	0·3	0·6	3·9	0·4	3·6	3·6	43·9	0·7	2·1	16·7	18·8	1·0	3·8	0·0	n/a	504,629
North East Region	0·3	0·3	0·7	4·1	0·4	2·7	3·0	42·8	0·8	2·2	20·9	17·6	0·9	3·3	0·0	n/a	101,558
Gateshead	0·3	0·2	0·9	4·3	0·1	2·2	3·1	43·4	0·4	2·3	23·6	15·8	0·7	2·4	0·0	n/a	2,705
Newcastle St. James	0·4	0·1	0·6	4·2	0·5	2·5	4·1	39·7	0·6	2·6	16·7	22·9	0·8	4·4	0·0	n/a	2,266
Newcastle East	0·3	0·1	1·0	4·0	0·5	3·0	3·5	45·7	0·7	2·0	16·1	20·1	0·7	2·4	0·0	n/a	1,953
Newcastle West	0·5	0·2	0·5	3·7	0·3	3·4	3·4	49·9	0·7	1·7	22·0	11·3	0·5	2·0	0·0	n/a	2,134
Wallsend	0·3	0·6	0·6	4·8	0·4	2·8	4·2	45·3	0·4	2·0	22·3	12·8	0·6	3·0	0·0	n/a	1,326
Houghton le Spring	0·1	0·6	0·5	3·6	0·6	1·6	3·4	44·6	0·3	1·5	28·7	11·3	1·4	1·7	0·0	n/a	949
Jarrow	0·7	0·3	0·8	4·2	0·3	2·2	4·0	45·6	0·5	2·8	20·4	14·7	1·0	2·4	0·0	n/a	1,231
North Shields	0·1	0·6	0·7	5·0	0·7	1·6	4·2	49·6	1·1	1·8	19·6	12·2	0·9	2·0	0·0	n/a	1,213
South Shields	0·2	0·2	0·6	4·7	0·3	3·6	5·7	42·8	1·0	1·5	16·9	18·9	0·5	3·3	0·0	n/a	1,731
Sunderland North	0·3	0·3	0·7	4·1	0·2	3·5	2·9	40·3	1·2	2·2	21·9	17·8	0·8	3·8	0·0	n/a	3,811
Sunderland South	0·3	0·1	0·9	4·0	0·2	2·9	3·3	38·3	1·1	2·5	20·5	20·1	0·7	5·1	0·0	n/a	2,388
Community Care Grants																	
Great Britain	0·4	4·5	3·7	14·3	0·9	3·4	10·0	25·2	0·7	1·5	9·5	16·4	2·0	6·3	0·0	1·1	152,574
North East Region	0·4	3·7	3·7	14·5	1·0	3·2	9·3	26·2	0·7	1·3	11·7	16·3	1·8	5·9	0·0	0·8	27,824
Gateshead	0·5	3·0	7·9	14·2	0·0	3·7	11·6	28·5	0·2	2·0	9·1	12·8	1·4	4·3	0·0	0·8	522
Newcastle St. James	0·9	4·3	3·0	18·0	0·9	3·3	7·2	18·2	1·1	1·3	6·3	27·3	2·2	6·1	0·0	0·0	475
Newcastle East	0·7	9·3	5·0	20·5	1·7	1·2	7·9	23·3	0·0	0·7	3·8	16·9	1·2	6·9	0·0	1·0	440

	Client Groups (see Key)																
	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	Total awards
Newcastle West	0·4	4·6	3·6	21·8	0·6	1·5	10·1	20·1	0·8	1·1	10·3	16·1	1·9	5·9	0·0	1·1	539
Wallsend	0·0	1·7	4·7	16·7	0·9	1·3	9·8	28·2	0·0	0·4	8·1	20·9	2·1	3·4	0·0	1·7	250
Houghton le Spring	0·5	5·5	4·1	4·1	0·5	3·2	14·5	21·8	0·5	1·8	30·9	10·0	0·9	1·8	0·0	0·0	237
Jarrow	0·0	5·1	6·8	19·5	0·6	4·5	9·9	25·7	0·3	0·8	9·0	10·7	1·7	4·8	0·0	0·6	365
North Shields	0·3	4·9	3·9	11·2	0·6	2·1	11·2	27·3	0·0	0·0	12·1	17·9	0·3	7·3	0·0	0·9	341
South Shields	0·2	2·9	3·6	17·1	1·0	1·7	10·3	26·7	0·2	1·0	7·8	18·4	2·1	6·8	0·0	0·8	546
Sunderland North	0·2	1·9	2·9	12·7	0·8	1·5	9·2	24·2	1·0	2·1	15·2	21·9	1·3	4·6	0·0	0·6	543
Sunderland South	0·3	3·7	4·0	14·4	0·8	3·2	11·2	20·5	1·1	1·3	8·3	18·9	4·5	6·9	0·0	0·8	386

n/a = Not applicable.

Key

Code	Meaning
00	Unallocated or unidentified (by default)
	Applicant or partner aged 60 or over
01	Over 80—with Income Support higher pensioner premium
02	Aged 60-79—disabled with higher pensioner premium
03	Aged 60-79—with ordinary pensioner premium, or over 60 without pensioner premium
	Applicant and partner aged under 60
04	Lone parent with Income Support disability premium
05	Family with disability premium
06	Other with disability premium
07	Lone parent without disability premium
08	Signs at UBO quarterly with Income Support family premium
09	Signs at UBO quarterly without family premium
10	Signing unemployed or with training allowance with family premium
11	Signing unemployed or with training allowance without family premium
12	Others with family premium
13	Others without family premium
14	Involved in trade dispute
15	Applicant not in receipt of Income Support

National Insurance Contributions

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the most recent estimate of the cost to the national insurance fund of the 2 per cent. inducement under sections 1 and 7 of the Social Security Act 1986 in 1989-90 and subsequent years; and how much of the cost in 1989-90 relates to contributions in respect of 1987-88 and 1988-89, respectively.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 15 May 1989]:* Precise information is not yet available on the number of persons who will be eligible for incentive payments in 1989-90. The latest estimate is that incentive payments paid in 1989-90 will be £850 million, of which £350 million relates to 1987-88 and £500 million to 1988-89.

Source: Government Actuary's Department.

Unemployment Insurance

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what reviews are planned within the next five years to consider unemployment insurance being handled by the private sector.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No such reviews are planned.

Social Fund

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of *(a)* budgeting loans and *(b)* community care grants were awarded to each of the 15 client groups defined by his Department for (i) Great Britain as a whole, (ii) the north-east region and (iii) each of the four offices serving the Bradford metropolitan area, for the financial year 1988-89.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[pursuant to his reply, 25 April 1989, c. 496-98]:* I regret that the reply given has been found to contain an error. The information requested with the amended figures is as follows.

Social fund budgeting loans and community care grants: Estimated percentage awards by client groups for year 1988-89

	Client Group (see key)															
	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15
Budgeting Loans																
Great Britain	0·5	0·3	0·6	3·9	0·4	3·6	3·6	43·9	0·7	2·1	16·7	18·8	1·0	3·8	0·0	n/a
North East Region	0·3	0·3	0·7	4·1	0·4	2·7	3·0	42·8	0·8	2·2	20·0	17·6	0·9	3·3	0·0	n/a
Bradford East	0·3	0·3	0·2	3·3	0·4	2·4	2·5	45·3	0·3	1·9	19·5	18·5	1·9	3·1	0·0	n/a
Bradford South	0·2	0·3	0·5	2·9	0·2	2·1	2·3	51·8	0·7	3·0	14·3	17·6	0·8	3·3	0·0	n/a
Bradford West	0·4	0·5	0·3	5·0	0·2	2·6	3·5	38·0	1·7	5·6	10·7	25·1	1·2	5·1	0·0	n/a
Keighley	0·7	0·3	0·6	5·7	0·5	4·1	4·1	42·5	1·3	2·3	15·3	18·1	0·4	4·3	0·0	n/a
Community Care Grants																
Great Britain	0·4	4·5	3·7	14·3	0·9	3·4	10·0	25·2	0·7	1·5	9·5	16·4	2·0	6·3	0·0	1·1
North East Region	0·4	3·7	3·7	14·5	1·0	3·2	9·3	26·2	0·7	1·3	11·6	16·3	1·9	5·3	0·0	1·0
Bradford East	0·0	1·3	1·5	10·2	0·6	1·9	6·2	32·6	0·2	0·6	8·7	28·7	0·4	4·0	0·0	3·2

	Client Group (see key)														
	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15
Bradford South	0·3	0·3	2·0	8·1	2·0	2·3	8·3	32·8	1·0	0·8	8·3	24·0	2·0	6·3	0·0	1·5
Bradford West	0·9	3·1	2·6	9·7	1·2	0·9	7·3	21·4	0·5	3·8	4·9	27·9	3·3	9·6	0·0	2·6
Keighley	0·0	1·6	1·2	5·6	0·0	2·4	4·0	39·2	0·4	0·4	9·2	20·8	2·4	8·0	0·0	4·8

Key code Meaning

00 Unallocated or not known

Applicant or partner aged 60 or over

01 over 80—with Income Support higher pensioner premium
02 aged 60-79—disabled with higher pensioner premium
03 aged 60-79—with ordinary pensioner premium, or over 60 without pensioner premium

Applicant and partner aged under 60.

04 lone parent with Income Support disability premium
05 family with disability premium
06 other with disability premium
07 lone parent without disability premium
08 signs at UBO quarterly with Income Support family premium
09 signs at UBO quarterly without family premium
10 signing unemployed or with training allowance with family premium
11 signing unemployed or with training allowance without family premium
12 others with family premium
13 others without family premium

14 involved in trade dispute

15 applicant not in receipt of Income Support.

DEFENCE

Military Accidents

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out the key statisics for military aircraft accidents over the last 10 years.

Mr. Neubert: I refer the hon. Member to tables 5.8 and 5.9 of the recent Statement on the Defence Estimates (Cm. 675-II) and to successive Statements since 1980, in which are to be found the relevant information about military aircraft accidents.

Land (Wales)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department has any plans to acquire more land for the use of the armed forces in Wales.

Mr. Neubert: We are determined that the defence estate should be no larger than necessary. But we continue to seek to acquire additional land particularly on the periphery of existing training areas to meet the increased needs of the armed forces, and to accommodate the large safety areas which modern weapons demand.

Radiation (Compensation)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to announce new compensation arrangements for British ex-service men who have suffered radiation ailments arising from their duties.

Mr. Sainsbury: I will write to the hon. Member.

Night Flying

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the outcome of the six-month trial of the revised military night-flying system introduced in October 1988.

Mr. Neubert: A revised military night low level flying system was introduced last year on a six-month trial basis. The trial period has now ended and the operation of the revised system has been reviewed. The review concluded that the revised arrangements were successful in increasing the co-ordination of activity at night and improving deconfliction procedures and that, with some refinements to improve utilisation, the revised system should therefore be retained. It is planned that the further refinements, which include centralising the co-ordination of the system and the responsibility for deconfliction at the tactical booking centre at RAF West Drayton, will be introduced from 1 June this year.

European Fighter Aircraft

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further progress is being made in developing the European fighter aircraft.

Mr. Sainsbury: I will write to the hon. Member.

SCOTLAND

New Business

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what his Department is planning to spend in the next financial year to encourage new business development in Scotland; and what was the comparable level of planning five years ago.

Mr. Lang: Comprehensive figures in the form requested are not available. A wide range of programmes operated by my Department are designed, either in whole or in part, to promote business development in Scotland. However, planned provision for regional assistance schemes, which are directly linked to industrial development and wealth creation among businesses, for 1990-91 is £120 million. The Government's public expenditure plans published each year include provision for three forward years. The level of provision planned three years ago for regional assistance schemes in 1990-91 was £110 million.

Erskine Bridge

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects the outstanding debt on the Erskine bridge to be finally paid off.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is not possible to specify a date.

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current toll charge on the Erskine bridge; when it was last increased; and to what figure.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Current toll charges, which have been in operation since November 1981, are as follows:

	Pence
Motor cycles	10
Cars and light goods vehicles	30
Heavy goods vehicles	80
Heavy goods vehicles (concessionary rate)	50

159. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total debt on the Erskine bridge for the year 1979-80; and what it was for each succeeding year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Total outstanding debt for 1979-80 and succeeding years is as follows:

	£ million
1979-80	15·49
1980-81	19·90
1981-82	24·92
1982-83	30·50
1983-84	37·04
1984-85	44·93
1985-86	53·68
1986-87	63·26
1987-88	73·68
1988-89	n/a

n/a not available.

Community Charge (Advertising)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the total budget allocated to the Scottish Information Office for the production, broadcasting and publishing of adverts relating to eligibility for community charge rebates; and how much has been spent on *(a)* TV advertisements and *(b)* press advertisements to the latest available date.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 22 May 1989]:* Expenditure on television public information campaigns on the community charge rebate scheme was £308,000. The rebate scheme was also featured in press advertisment campaigns on the community charge, particularly in the autumn 1988 and the spring 1989 campaigns, the cost of which totalled £181,000.

WALES

Middle Schools

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a list showing the numbers of middle schools by size *(a)* in relation to pupil numbers and *(b)* in relation to the group size defined in the school teachers' pay and conditions document.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: There was one middle school in Wales in January 1988. It had 78 pupils and was group 4 under the school teachers' pay and conditions document criterion.

Secondary Schools

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a list showing the numbers of secondary schools by size *(a)* in relation to pupil numbers and *(b)* in relation to the group size defined in the school teachers' pay and conditions document.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information in respect of January 1988 is as follows:

Number of pupils	*Number of secondary schools*
Under 400	13
401-600	37
601-800	51
801-1,000	61
1,001-1,500	64
1,501-2,000	6

School teachers' pay and conditions document group number	*Number of secondary schools*
7	4
8	24
9	28
10	56
11	78
12	29
13	12
14	1

Primary Schools

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a list showing the numbers of primary schools by size *(a)* in relation to pupil numbers and *(b)* in relation to the group size defined in the school teachers' pay and conditions document.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information in respect of January 1988 is as follows:

Full-time and part-time pupils numbers	*Number of schools*
Up to 25	77
26-50	221
51-100	342
101-200	615
201-300	380
301-400	97
401-600	21

School teachers pay and conditions document group number	*Number of schools*
1	314
2	331
3	304
4	556
5	187
6	58
7	8

Ambulances (A55)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the implications for patients in Gwynedd needing emergency hospital treatment, arising from the road works on the A55 road holding up ambulances en route to hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Temporary traffic restrictions on the A55 in Gwynedd to allow completion of trunk road improvements have been imposed in close co-operation with the emergency services. The administration of contingency plans is the responsibility of each service involved. However, I am advised that patients who require urgent treatment at a district general hospital will be taken to Bodelwyddan if there are difficulties in reaching Bangor. Should it prove necessary the medical services can call on helicopters from RAF Valley for assistance.

Felinheli Bypass

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what date the Felinheli bypass on the A48 was first put into the Welsh Office roads preparation pool; when the first draft bypass plan was put out for public consultation; when the most recent plan was put out to public consultation; whether his most recently favoured route has now been confirmed in detail; what is the latest target date for commencing that work; and when is it planned that the bypass will open.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Felinheli bypass was first put into the Welsh Office preparation pool in 1971. A feasibility study into various routes for a bypass was carried out in 1971 and the selected route was protected for planning control purposes in December 1972. There has been no public consultation but an exhibition of the revised protected route was held in December 1985. Draft orders were published in November-December 1987 and, as a result of objections received, a public inquiry was held in May 1988. The inspector's report has been received and is under consideration. The scheme is programmed to start in the medium term, ie April 1991-March 1994 as shown in the recently published edition of "Roads in Wales", and will take two years to construct.

Plant Breeding Station (Aberystwyth)

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about the future of the Welsh plant breeding station, Gogerddan, Aberystwyth.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Welsh plant breeding station is part of the Agricultural and Food Research Council's Institute for Grassland and Animal Production and, as such, is the responsibility of that research council. The council has been supportive of the station in the past, and I would expect it to be so in the future.

Set-aside Scheme

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about the operation of the set-aside scheme in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: There were 35 applications for set-aside in 1988-89; 31 of these have been approved and four were withdrawn.

The scheme will be reopening for the 1989-90 season shortly.

TRANSPORT

Channel Tunnel

94. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the environmental impact study being undertaken for British Rail of the high-speed rail link through Kent meets the requirements for such studies as defined by the European Community.

Mr. Portillo: British Rail and its consultants are in consultation with the Government to ensure that these requirements are met.

Humber Bridge

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent discussions he has had with the Humber bridge authorities concerning outstanding debt; whether any amount has been written off; and when he expects the overall debt on the bridge to be finally paid off.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There have been no recent discussions, and no debt has been written off. The date at which the debt is written off will depend on various factors, including future toll levels. When my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State reaches a decision on the inspector's report, following last year's inquiry into proposals to raise tolls, we shall discuss the debts of the bridge with the bridge board.

Severn Bridge

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the repair and renewal work on the Severn bridge will be completed; and what is the current estimated total cost of this work.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The recently awarded contract for the resurfacing should be completed around the end of next year. The estimated total cost of the repair and renewal work for the strengthening of the crossing is £69·1 million.

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive the report of the inspector who conducted the inquiry into the Government's proposal to increase toll charges on the Severn bridge.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This is a matter for the inspector, who is working on his report.

Central London Rail Study

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has made a decision about the options contained in the central London rail study; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Further work on the proposed options is currently taking place. We hope to make a decision on the way ahead later in the year.

Highways (Costs)

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the latest figure for the drainage cost of public highways in Britain.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No general statistics are kept of the cost of draining public highways. I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave him on 13 December last *Official Report* column *520*, for the latest figures of the cost in England of maintaining road drainage. It falls to highway authorities to meet the costs of providing and maintaining drainage within the highway and to water authorities to meet the costs of dealing with the surface water discharged from it.

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the latest figure for the cost of lighting public highways in Britain.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Current and capital expenditure by central and local government on public highways lighting in Great Britain in 1987-88 is estimated to have been some £225 million.

Trunk Roads

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much his Department spends on environmental and safety measures included in new trunk road schemes.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department is committed to minimising the impact of new roads on the environment and to enhancing road safety. These are two of our main objectives in building roads and form an integral part of our planning and design process.

Possible measures to mitigate the impact of the road such as use of sensitive design, banks to screen traffic, planting, choice of materials and colour of structures are all taken into consideration when preparing the detailed design.

In some exceptional circumstances, special features such as tunnels may be incorporated.

Safety features such as lighting, signing, safety barriers and special provisions for pedestrians and cyclists are considered when drawing up the detailed design; and all contribute to the overall safety of the road.

Because environmental and safety measures are integrated into the design and construction of schemes, their cost cannot in general be identified separately.

Information can be given for some illustrative examples.

On the A12 Hackney-M11 link road, we estimate that overall some £50 million will be spent on environmental measures, including some tunnelling. This represents about 40 per cent. of the total scheme cost.

The A69 Newcastle Western bypass is to pass under rather than over the Metro line at an additional cost of £3 million.

On the A361 North Devon link road well over £1 million was spent on environmental measures including nearly three miles of Devon hedgebanks.

Planting is only implemented after a road scheme has been built. The expenditure involved can be more readily identified.

In the last financial year the Department spent £2·2 million on planting and associated works.

A total of 1·4 million trees and shrubs were planted. Typical schemes are A35 Dorchester bypass where almost 70,000 plants are being provided at a cost of £150,000 and the A626 Stocksbridge-M1 link where £111,000 is being spent on over 60,000 plants.

With regard to safety aspects, the cost of central reserve safety barriers can be identified. New dual carriageways are generally provided with central reserve safety barriers at the outset.

For example, over £0·5 million was spent on this on the south Woodford to Barking relief road completed in December 1987 and over £1 million on the Newcastle Western bypass currently under construction.

In addition the Department has a rolling programme to a value of some £10 million per year to install central reserve safety fencing on existing roads.

For 1989-90 this represents almost 150 miles of safety fencing. The provision and renewal of safety barriers is also carried out as part of major maintenance contracts.

Drink Driving

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether, in the current year, the transport and road research laboratory will be continuing its programme of roadside surveys of drinking and driving.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes. This year the survey procedure will be simplified, costs reduced and more survey sites covered.

Vehicle Weight Limits

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy on the ending of the United Kingdom's derogations from the European Community vehicle weight limits; and if he will make it his policy to agree only to an end-date which takes full account of the time needed to strengthen United Kingdom bridges.

Mr. Channon: As I explained to the House on 8 March, my aim is to resist attempts to end the United Kingdom's derogations in 1993 or at any other premature date. I shall therefore be negotiating at the June Transport Council for an end-date which takes proper account of the need to strengthen our bridges.

HEALTH

Drug Safety

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress the Medicines Control Agency is making in the licensing and control of medicines in preparation for 1992.

Mr. Mellor: Officials from the Medicines Control Agency are engaged with the Commission and other member states in discussion on various issues relating to the establishment of a single EC market in medicines by 1992. These include the development of draft technical regulatons and guidelines relating to the safety, quality and efficacy required before medicinal products can be marketed as well as broader discussion about the system for licensing and control of medicines after 1992. These discussions are intended to lead to the formulation by the Commission of proposals for a definite system for the free movement of medicinal products within the Community, to be submitted to the Council of Ministers by the end of the year.

Hospital Treatment (Bolton)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of hospital beds in the Bolton area taken up by people with heart disease and related illnesses.

Mr. Freeman: The hospital activity records for 1987-88 have not yet been analysed to produce information about beds occupied in individual districts by patients with specified diagnoses. My hon. Friend may wish to write to the chairman of the district health authority, who may be able to provide the information.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was *(a)* the total number of beds available daily in the United Kingdom and *(b)* the number unoccupied in the NHS for each of the years 1979, 1986, 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Freeman: Information for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland is a matter for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and for Northern Ireland and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Information for England is given in the table.

Beds in NHS hospitals, England, 1979, 1986 and 1987-88

Year	Average daily available beds	[1]Average daily occupied beds	Average daily unoccupied beds
1979	361,670	293,272	68,398
1986	315,714	254,597	61,117
1987-88	297,342	[2]240,000	57,342

[1] Bed occupancy figures are based on a midnight count and do not reflect the use of beds by patients who do not stay overnight.
[2] Estimated.

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what income has been derived by the Huddersfield health authority from pay beds in the latest year for which figures are available and in the preceding eight years; and how that income has been used.

Mr. Mellor: The table lists the information requested from 1982-83 onwards. Prior to 1 April 1982, the authority's predecesssor health district formed part of an area health authority and district based figures were not collected centrally.

Income from private in-patients (under section 65 of the NHS Act 1977)

Year	£
1982-83	61,962
1983-84	156,764
1984-85	191,590
1985-86	71,107
1986-87	9,745
[1]1987-88	16,354

[1] Latest available—annual accounts for 1988-89 are not due for submission to the Department until 30 June 1989.

Health authorities are free to retain such income, which by its nature is bound to vary from year to year, as a supplementary source of funds in order to meet their total annual expenditure. We do not collect information centrally on the specific purpose to which such monies have been put.

Counterfeit Medicines

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health by what means counterfeit medicines imported into the United Kingdom from elsewhere within the European Community will be detected when inter-community custom barriers are removed in 1992.

Mr. Mellor: Detailed arrangements affecting the importation of pharmaceutical products after 1992 have not yet been decided.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he intends to take action under article 36 of the treaty of Rome, on the grounds of public safety, to control the quality, efficacy and safety of parallel imported medicines in view of the recent instances of counterfeit medicines being found in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Mellor: We have no plans at present to do so. I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to him on 3 May at column *150*.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what savings have been achieved by the Huddersfield health authority by putting ancillary services out to competitive tendering in the latest year for which figures are available and in the preceding eight years; and how have any savings achieved been used.

Mr. Mellor: We do not collect information in the form requested centrally. Savings achieved in 1988-89 amounted to £675,000. The total since the initiative started in 1983 is of the order of £1·85 million. Such savings contribute to the total resources available to the district; they are not attributed to specified developments.

NHS Staff

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will state the total directly employed staff in the National Health Service, in the United Kingdom *(a)* the number of persons and *(b)* full-time equivalents, for 1979, 1986, 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Mellor: The available information is shown in the table.

Total directly employed staff in the National Health Service at 30 September of each year: United Kingdom

	Number[1,2]	Whole-time equivalent[1,2]
1979	1,171,700	976,900
1986	1,217,400	1,018,400
1987	1,222,400	1,016,400
1988	n/a	n/a

Source: Department of Health (SMI3) annual censuses of NHS medical and non-medical manpower, Welsh Office; Scottish Health Service common services agency and Northern Ireland Department of Health and Social Services.
[1] All figures are independently rounded to the nearest 100.
[2] Includes medical and dental locums and nursing and midwifery agency staff.
n/a = Not available.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many vacancies there are for (i) domestic staff, (ii) porters, (iii) catering staff and (iv) other ancillary staff

in the Oxford district; for how long such vacancies are advertised on average before they are filled, and what was the percentage turnover of all ancillary staff in the Oxford district in 1986, 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Freeman: We do not hold this information centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of the Oxfordshire health authority for the information that he seeks.

Water Fluoridation

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assessment he has made of the results of the Water (Fluoridation) Act 1985;

(2) what has been the cost to his Department of water fluoridation since the Water (Fluoridation) Act came into effect;

(3) what new estimate he has made of the cost effectiveness of further fluoridation in view of the general decline in dental cavities in children's teeth in the 90 per cent. of the population not in receipt of artificially fluoridated water;

(4) whether he is prepared to offer an indemnity to private water undertakers who are liable to be sued for harm resulting from fluoridation of their drinking water; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The Water (Fluoridation) Act 1985 did what it was intended to do and put beyond doubt the power of water undertakers to add fluoride to the water supplied to them when asked to do so by health authorities. No new fluoridation schemes have been introduced since the Act came into force though a number of schemes are at various stages of preparation.

The central funds allocated to health authorities for the implementation of water fluoridation schemes amounted to £262,000 in 1986-87; £433,000 in 1987-88 and £1,168,000 in 1988-89. The 1988-89 figure reflects the commitment in the Government's White Paper "Promoting Better Health" to increase the amount of money made available to Health Authorities to fund fluoridation schemes. £2,075,000 is allocated for 1989-90.

A recent survey comparing the dental health of young children in fluoridated south Birmingham and non-fluoridated Bolton (C. M. Mitropoulos et al., Br. Dent. J. 1988) confirms that further reductions in caries levels in children's teeth are undoubtedly achievable over and above the general decline in caries that has occurred. These benefits are particularly cost-effective where caries levels are otherwise high and in the less privileged social classes where the highest incidence of caries is found.

A copy of the model agreement which provides the basis of discussion between health authorities and water undertakers on the terms under which fluoridation of domestic water supplies may be carried out, including a copy of the terms of indemnity provided for water authorities and private water companies operating fluoridation schemes was placed in the Library on 16 January 1989. We will continue to provide an indemnity to water undertakers after privatisation of the water industry; the terms of this indemnity are being considered in the light of representations made by the water authorities and the water companies associations.

GPs (Remuneration)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate the Government have made of the effects of the proposed changes in the remuneration of general practitioners on the gross income of those who do not opt for their own budgets; and what is the intended effect of the new arrangements in terms of *(a)* the number of patients per doctor and *(b)* the number of staff employed by doctors, and their remuneration.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friends the Members for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway), for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown), for Slough (Mr. Watts) and for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) today. Under the proposals for GP practice budgets set out in the White Paper, "Working for Patients", and Working Paper 3, practices which opt to become budget holders may invest any savings on their annual budget in improving the services that they offer to patients. The review body on doctors' and dentists' remuneration will continue as now to recommend the average net income and indirectly reimbursed expenses of all GPs, whether budget holders or not. Other expenses incurred by GPs are reimbursed directly.

We expect the number of staff employed by GPs to increase as a result of our intention to invest more in practice teams, and to remove the present restraints on their number and the range of qualifying duties. By enabling family practitioner committees to target funds on areas of greatest need, the deployment of practice team staff will become more cost-effective.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Research and Development

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list those agricultural research and development projects from which funding was withdrawn during 1988.

Mr. Ryder: 1. The resources devoted to agricultural research and development by and for my Department were increased in 1988-89. The cost rose from £81·7 million in 1987-88 to an estimated £85·6 million in 1988-89. The majority of the work is included in rolling programmes commissioned with the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service and the Agricultural and Food Research Council. Other ad hoc projects are performed by a variety of contractors under short term contracts.

2. The rolling programmes of commissioned research are under constant review and adjustment, in the light of changing priorities and the prospects for useful results. A number of individual experiments and studies in each programme will have ceased in 1988-89 to be replaced by new work. It would not be possible to list such adjustments except at disproportionate cost. The following short-term contracts were completed during 1988-89; none was terminated prematurely.

Project title	*Contractor*
Group breeding scheme	University College, Wales
Potato clones partially resistant to Globodera Pallida	National Institute of Agricultural Botany
Buffer feeding as a means of increasing the efficiency of grass use	University College of North Wales
Response in the yields of milk fat and protein to nutrition	Leeds University
Biodegradation of thatching straw	Bath University
Storage of Rubus mother stocks	Edinburgh School of Agriculture
Free convective airflows in perishable crop storage	Silsoe college
Anthelmintic resistance in sheep nematodes	Nottingham University
Tuberculin production by recombinant E. Coli	Surrey University
Investigation of mastitis in sheep	Royal Veterinary College
The dynamic behaviour of specialised spraying vehicles	Leeds University
Improvement of fruit quality and control of tree vigour	East Malling Research Station
Maintenance of soil structure, fertility and fruit quality in herbicide managed orchards	East Malling Research Station
Methods for rapid classification of carcasses	Food Research Institute
The prevention of bolting in early protected celery	Glasshouse Crops Research Institute
Micropropogation of FI hybrid lettuce	Glasshouse Crops Research Institute
The nitrogen cycle on organic farms	University College of Wales
Salmonella shedding in poultry	Bristol University
A mathematical study of the genetics and epidemiology of nematode parasites resistant to anthelmintics	Strathclyde University
Modified atmosphere packaging of tree fruits to retain quality	East Malling Research Station
The palatability and nutritive value of low-glucosinolates	Royal Veterinary College
The development of a rapid and simple method for the analysis of glucosinalate content of rapeseed	Food Research Institute
Broken bones in culled layer hens	Food Research Institute
A pilot study of the interdependence of farming and the local rural economy	Ecotec Consulting Ltd.
Pilot study of grazing by hares and deer on double low oilseed rape	Game Conservancy Trust
Reed beds for agricultural effluent treatment	Birmingham University
The impact on the rural economy of replacing agricultural land use by planting woodland	Laurence Gould Consultants Ltd.
Flow rate serving for automatic cluster removal on small ruminants	Cranfield Institute of Technology
Review of the risk of exposure of dairy cows to bracken	Institute for Grassland and Animal Production

Gas Prices

Mr. Jack: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received about the implications for gas prices for horticulturalists resulting from the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on gas tariffs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: I have so far received 10 letters, including two from the National Farmers Union, making representations about the new price schedules being introduced by British Gas and the likely impact of these on growers.

My officials have subsequently met NFU horticultural representatives to discuss the problem and have asked, to be kept informed urgently of progress in the discussions which they are having with the Office of Gas Supply.

New Nitrashell

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the make up and side effects of using or storing the fertiliser New Nitrashell; what safety recommendations have been issued about it; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: New Nitrashell is a propriety fertiliser based on ammonium nitrate manufactured by Kemira Ince Ltd, Ince, Chester, and according to the manufacturer contains more than 28 per cent. nitrogen and as such complies with EC directive 80/876.

The Fertilisers Regulations 1977, as amended by the Fertilisers (Amendment) Regulations 1984, require ammonium nitrate fertilisers, such as New Nitrashell to meet minimum safety standards which include limits on inorganic additives, heavy metals, the percentage of combustible material and minimum particle size.

Ammonium nitrate is an oxidising agent which is not itself combustible but can be detonated under conditions of heat and confinement of severe shock. It is therefore controlled under the United Kingdom Classification, Packaging and Labelling of Dangerous Substances Regulations 1984 and the United Kingdom Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazard Regulations 1984. These regulations are enforced by HSE, which also issues guidance note CS 18 on storage and handling of ammonium nitrate.

The Fertilisers Manufacturers Association and Kemira Ince Ltd issue full safety advice for the storage, handling and transportation of ammonium nitrate fertilisers.

Payments

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing *(a)* payments under the common agricultural policy and *(b)* payments from the Exchequer to United Kingdom farmers for each crop and type of livestock since the financial year 1969-70 together with his estimate for 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Mr Donald Thompson: Expenditure on market regulation under the CAP and on price guarantees up to 1988-89 is set out by main commodity in the publication "Agriculture in the United Kingdom 1988", and the annual reviews of agriculture which preceded it. Forecasts for 1989-90 are contained in the Supply Estimates

Food Quality

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the outcome of the informal Agriculture Council meeting in Spain on 16 May on food quality.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 22 May 1989]:* Time permitted only brief and very gneral discussion at this meeting. It focussed mainly on the Commission's suggestion, in its document "The Future of Rural Society", that Community law might provide for certain food designations to be reserved for foods of a particular composition or produced by specified methods or originating in a specific geographical area.

A wide range of views was expressed. Some believed that such measures would improve food quality, discourage "substitute" products, and help raise farmers' incomes. Others, like me, felt that consumer choice and freedom of trade could best be maximised by allowing producers to respond freely to demand, while ensuring that consumers where fully informed about the nature of the goods offered to them. The Council is likely to return to the subject on a future occasion.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Post Office Savings Bank (Savings Limit)

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he is taking to monitor the new rules concerning the Post Office savings bank, particularly the new limit of £5 savings; what representations he has received on the effect of the rules on children and pensioners saving small amounts of money; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 22 May 1989]:* I have been asked to reply.

National savings monitors the performance of all national savings products. The increase from £1 to £5 in the minimum for deposits into the National savings ordinary account from 1 January 1989 has reduced the number of deposits transactions by around 20 per cent. So the measure has achieved its aim of reducing the number of very small deposits, which are as expensive to process as larger deposits. Since Girobank and other financial institutions provide a wide range of savings facilities for very small amounts of savings, I am satisfied that this change has not had a negative effect on children and pensioners.

Representations have been received from many hon. Members and from the members of the public to whom I have explained the reasons for the change.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Immigration Appeals

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Attorney-General what was the total number of appeals against refusal of asylum heard by the immigration appellate authorities in each of the last three years.

The Attorney-General: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) on 19 May at column *321*.

Social Security Commissioners

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Attorney-General how many people resident in *(a)* England, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* Wales and *(d)* Northern Ireland have appeared before a social security commissioner in each of the past five years; and if he will separately distinguish the location where those hearings were held.

The Attorney-General: The numbers of cases heard by social security commissioners in each of the past five years are listed in the tables, broken down according to the location of the hearings. The breakdown of individual residential locations requested is not reasonably practicable.

England, Wales and Scotland
Number of cases heard by Social Security Commissioner in each of the past five years

Location	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
London	na	na	519	572	222
Cardiff	na	na	6	42	56
Liverpool[1]	nil	nil	nil	nil	53
Edinburgh	56	51	64	68	63

na = Figures not available.
[1] Hearings have only been held at this location since 1988.

Northern Ireland

Number of cases heard by Social Security Commissioner in each of the past five years

Location	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Belfast	74	89	76	47	33
Armagh	7	19	10	12	3
Ballymena	nil	8	5	3	2
Ballymoney	nil	nil	2	2	nil
Banbridge	nil	32	18	6	22
Coleraine	6	6	2	2	2
Cookstown	12	6	4	nil	3
Craigavon	nil	1	3	4	2
Downpatrick	nil	5	5	4	nil
Dungannon	nil	11	9	nil	nil
Enniskillen	4	8	3	nil	3
Limavady	7	4	7	2	3
Londonderry	10	7	3	8	5
Magherafelt	1	14	6	4	nil
Newry	13	17	6	16	8
Omagh	17	12	21	11	7
Strabane	4	13	11	6	6
TOTALS	155	252	191	127	99

EMPLOYMENT

Availability for Work

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list from the 1988 labour force survey, by region, including Greater London and by male and female, the numbers of people who were *(a)* without jobs and who looked for work in the four weeks before their LFS interview and were available to start work within two weeks, who wanted full-time jobs, the number who wanted part-time jobs and the number who had no preference *(b)* unemployed according to the standard LFS definition who were looking for full-time jobs and the number looking for part-time jobs and the number who had no preference, *(c)* in part-time jobs who were looking for a different job with longer hours or looking for an additional job, *(d)* looking for a different job with shorter hours, *(e)* claimants not unemployed by the definition using broad ILO guidelines on the grounds that they were employed, and *(f)* claimants not unemployed by the conventional LFS definition on the grounds that they were employed.

Mr. Lee: Available estimates from the preliminary results of the 1988 labour force survey are shown in the following tables:

Table 1

ILO/OECD unemployed[1] looking for work as an employee[2] and wanting a full or part-time job or having no preference

Spring 1988, Thousands

	Full-time		*Part-time*		*No Preference*	
	Males	*Females*	*Males*	*Females*	*Males*	*Females*
Great Britain	912	333	66	403	95	120
Northern	87	30	[3]	26	[3]	10
Yorkshire and Humberside	110	31	[3]	40	13	13
East Midlands	53	19	[3]	30	[3]	[3]
East Anglia	16	[3]	[3]	12	[3]	[3]
South East	163	80	19	104	13	22
of which: Greater London	89	40	10	44	[3]	10
South West	40	17	[3]	31	[3]	[3]
West Midlands	90	33	[3]	42	[3]	12
North West	151	49	11	52	20	21
Wales	57	17	[3]	22	[3]	[3]
Scotland	141	48	[3]	44	11	14

[1] People without a job who were available for work and had either looked for work at some time in the last four weeks or were waiting to start a job they had already obtained.

[2] People looking for work as self-employed were not asked if they would prefer to work full or part-time.

[3] Sample size too small for a reliable estimate.

Source: 1988 Labour Force Survey, Preliminary results.

Table 2

Unemployed[1] persons looking for work as an employee[2] and wanting a full or part-time job or having no preference

Spring 1988, Thousands

	Full-time		*Part-time*		*No preference*	
	Males	*Females*	*Males*	*Females*	*Males*	*Females*
Great Britain	907	334	60	369	95	121
Northern	88	30	[3]	28	10	[3]
Yorkshire and Humberside	110	31	[3]	36	12	14
East Midlands	53	20	[3]	30	[3]	[3]
East Anglia	16	[3]	[3]	12	[3]	[3]
South East	166	80	19	97	14	22
of which: Greater London	91	40	11	42	[3]	10
South West	38	17	[3]	28	[3]	[3]
West Midlands	89	32	[3]	31	10	11
North West	148	52	[3]	48	18	23
Wales	57	18	[3]	21	[3]	[3]
Scotland	141	46	[3]	38	10	14

[1] Great Britain labour force definition.

[2] People looking for work as self-employed were not asked if they would prefer to work full or part-time.

[3] Sample size too small for a reliable estimate.

Source: 1988 Labour Force Survey, Preliminary results.

Table 3
Persons in employment in part-time jobs[1] looking for a different job with longer hours or an additional job
Spring 1988. Thousands

	Males	Females
Great Britain	127	225
Northern	11	17
Yorkshire and Humberside	14	26
East Midlands	[2]	18
East Anglia	[2]	[2]
South East	26	60
of which: Greater London	11	20
South West	[2]	15
West Midlands	[2]	19
North West	23	28
Wales	[2]	14
Scotland	14	18

[1] Based on the respondent's own assessment, not on the number of hours usually worked.
[2] Sample size too small for a reliable estimate.
Source: 1988 Labour Force Survey, Preliminary results.

TABLE 4
Persons in employment in part-time jobs looking for a different job with shorter hours
Spring 1988. Thousands

	Males	Females
Great Britain	240	123
Northern	10	[1]
Yorkshire and Humberside	23	[1]
East Midlands	19	11
East Anglia	[1]	[1]
South East	84	49
of which Greater London	32	21
South West	17	[1]
West Midlands	23	13
North West	27	14
Wales	[1]	[1]
Scotland	19	10

[1] Sample size too small for a reliable estimate.
Source: 1988 Labour Force Survey, Preliminary results.

It is estimated that there were some 100,000 male and 60,000 female claimants employed in Great Britain in Spring 1988. However, a reliable analysis of these figures by region is not available, mainly because of the sampling errors involved.

Job Introduction Scheme

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many applications have been made for grant aid under the job introduction scheme; and how many have been awarded for each of the past five years.

Mr. Lee: The information requested about the number of applications made for grant aid under the job introduction scheme is not available. The numbers of grants authorised for each of the past five years were:

	Number
1984-85	2,033
1985-86	1,828
1986-87	1,460
1987-88	1,629
1988-89	2,091

Skill Shortages

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what review he has made of the effectiveness of industry training boards in tackling the level of skill shortages or training needs in their sectors; and what were the results of the review for each training organisation.

Mr. Nicholls: The effectiveness of each industry training board is reviewed every three years at the time of reconstitution. Many industries covered by these boards continue to report skill shortages.

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what review he has undertaken of the effectiveness of non-statutory training organisations in tackling the level of skill shortages or training needs in their sectors; and what were the results of the review for each training organisation.

Mr. Nicholls: The effectiveness of non-statutory training organisations was last reviewed during a Manpower Services Commission research study in 1987. The criteria used included monitoring and reviewing key skill requirements and training needs. The report showed that 56 were rated effective and a further 23 partially effective against the full range of the criteria. The report did not rank organisations against each criterion.

Non-statutory Training Organisations

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment in which areas the level of effectiveness of non-statutory training organisations has improved since production of the Manpower Services Commission study "The Full Fact Finding Study of the NSTO System".

Mr. Cope: There has been no overall study of the effectiveness of non-statutory training organisations since the Manpower Services Commission research report in 1987.

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many non-statutory training organisations currently meet the standards laid down in the Manpower Services Commission publication "The Effective NSTO"; and what steps he is taking to secure compliance with those standards by the remaining non-statutory training organisations.

Mr. Cope: Since the Manpower Services Commission research report in 1987, many non-statutory training organisations have taken steps to improve their effectiveness. The Government continue to provide financial support to help effectiveness improvements in these organisations. "Employment for the 1990s" (Cm. 540) noted the Government's welcome for the establishment of the voluntary National Council for Industry Training Organisations, and the Training Agency is assisting the council in producing a code of practice for members. Further research will be commissioned in due course.

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the current level of resourcing and support to non-statutory training organisations from employers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: The majority of non-statutory training organisations command the support of the employers in their industries and have adequate resources to be effective in carrying forward the remits for industry-level training

organisations set out in "Employment for the 1990s" (Cm 540). The Government continue to assist the less effective and new bodies.

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, in the light of the finding of the Manpower Services Commission study "The Full Fact Finding Study of the NSTO System" that 79 per cent. of employers would not contribute more resources to training organisations, what steps he is taking to ensure that the industry-level training organisations proposed in the White Paper "Employment for the 1990s" will attract sufficient industry support.

Mr. Cope: The great majority of employers in Great Britain support vocational education and training for their employees; a very small proportion of that support goes to finance the voluntary and independent non-statutory training organisations. All proposals for new organisations are required to detail the level of support being obtained from employers in the relevant industry.

Competent Persons (Prosecutions)

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many competent persons have been prosecuted in each year since 1965.

Mr. Nicholls: This information is not available.

Power Presses

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many injuries and deaths there have been at power presses for each year since the Power Presses Regulations were introduced in 1965.

Mr. Nicholls: Power presses are not separately identified in the Health and Safety Executive's current databases of reported injuries at work. Available information is taken from annual surveys which were discontinued after 1974, but comparable data was collected in 1979 and 1983. The results are shown in the table.

Accidents at the Tools of Power Presses and Press Brakes[1]

	Number
1965	441
1966	342
1967	230
1968	234
1969	245
1970	203
1971	159
1972	153
1973	152
1974	145
1979	48
1983	27

[1] Reportable injuries notified to Her Majesty's factory inspectorate; severity is not recorded.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many competent persons have been prosecuted in each year since 1965 in relation to the 1965 Power Presses Regulations and any other legislation relevant to power presses.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not available. The HSE records do not specifically identify proceedings taken against competent persons.

Factory Inspectors

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total number of factory inspectors employed by the Health and Safety Executive on 2 December 1987; how many were employed in each of the grades of inspector II, inspector 1B, inspector 1A, deputy superintending inspector, superintending inspector, area director, senior area director, deputy chief inspector and chief inspector, respectively; what are the latest totals in each of these categories; and how many in each of the categories for both dates were in the field.

Mr. Nicholls: The breakdown by grade of number of factory inspectors employed in HSE is as follows. Staffing figures are recorded on the first of each month.

Grade	*1 December 1987*		*1 May 1989*	
	Number	*(of which in the field force)*	*Number*	*(of which in the field force)*
Chief Inspector	1	(—)	1	(—)
Deputy Chief Inspector	6	1	4	(—)
Senior Area Director	2	(1)	4	(2)
Area Director	18	(18)	17	(17)
Superintending Inspector	3	(—)	3	(—)
Deputy Superintending Inspector	44	(25)	38	(24)
Inspector 1A	159	(123)	165·5	(124·5)
Inspector 1B	283	(268)	276·5	(263·5)
Inspector 1I	95	(95)	102	(102)
Total	611	(531)	611	(533)

Following the latest in a series of recruitment competitions, a number of successful candidates have been or will be offered employment as factory inspectors. A further recruitment competition is currently under way.

Agriculture Inspectors

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total number of agricultural inspectors employed by the Health and Safety Executive on 2 December 1987; how many were employed in each of the grades of assistant inspector, inspector, principal inspector, principal inspector 1, deputy superintending inspector, deputy chief inspector and chief inspector, respectively; what are the latest totals in each of these categories; and how many in each of the categories for both dates were in the field.

Mr. Nicholls: The breakdown by grade of the number of agricultural inspectors employed in HSE is as follows. Staffing figures are recorded on the first of each month.

Grade	*1 December 1987* *Number*	*(of which in the field force)*	*1 May 1989* *Number*	*(of which in the field force)*
Chief Inspctor	1	(—)	1	(—)
Deputy Chief Inspector	2	(—)	2	(—)
Deputy Superintending Inspector	3	(3)	3	(3)
Principal Inspector 1	7	(6)	6	(5)
Principal Inspector	29	(24)	28	(23)
Inspector	91	(80)	100	(86)
Assistant Inspector	25	(25)	26	(26)
Total	158	(138)	16	(143)

A recruitment competition is currently under way.

Construction (Safety)

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will investigate the reasons for the differences in death, serious injury and ill-health rates on construction sites with the highest and lowest rates.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) does not record fatal accident, serious injury or ill-health rates for individual construction sites and, therefore, the sites with the highest and lowest rates cannot be identified.

However, the "Blackspot Construction" report published by the HSE in June 1988 analysed the circumstances of 739 deaths in the construction industry between 1981 and 1985 and showed that 70 per cent. could have been avoided by positive management action.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report* provisional figures for 1988-89 giving *(a)* the number of fatalities and *(b)* the number of major injuries (i) in the London region and (ii) nationally for the construction industry.

Mr. Nicholls: Figures for 1988-89 are in the process of compilation but are not yet available.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the reasons why death and serious injuries in local authority direct labour buiding works are lower than in private industry.

Mr. Nicholls: Comparisons of the kind the hon. Member has in mind would be meaningless, even if reliable and comprehensive figures were available, since the work performed by organisations of different types and size in the construction industry differs substantially.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if, pursuant to his statement in the House on 11 April, *Official Report*, columns 833-34, on the correlation between firms with good safety standards and those that are successful, he will publish in the *Official Report* the names of the successful companies giving examples of their good safety record and stating whether the companies recognise trade unions.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not available. As I pointed out in my statement to the House on 11 April, the correlation between good safety standards and other positive aspects of firms' performance is based on the experience and observations of HSE inspectors.

Release for Training Scheme

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many applications have been made for grant aid for the release for training scheme; and how many have been awarded for each of the past five years.

Mr. Nicholls: This information is not available.

Personal Reader Service Scheme

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many applications have been made for grant aid under the personal leader service scheme, and how many have been awarded for each of the past five years.

Mr. Lee: I take it that the hon. Member's question refers to my Department's personal reader service scheme.

Information about the number of applications made for grant aid under this scheme for the last five years is not available.

The number of new beneficiaries receiving grants in each of the last five years was as follows:

	Number
1984-85	75
1985-86	80
1986-87	62
1987-88	107
1988-89	116

Employment (Special Aids)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many applications have been awarded for grant aid for the special aids to employment; and how many have been awarded for each of the past five years.

Mr. Lee: The information requested about the number of applications made for grant aid under the special aids to employment scheme is not available. The numbers of grants authorised for each of the past five years were:

	Number
1984-85	1,640
1985-86	2,386
1986-87	2,630
1987-88	3,041
1988-89	4,242

Fares to Work Scheme

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many applications have been made for grant aid under the fares to work scheme; and how many have been awarded for each of the last five years.

Mr. Lee: The information requested about the number of applications made for grant aid under the assistance with fares to work scheme is not available. The numbers of grants authorised for each of the past five years were:

	Number
1984-85	390
1985-86	434
1986-87	536
1987-88	553
1988-89	617

Adaptations to Premises and Equipment

47. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many applications have been made for grant aid under the adaptations to premises and equipment scheme; and how many have been awarded for each of the past five years.

Mr. Lee: The information requested about the number of applications made for grant aid under the adaptations to premises and equipment scheme, is not available. The numbers of grants authorised for each of the past five years were:

	Number
1984-85	145
1985-86	165
1986-87	253
1987-88	252
1988-89	247

Disabled People

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what conclusions the internal review on the employment practices for disabled persons has reached on altering or retaining the quota system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Consideration of the issues being examined in the internal review of my Department's services for people with disabilities has not yet been completed. The review will be completed and the results published as soon as possible.

Disabled Workers (Quotas)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of permits issued exempting employers from the quota obligations under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944, for each of the past five years.

Mr. Lee: The table gives information about the number of employers issued with permits some of whom may have received more than one permit during the years shown.

Number of Employers who were below quota on 1 June but who had been granted bulk permits during the previous 12 months

	Number
1984	18,769
1985	18,681
1986	18,840
1987	18,577
1988	18,594

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of bulk permits issued exempting employers from the quota obligations under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944, for each of the past five years.

Mr. Lee: The table gives information about the number of employers issued with bulk permits (some of whom may have received more than one permit) during the years shown.

Number of Employers who were below quota on 1 June but who had been granted bulk permits during the previous 12 months

	Number
1984	18,300
1985	18,486
1986	18,683
1987	18,480
1988	18,331

Employment Rehabilitation Centres

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total amount spent on employment rehabilitation centres for each of the last five years.

Mr. Lee: The total expenditure for the employment rehabilitation service (which includes employment rehabilitation centres) was as follows:

	£ million
[1]1988-89	20
1987-88	23
1986-87	22
1985-86	20
1984-85	20

[1] Provisional figure.

Disabled Workers

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many prosecutions have been instigated for contravention of the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944 for each of the past five years; and what has been the total amount paid in fines.

Mr. Lee: There have been no prosecutions under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944 in the last five years.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what publicity initiatives have been taken by his Department regarding the uptake of grants by employers for the employment of disabled persons, for the last three years; and what has been the total expenditure.

Mr. Lee: Publicity initiatives about schemes and services for the employment of disabled people during the

last three years have included ongoing promotion of the code of good practice on the employment of disabled people and the associated videos "It Worked Fine" and "It Can Be Done". In 1988 a new series of leaflets for employers and people with disabilities was introduced. In 1989, additional leaflets about specific disabilities, the disablement resettlement officer service and jobhunting for people with disabilities were provided. Publicity material is displayed at appropriate conferences, exhibitions and so on. The Disablement Advisory Service provides information about such schemes and services as part of its advisory role to employers. The total expenditure for the three years was approximately £651,500, excluding staff costs which are not separately identifiable.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people with disabilities are employed by his Department *(a)* as a total number, and *(b)* as a percentage of the total work force.

Mr. Lee: The Employment Department group employs 1,502 registered disabled staff; they represent 2·5 per cent. of permanent staff in the group. In addition, the group employs a number of other people with disabilities who choose not to register.

Labour Statistics

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what was the total number of part-time female employees in employment in Scotland and for each of the years June 1979 to June 1988;

(2) what was the total number of part-time male employees in employment in Scotland for each of the years June 1979 to June 1988;

(3) what was the total number of full-time male employees in employment in Scotland for each of the years June 1979 to June 1988;

(4) what was the total number of full-time female employees in employment in Scotland for each of the years June 1979 to June 1988.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 19 May 1989]:* I have been asked to reply.

The available information is shown in the table. Estimates of the number of part-time male employees are not available for each year, but the censuses of employment record some 0·06 million male part-time employees in employment for each of the years 1978, 1981 and 1984.

Employees in employment in Scotland (thousands)

Year (at June)	Males all	Females full-time	Females part-time
1979	1,205·2	565·2	331·9
1980	1,186·3	561·2	334·7
1981	1,127·8	537·7	336·3
1982	1,090·2	522·7	337·3
1983	1,060·4	501·4	337·3
1984	1,043·3	510·7	347·2
1985	1,039·4	502·3	362·1
1986	1,021·3	501·1	364·8
1987	1,009·5	504·0	378·4
1988	1,020·5	525·8	382·6

Notes:
(1) These estimates may be revised when the results of the 1987 Census of Employment become available.
(2) Not adjusted for seasonal variation.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the number of people in *(a)* full-time employment and *(b)* part-time employment, by sex, for each of the standard regions, for each of the years 1983 to 1988 based on the labour force survey.

Mr. Lee *[holding answer 19 May 1989]:* Estimates from labour force surveys are as shown in the table:

	1983		1984		1985		1986		1987		1988[4]	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Employees and self employed[2]												
Full-time[3]												
Northern region	672	268	662	251	661	254	658	269	671	275	671	288
Yorkshire and Humberside region	1,117	430	1,132	420	1,132	416	1,104	433	1,096	438	1,118	422
East Midlands region	954	378	949	376	935	366	965	359	954	374	980	413
East Anglia region	470	166	494	159	490	171	489	190	499	194	520	206
South East region	4,274	1,833	4,336	1,870	4,378	1,893	4,350	1,922	4,371	1,965	4,540	2,039
of which Greater London	1,665	840	1,672	834	1,696	832	1,642	811	1,637	846	1,688	860
South West region	1,043	387	1,048	388	1,078	409	1,068	410	1,094	433	1,103	456
West Midlands region	1,200	468	1,191	482	1,191	485	1,212	509	1,212	483	1,299	511
North West region	1,412	609	1,394	580	1,426	618	1,403	604	1,412	631	1,426	650
Wales	587	244	598	246	593	240	584	246	575	242	598	258
Part-time[3]												
Northern region	21	221	23	242	22	235	24	249	22	258	25	251
Yorkshire and Humberside region	34	397	47	415	48	420	45	430	58	442	53	438
East Midlands region	30	283	42	320	38	327	41	359	48	337	47	341
East Anglia region	21	162	20	173	19	170	23	167	29	175	25	205
South East region	167	1,210	224	1,368	223	1,392	204	1,392	231	1,453	264	1,472
of which Greater London	63	422	82	446	79	486	79	473	89	485	99	470
South West region	45	348	51	380	58	405	58	397	69	431	81	437
West Midlands region	36	365	37	376	48	381	53	399	53	431	58	442
North West region	46	453	58	491	59	493	59	507	66	495	77	530
Wales	13	164	22	184	21	192	26	204	30	196	32	204
On Government employment and training programmes												
Northern region	16	11	16	—[1]	19	13	23	11	30	19	31	17
Yorkshire and Humberside region	22	15	18	10	29	12	33	13	36	20	36	19
East Midlands region	14	10	16	10	20	—[1]	21	11	24	12	25	16
East Anglia region	—[1]	—[1]	—[1]	—[1]	10	—[1]	—[1]	—[1]	—[1]	—[1]	12	—[1]
South East region	47	36	36	28	40	31	45	25	45	25	49	34
of which Greater London	14	11	13	—[1]	11	12	15	12	19	—[1]	18	14

	1983		1984		1985		1986		1987		1988[4]	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
South West region	17	10	16	—[1]	17	10	22	12	17	14	27	15
West Midlands region	20	12	20	13	34	20	36	18	38	21	29	24
North West region	29	20	31	20	33	19	36	13	50	29	48	27
Wales	13	—[1]	12	—[1]	18	—[1]	15	—[1]	23	14	26	11

[1] Sample size too small for a reliable estimate.
[2] Full/part-split is only available for employees and self employed, not all persons on Government employment and training programmes are asked the appropriate question.
[3] Based on respondent's own assessment.
[4] Preliminary results (1988 only).
Source: Labour Force Surveys.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of people aged over 16 years who are (i) full-time employees, (ii) part-time employees, (iii) self-employed and (iv) on Government employment and training schemes, based on the labour force survey, in each of the standard regions and Wales, for each of the years 1983 to 1988.

Mr Lee: Estimates from labour force surveys are as shown in the following table.

Full and part-time employees, self-employed and Government employment and training programmes, by region
Spring estimates *Thousands*

Persons aged 16 and over	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*[2]1988*
Full-time[1] employees						
Northern region	865	830	813	832	845	852
Yorks and Humberside region	1,395	1,380	1,360	1,343	1,335	1,361
East Midlands region	1,188	1,189	1,160	1,179	1,159	1,211
East Anglia region	556	559	563	581	588	605
South East region	5,449	5,462	5,470	5,465	5,414	5,623
—of which Greater London	2,250	2,211	2,205	2,143	2,127	2,192
South West region	1,223	1,199	1,253	1,230	1,258	1,269
West Midlands region	1,501	1,490	1,504	1,548	1,502	1,573
North West region	1,808	1,739	1,803	1,766	1,790	1,812
Wales	722	712	716	702	706	739
Part-time[1] employees						
Northern region	225	249	238	256	260	260
Yorks and Humberside region	405	426	424	447	459	455
East Midlands region	290	328	337	364	346	357
East Anglia region	165	172	169	178	179	204
South East region	1,246	1,409	1,441	1,416	1,474	1,529
—of which Greater London	443	472	504	495	505	503
South West region	349	377	402	396	443	459
West Midlands region	373	381	395	421	447	453
North West region	469	507	508	521	515	560
Wales	163	190	195	215	204	218
Self-employed						
Northern region	92	100	121	111	121	123
Yorks and Humberside region	177	207	233	223	240	235
East Midlands region	168	172	169	181	209	213
East Anglia region	98	116	118	109	130	146
South East region	790	927	975	986	1,131	1,163
—of which Greater London	298	352	384	368	425	423
South West region	251	291	296	307	324	349
West Midlands region	195	214	207	204	230	284
North West region	244	276	286	286	298	310
Wales	123	148	135	143	132	135
On Government employment and training programmes						
Northern region	27	23	33	34	48	47
Yorks and Humberside region	38	28	41	46	57	55
East Midlands region	24	25	29	32	36	42
East Anglia region	12	11	16	10	11	17
South East region	83	64	71	70	71	82
—of which Greater London	25	22	23	27	27	33
South West region	27	24	27	34	31	42
West Midlands region	32	32	54	54	59	53
North West region	49	51	52	50	79	74
Wales	21	19	26	23	37	36

Source: Labour Force Surveys
[1] Based on respondent's own assessment
[2] Preliminary results (1988 only)

Employment Training

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the revised numbers of approved places allocated under employment training; what are the area budgets for the programme; and what are the allocations of supplementary grant, for each training agency area.

Mr. Nicholls: Up to 265,000 employment training places have been allocated for 1989-90. Detailed area plans have yet to be finalised.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total number of employment training places occupied, by sex, in each of the standard regions and Wales at the latest date for which the information is available.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 19 May 1989]:* Information about the numbers of men and women on employment training is not available separately. The number of those entering the programme and the proportions of men and women are given in the table.

Employment training entrants

Region	*Entrants to 12 May*	*Men*[1] *Per cent.*	*Women*[1] *Per cent.*
South East	17,200	65	35
London	26,400	59	41
South West	16,200	68	32
West Midlands	33,200	69	31
East Midlands and Eastern	23,400	72	28
Yorkshire and Humberside	41,200	74	26
North West	44,900	72	28
Northern	30,500	75	25
Wales	21,800	71	29

[1] Proportions of men and women for period September—end March.

ENVIRONMENT

Urban Development Corporations

12. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the cost for each urban development corporation so far in relation to the relocation of firms under the following headings *(a)* compensation for land and buildings, *(b)* disturbance and removal costs and *(c)* additional payments.

Mr. Trippier: A full, detailed breakdown is not readily available. But total expenditures to date on relocation of firms are as follows: LDDC £8·4 million, black country DC £3·4 million, Trafford park DC £1·4 million, Merseyside DC £0·7 million, Leeds DC £0·2 million.

Empty Residential Properties

13. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on the number of empty residential properties owned by his Department.

Mr. Chope: Yes. As at 1 April 1989, 38 of the 433 residential properties owned by the Department of the Environment were empty. Of these only 13 are surplus to requirements and these are in process of disposal on the open market.

25. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will seek guidance from local authorities and housing associations on the use of empty residential property possessed by his Department.

Mr. Chope: No. I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) earlier today.

59. **Mr. Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will issue guidance to Government Departments on the use of Government-owned empty residential property.

73. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to bring empty Government-owned residential property into use.

89. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on Government policy concerning empty residential property in its possession.

Mr. Chope: My Department takes every opportunity to advise other Government Departments on the best use of their residential property and to draw to their attention the need to bring empty residential property back into use as early as possible.

75. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of empty properties belonging to his Departmenst is suitable for use as temporary accommodation by homeless people.

Mr. Chope: At present there are no empty properties owned by the Department of the Environment suitable for use as temporary accommodation for the homeless. Should empty residential properties not be required for further Government use and they cannot be sold because of legal restrictions or sold within six months they are offered first to the local housing authority and then to a housing association.

90. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of properties owned by his Department and suitable for residential accommodation has been empty for more than six months.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) earlier today. The 38 empty properties represent 8·7 per cent. of the total residential property owned by my Department.

92. **Mr. John P. Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish a list of all the empty residential property owned by his Department.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will provide a table showing by region of England and Wales the number and percentage of empty residential property owned by his Department.

Mr. Chope: A list showing all empty residential property owned by the Department of the Environment by region, number and percentage of total stock as at 1 April 1989, is set out.

Region	Number	Percentage	Address
Scotland	11	2·5	Custom House, Campbeltown, Argyll (two units) George Street, Dunoon, Argyll Hamilton House, Glasgow Veterinary Research Station, Lasswade, Midlothian (two units) 86 Lomond Road, Wemyss Bay, Inverclyde 9 Windsor Street, Shotts, Motherwell 52, 54, 56 School Road, Peterhead, Banss Buchan (three units)
North East	3	0·7	Hawkills Estate, Easingwold Hambleton (two units) Coastguard Station, Redcar, Lanbaurgh
North West	1	0·2	Courts of Justice, Manchester
Eastern	2	0·4	26 London Road, Brentwood Coastguard Station, Felixstowe, Suffolk Coastal
London	1	0·2	173 Ashley Gardens, Westminster
South West	8	1·9	Fire Services College, Moreton-in-the-Marsh, Cotswold (four units) Strand House, Isle of Scilly Shapwick Wireless Depot, Bridgewater, Sedgemoor
South East	12	2·8	Osborne Estate, East Cowes, Medina (twelve units)
	38	8·7	

Mr. Eastham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any proposals to release property belonging to his Department, which has been empty for more than a year and is suitable for residential accommodation, for use by young people who are at present homeless.

Mr. Chope: At present there are no empty properties suitable for residential accommodation owned by the Department of the Environment which could be made available for use by homeless young people.

Empty residential properties owned by my Department for which there is no further Government use are put on the open market for sale. If, because of legal restrictions, they cannot be sold or sold within six months they are offered first to the local housing authority and then to a housing association.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will seek guidance from the local authority organisations on how best to use the empty property owned by his Department.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) earlier today.

Empty Public Sector Housing

18. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received regarding empty public sector housing.

Mr. Trippier: Apart from occasional correspondence, we have received some recent representations on empty public sector housing in the context of our homelessness review. They emphasise the contribution these properties could make to the relief of housing pressures and the need for all public sector landlords to manage their stock efficiently.

Green Lanes and Bridleways

19. **Sir David Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to protect green lanes and bridleways from use by motorised vehicles; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is already unlawful, by virtue of section 34 of the Road Traffic Act 1988, to drive a motor vehicle on a bridleway. I am aware, however, of concern about legal, but irresponsible and inconsiderate, use by motor vehicles of byways and green lanes. Powers are available to highway authorities to prevent this but my Department is monitoring this situation closely and I will consult my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport if I consider further legislation necessary.

Water Authority Land

20. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement regarding the rights of access, by members of the public, to water authority owned land.

Mr. Ridley: After enactment of the Water Bill, the National Rivers Authority and the water and sewerage companies will be under the same statutory duties as the present water authorities in respect of public access and amenity on water industry land.

CFCs

21. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he now expects that the inessential use of chlorofluorocarbons in aerosols will be phased out in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Members of the British Aerosol Manufacturers Association have stated that by the end of this year 90 per cent. of aerosols in this country will be free of chlorofluorocarbons. The remaining 10 per cent. is accounted for by medical and some industrial aerosols for which suitable substitutes are not yet available.

74. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy on the labelling of aerosol cans as ozone friendly.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I welcome the decision of the British Aerosol Manufacturers Association to recommend to its members that all aerosols be labelled, so as to indicate whether or not they contain ozone-damaging chlorofluorocarbons.

Sir Barney Hayhoe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what facilities there are in the United Kingdom for destroying chlorofluorocarbons in an environmentally safe way; and whether he has any plans to improve upon present arrangements.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 22 May 1989]:* There are very limited facilities currently available in the United Kingdom for incineration of liquefied chlorofluorocarbons and, as yet, no practical methods for destroying foam in an environmentally satisfactory method. The best way forward is to encourage industry to minimise the use of CFCs, and to recycle where practicable. I shall keep disposal arrangements under review in the light of further consideration by the parties to the Montreal protocol.

Community Charge

22. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of pensioner households he estimates will gain under the community charge.

Mr. Ridley: I estimate that nearly 70 per cent. of pensioner households will pay less with the community charge than they would with rates, and 83 per cent. of single pensioner households will pay less.

Football Spectators Bill

23. **Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will next meet the president of the Football League to discuss the Football Spectators Bill.

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend and I met the chairman of the Football Association and the president of the Football League this morning to discuss the question of all-seater stadiums.

Shared Equity Housing Schemes

24. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received seeking the removal of the right to buy out the freehold from shared equity housing schemes.

Mr. Trippier: I have received a number of representations, mainly from local authorities and housing associations.

Greater Manchester (Housing)

26. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the condition of housing in Greater Manchester.

Mr. Trippier: Responsibility for the condition of housing in Greater Manchester, as elsewhere, rests with the owners. For properties in private ownership, grants may be available to help to improve them. Where the owner is the local authority, my Department's estate action unit continues to provide significant assistance in improving housing conditions on rundown estates.

East Lancashire Railway

27. **Mr. Burt:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will pay an official visit to Ramsbottom in order to examine the impact of the east Lancashire railway on the development of the local economy.

Mr. Trippier: I visited Summerseat, near Ramsbottom, in February of this year to speak at the launch of the "Irwell Valley Adventure" in which the east Lancashire railway features as a major tourist attraction. I am pleased both with the progress of the railway restoration project itself and the impact it is having on the local economy.

Unleaded Petrol

28. **Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of new cars are now capable of running on unleaded petrol.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is estimated that 80 per cent. of new cars registered in Great Britain in 1988 could be using unleaded petrol. Of these 33 per cent. could use unleaded petrol straight away and the remaining 47 per cent. after adjustment. Estimates for January 1989 indicate that more than half of the cars currently being registered can now use unleaded petrol without adjustment.

38. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the latest figures for demand for unleaded petrol.

45. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the increase in demand for unleaded petrol since the Budget; what proposals he has for encouraging the wider use of lead-free petrol; and what has been the response of other EEC member states to Britain's initiatives to promote lead-free petrol.

47. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intendes to promote further measures to encourage the use of unleaded petrol.

51. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his Department's campaign to increase the use of unleaded petrol.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Government are firmly committed to the speedy changeover to unleaded petrol. Last year the average uptake of the fuel amounted to only 1 per cent. of the total petrol sales. Following the significant duty differential introduced by the Chancellor in his Budget this year together with the ongoing work of the unleaded petrol group, which I chair, our recent major television advertising campaign and a range of publicity initiatives by the Department, uptake is estimated to have risen to over 15 per cent. We shall continue to campaign vigorously to increase sales still further.

We led the way in securing agreement in the EEC on the introduction of this environment-friendly fuel. Britain now has the second largest duty differential in favour of unleaded petrol within the EEC and is in the top four countries for uptake.

The changeover to unleaded petrol now is important. It is good for the environment, it makes good financial sense and it paves the way for the introduction of stricter EC vehicle emission standards to which we are committed.

Water Industry

29. **Mr. William Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice the Monopolies and Mergers Commission has given about the most effective way of transferring the water industry into the private sector.

Mr. Howard: The Monopolies and Mergers Commission stated in its report on Southern water authority in April 1985 that it did not regard the existing private statutory companies as a useful model for the privatised industry. It took the view that the statutory form of regulation, which limits profits and dividends, conspicuously failed to provide adequate safeguards for the consumer and a profit incentive to management to reduce costs and increase efficiency. I am confident that the Water Bill's chosen route to privatisation on plc lines offers a far more attractive future for the industry, the consumer and the investor.

Housing Estates

30. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has for those estates no longer included in the housing action trust proposals; and if he will make a statement.

44. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will release money to those areas originally designated to be part of a housing action trust, which are not now to be included.

Mr. Trippier: It is for the local authorities concerned to decide, in consultation with their tenants, what future action to take on these estates. The work done by the HAT consultants will assist the Department in assessing any bids for HIP resources.

Water Privatisation

31. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will meet a deputation from the Ramblers Association to discuss the maintenance of free accessibility to land for the general public following privatisation of the water authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I met the Ramblers Association to discuss these matters on 6 March 1989.

32. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the alleged illegality of the water authorities' advertising campaign.

Mr. Howard: I have been unable to trace any representations on this point.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from Cumbria county council and the Lake District planning board on the privatisation of water authority assets.

Mr. Howard: We have received a number of representations from the Lake District planning board about the composition of the regional rivers advisory committees of the National Rivers Authority, consultation arrangements between the national park authorities and the water industry, and the sale of non-operational land. The board's views have been carefully considered. I am not aware of any representations from Cumbria county council.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how it intends to finance the main flotation costs of the privatisation of the water authorities.

Mr. Howard: Token provision for this new service has been sought in the main supply estimate for class X vote 9. A supplementary estimate will be presented when the sale has been completed and the final costs are known. Pending approval of these estimates, urgent expenditure will be met by repayable advances from the contingencies fund.

New Towns

33. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received regarding the seven new town submissions affecting Appleton Cross and Grappenhall Heys; and what proportion of them were in favour of the developments.

Mr. Trippier: I have received 2,095 proformas and letters about these submissions, most of which were opposed to the proposals. I have also received three petitions against the proposals containing in total some 7,000 signatures.

52. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many county councils in England currently include in their proposed revised structure plan schemes for building new towns in excess of 10,000 people on existing green belt land; and if he will list them.

Mr. Chope: I know of no such schemes, other than that proposed in the south-east Dorset structure plan first alteration, of which my hon. Friend will be aware. My right hon. Friend hopes to publish modifications to the South-East Dorset alteration shortly.

Right to Buy

34. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the use of the delay procedure, since its introduction in March, by tenants wishing to exercise their right to buy their council home.

Mr. Trippier: A large number of tenants exercising the right to buy and held up by their landlord have sought advice on the delay procedure, and over 15,000 forms have been sent out, both to tenants direct and to hon. Members and tenants' advisers. But we have no precise information since there is no requirement to inform the Department when delay notices are served.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many appeals against valuations under the right-to-buy scheme were made by Greenwich council tenants during *(a)* 1988 and *(b)* the first three months of 1989; and in how many cases the original valuation was reduced on appeal.

Mr. Trippier: A total of 369 tenants of the council requested determinations of value by the district valuer in 1988, the value determined being lower than the council's in 360 cases. Two hundred and eleven tenants have requested determinations in the first three months of this year, the determination being lower than the original valuation in all the 114 cases dealt with so far.

Water Charges

35. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received on the provisions for the future control of water charges set out in the Water Bill.

Mr. Howard: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) on Monday 22 May 1989.

Green Belt

36. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total area of land which has been removed from the green belt during the last 10 years.

Mr. Chope: The precise information requested is not available, but the extent of approved green belt in England has more than doubled from 1·8 million acres to 4·5 million acres since 1979.

77. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what instructions he has given to planning authorities to prevent erosion into the green belt; whether the importance of presumption against development in the green belt still applies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Local planning authorities are expected to have regard to the very restrictive planning policies that continue to apply in the green belt, as set out in the Department's planning policy guidance note 2, published in January 1988: a copy is in the Library. As the guidance makes plain, there is a general assumption against inappropriate development in the green belt.

93. **Mr. Wolfson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration he has given to the need for local housing authorities situated within the green belt to make provisions, on an exceptional basis, for low-cost housing in their rural area; and what advice he has offered.

Mr. Trippier: In the first instance it is for local authorities to decide where new housing can be accommodated, taking account of existing planning policies and, where applicable, the relaxation I announced on 3 February for small developments to meet local needs in rural areas. The Government have made provision for a substantial increase in the total resources available to housing associations for subsidised rented housing and for low-cost home ownership, and an increased share of that total will be allocated to smaller rural communities and to those areas where high house prices make access to owner-occupation more difficult.

Low-cost Housing Scheme

37. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements he proposes to recommend to local authorities and housing associations to ensure that the initial benefit of a reduced price available to the purchaser of a house under the low-cost housing scheme can be passed on to subsequent purchasers.

Mr. Trippier: My noble Friend the Minister for Housing, Environment and Countryside recently announced that we have in mind a scheme where housing associations will have a pre-emptive right to buy back a shared ownership property at full market value when the owner sells:

(i) where the house is in a rural area where replacement of a shared ownership dwelling may be difficult; or
(ii) where a private landowner has contributed a site on condition that it be retained for low-cost housing.

This repurchase arrangement enables the association to resell with the benefit of a reduced price, without restricting the right of the shared owner to become the full owner of his home.

Montreal Protocol

39. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many countries have agreed to sign the Montreal protocol following the ozone conference in London held in March.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: At the "London saving the ozone layer conference" 20 countries said that they would become parties to the Montreal protocol, and a further 14 said that they would give serious consideration to doing so.

Pollution Inspectorate

40. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning the proposed re-organisation of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department has received some representations mainly from or on behalf of local authorities. They have been concerned primarily with the need to maintain existing lines of communication with inspectorate staff following implementation of the reorganisation proposals.

One of the objectives of the proposed reorganisation is to produce a more effective deployment of resources. The importance of effective links with local authorities is recognised and maintaining communication with them will be an essential element in developing the reorganisation proposals.

Young Persons (Housing)

41. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he takes to ensure that advice is available to a young person without a parental home looking to be housed in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Trippier: I can answer only for England. In the current year my Department will provide grants totalling nearly £700,000 to over 20 voluntary housing advice agencies. Many of these provide assistance to young people without a parental home.

European Council of Environment Ministers

42. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the business of the forthcoming meeting of the European Council of Environment Ministers, which is to be held on 8 June.

69. **Mr. James Lamond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the

business of the forthcoming meeting of the European Council of Environment Ministers, which is to be held on 8 June.

84. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the business of the forthcoming meeting of the European Council of Environment Ministers, which is to be held on 8 June.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is for the Spanish presidency to decide on the agenda for meetings of the European Council of Ministers. It has not yet confirmed an agenda for the European Council meeting of Environment Ministers on 8 June.

Local Authority Housing

43. **Mr. Gow:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many houses and how many flats are owned by local authorities; and what new proposals he has to extend the opportunity for them to become owner-occupied.

Mr. Trippier: In April 1988 local authorities in England owned some 4·5 million dwellings, about a third of them flats or maisonettes. Following the new discount scale for flats introduced in January 1987 sales of flats increased from 9 per cent. to 17·6 per cent. as a proportion of all sales. Tenants of both houses and flats have recently been helped to buy their homes by an increase in the maximum discount to £50,000 and by a new power to have rent deducted from the purchase price if the landlord delays the sale.

Lambeth (Council Housing)

46. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many houses owned by Lambeth council are currently empty.

Mr. Trippier: At 1 April 1988, the latest date for which figures are currently available there were 1,156 empty properties owned by the London borough of Lambeth. There are no separate figures for houses alone.

50. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council tenants in Lambeth were waiting for their applications to buy their homes to be processed at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Trippier: On 30 April 1989, according to figures supplied by Lambeth, 2,086 applicants were waiting for the council to take the next step in processing the sale of their homes, either by confirming the tenant's right-to-buy or providing a valuation.

Water Bill

48. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what aspects will be covered in further leaflets on the Water Bill.

Mr. Howard: Possible subjects for future leaflets on the Water Bill are land, access and recreation; and bathing waters.

63. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will seek to amend the Water Bill so that privatisation of the industry is based on the statutory water companies model.

Mr. Howard: No. The 1986 White Paper "Privatisation of Water Industry in England and Wales" explained that we had rejected the statutory company model because it was an outdated method of operating a business. The controls on dividend and reserves do not give any incentive to achieve greater efficiency. We firmly believe that the plc company model with controls on prices and standards of service will provide a better and more efficient service, and will enable the privatised companies to develop in ways that will benefit their customers and investors alike.

Control of Pollution Act 1974

49. **Mr. Heddle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action was taken to implement part II of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 *(a)* between its enactment and May 1979 and *(b)* since May 1979.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The main provisions of part II of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 were implemented between July 1984 and October 1986. These provided for more effective protection of inland surface and underground waters, the extension of controls to cover all coastal and estuarial waters and public involvement, for the first time, in the water pollution control system.

These provisions are to be re-enacted, and where appropriate, strengthened, in the Water Bill.

Prior to May 1979, only five relatively minor sections of part II were brought into force.

Housing (Ballots)

51. **Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will announce a timetable for ballots in proposed housing action trust areas.

Mr. Trippier: Ballots will not take place until we are satisfied that tenants have had time to consider fully the consultants' reports on the areas and to put forward their own ideas for improving their estates.

Sports Facilities (Urban Areas)

53. **Mr. Heffer:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department is monitoring the number of outdoor recreational sports facilities in the urban areas of England.

Mr. Moynihan: This information is not held centrally. However, the regional offices of the Sports Council maintain records on the major sports facilities within their regions and the Sports Council is in the process of building up a sports facilities database for England.

Rent Arrears (Lambeth)

54. **Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the level of council rent arrears in Lambeth at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Trippier: A table showing the rent arrears outstanding to all English local authorities as at 1 April 1988 is in the Library.

Home Ownership

55. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment by what percentage home ownership has increased since 1979.

Mr. Trippier: Estimates of numbers and proportions of dwellings in owner occupation in England in December 1979 and December 1988 appear in Table 2·22 of "Housing and Construction Statistics, Part 2", volume 36, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Developments (Restrictive Covenants)

56. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on covenants to restrict development; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend receives three or four applications each year under schedule 24 to the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 to discharge or modify agreements made under section 34 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1932 which restrict the planning, development or use of land; some of these applications are opposed.

Sewage Treatment Works

57. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of sewage treatment works failed their discharge consents *(a)* in May 1979 and *(b)* at the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mr. Howard: Information on sewage treatment works failing their consents was not collected by the Government in May 1979. Numbers of sewage treatment works in each water authority area in England and Wales that have numerical discharge consent conditions, numbers tested and non-compliance in 1986 and 1987, together with the figures returned by authorities for 1988 are as follows.

Water authority	*Number*			*Number tested*			*Works in breach of consent* *Number*			*Percentage of works tested*		
	1986	*1987*	*1988*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Anglian	782	760	775	774	754	748	309	260	208	40	34	28
Northumbrian	196	182	178	196	182	178	37	27	26	19	15	15
North West	458	448	441	458	448	441	62	55	43	14	12	10
Severn-Trent	773	753	808	762	742	751	179	160	112	23	22	15
Southern	282	274	273	282	274	271	54	39	41	19	14	15
South West	226	226	232	188	219	228	55	65	68	29	30	30
Thames	374	382	378	374	379	378	67	70	60	18	18	16
Welsh	803	764	710	668	611	650	112	108	107	17	18	17
Wessex	272	272	272	272	270	272	39	39	16	14	11	6
Yorkshire	380	360	360	380	351	354	88	74	61	23	21	17
England and Wales	4,546	4,421	4,427	4,354	4,230	4,271	1,002	887	742	23	21	17

Water Quality (Barnsley)

58. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has recently received regarding the quality of water supplies in the Barnsley area.

Mr. Howard: None.

Structure Plans (White Paper)

60. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from Oxfordshire concerning the White Paper on structure plans.

Mr. Howard: Representations have been received from Oxfordshire county council and South Oxfordshire district council, suggesting some minor modifications to our proposals for the future development plans. These comments will be considered, along with those received from other organisations and authorities, as draft legislation is prepared to implement the White Paper proposals.

Rating Reform

61. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimates he has of the relative effect of *(a)* a system of capital value rates plus local income tax and *(b)* the community charge on an average ward sister.

Mr. Gummer: Last year ward sister's earning £13,000 and living in properties valued at £40,000 would have paid on average about £450 in a system of capital value rates plus local income tax compared to £246 with the community charge.

78. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has had any representations to introduce a local income tax instead of the rating system and the community charge; and what would be the amount payable in local income tax by a man on average earnings.

Mr. Gummer: Not surprisingly I have received hardly any representations in favour of a local income tax. Based on 1988-89 figures for local authority spending, the average local income tax rate needed in England would have been 6·4p in the pound. If the tax were at that level in a particular local authority area, the payment for a person on male average earnings, with only the single person's tax allowance, would have been about £650.

Football Identity Card Scheme

62. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations he has had with Lord Justice Taylor regarding the introduction of his Bill on football club membership cards.

Mr. Moynihan: None.

Atmospheric Lead

64. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of lead in the atmosphere is caused by lead in petrol.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: On 1 January 1986 the permitted lead content of petrol was reduced from 0·4g per litre to 0·15g per litre. The Warren Spring laboratory has been monitoring the effects of the reduction on the concentration of lead in the atmosphere for the

Department. Its estimate, based on this work, is that currently 75 per cent. of the lead in the air is derived from lead in petrol.

Sewage Works Discharge Consents

65. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest figure for the number of applications by water authorities for the relaxation of sewage works discharge consents.

Mr. Howard: On 7 December at column 199, I announced a capital programme costing around £1 billion to bring sewage treatment works into compliance with their discharge consents by March 1992. Water authorities may apply for time-limited discharge consents for these works to regularise current performance while improvements take place. Some 785 such applications have been received from English water authorities. A list of those sewage works for which these applications have been made has been placed in the Library of the House.

Plastic Packaging

66. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to discourage the use of non-recyclable plastic packaging.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is for industry to develop products that meeet the requirements of consumers, bearing in mind energy use, the need to protect goods and prevent wastage.

Housing Action Trust, Sunderland

67. **Mr. Clay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are his most recent proposals concerning the designation of a housing action trust in Sunderland.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend announced on 16 March that detailed consultation would be carried out with tenants on the proposal to designate a housing action trust in Sunderland. This consultation process is under way.

Sports Facilities (Privatisation)

68. **Mrs. Golding:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the effect of the privatisation of the management of sports facilities upon the public use of swimming baths and playing fields.

Mr. Moynihan: A number of local authorities have put the management of their leisure facilities out to competition. My Department does not have complete information on the impact of those decisions. However, to take one example, after eight months of private sector management at three leisure centres owned by Westminster city council, public use has increased on average by over 60 per cent.

Local Authority Housing Programme

70. **Mr. Robert Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received about the proposed new arrangements for capital receipts and the impact these will have on local authority housing programmes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Over 450 responses were received to my Department's consultation paper "Capital Expenditure and Finance" and a number of further representations have been received following the introduction of the Local Government and Housing Bill. More than half of these have commented on the proposed arrangements for capital receipts in the new capital finance system. Those arrangements will ensure prudential provision for debt redemption when local authority assets are disposed of. They will also allow the Government to target resources efficiently on need, including the need for local authority housing programmes.

Tin Cans (Recycling)

71. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of tin cans are currently recycled.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is estimated that about 8 per cent. of the United Kingdom's consumption of tinplated steel cans was recycled in 1988.

Air Pollution

72. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many visits and inspections were carried out by the air pollution inspectors during the year 1988-89.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In the year 1988-89, the air pollution inspectors made 8,542 visits and inspections.

Airport, Tinsley Park

76. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will change his decision not to call in for his determination the proposal for a STOL airport at Tinsley park, Sheffield.

Mr. Chope: No. The matter was given full and careful consideration before the Secretary of State reached his decision.

Countryside (Access)

79. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with organisations concerned about rights of access to the countryside.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: On 10 January I met a delegation from the Ramblers Association at which a range of topics relating to access to the countryside were discussed. I also met representatives of the Country Landowners Association on 21 February. Officials are in regular contact with all the organisations concerned with countryside access.

Sports (Drugs)

80. **Mr. Randall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to encourage the eradication of drug taking by British sports competitors.

Mr. Moynihan: The Sports Council funds the drug control and testing centre and conducts doping controls on behalf of and in co-operation with the governing bodies. In April 1988, following a report by Sebastian Coe and

myself, the council introduced more rigorous procedures for doping control requiring random testing of competitors. This includes testing out of competition and collection of samples by independent sampling officers. I have proposed a European convention on the use of drugs in sport based on these procedures. This will be discussed at the forthcoming meeting of European Sports Ministers in Reykjavik on 31 May and 1 June.

Sport (Private Investment)

82. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made by the Sports Council in seeking to attract private sector investment into sport.

Mr. Moynihan: Private sector investment in sport in 1988-89 was £180 million. The Sports Council has played an important role in promoting the development of sponsorship.

Environmental Research

83. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment by what amount spending by his Department on environmental research has increased over the past five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Ridley: Spending by my Department on environmental research, covering research on environmental protection, water, planning and local government, has increased by £7·8 million from £21·8 million in 1984-85 to £29·6 million in 1988-89.

Recreational Land

85. **Mr. John P. Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the amount of recreational land currently available for general community use; what was the comparable figure 10 years ago; and what steps he is taking to monitor the situation and ensure that the local authorities are able to provide for increased public participation in sport and recreation.

Mr. Moynihan: This information is not held centrally. However, some local studies have been undertaken and these suggest that in a number of areas gains in provision outweigh losses. The regional councils for sport and recreation work with the local authorities to increase participation in sport and to monitor the provision of recreational land. The regional councils seek to ensure that well used recreational land is retained for that purpose.

Marine Nature Reserves

86. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many areas have been identified by the Nature Conservancy Council as suitable for marine nature reserves; and when these reserves will be established.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Nature Conservancy Council has identified seven sites that, in its opinion, have the potential to be designated as marine nature reserves. One of these sites, Lundy Island, was designated as a marine nature reserve in November 1986. In view of the further scientific work that will be required, and the extensive consultation procedures that form a necessary part of the designation process, it is not possible to forecast when the other reserves might be established.

8. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many marine nature reserves have been established since the enactment of the Countryside and Wildlife Act 1981.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: One marine nature reserve at Lundy Island, has been designated under the 1981 Act so far. Proposals for a second MNR, at Skomer and the Marloes peninsula, are currently being considered by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Planning and Development Policies

87. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next expects to review planning and development control policies for the conurbations of England and Wales with a view to possible legislative adjustments.

Mr. Chope: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given yesterday to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey).

Denis Wild-type Houses

91. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce progress in encouraging building societies to advance mortgage loans on Denis Wild-type houses.

Mr. Trippier: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 26 April at column *584*.

Schools (Sports)

92. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the changes in the numbers of schools participating in swimming and sports activities in recent years.

Mr. Moynihan: This information is not held centrally.

Allotments

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by year for the last 10 years, how many hectares of *(a)* statutory and *(b)* temporary allotment sites have been granted outline planning permission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: This information is not available.

Archaeological Investigations

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what amount of Government funding is set aside to fund archaeological investigations.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This is a matter for English Heritage to determine, within its overall resources of grant-in-aid from this Department and other sources of income. In its budget of £72,399 million for the current financial year it has allocated £7·2 million for archaeological investigations and recording.

Ancient Monuments

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those sites where ancient monuments have been covered by planning decisions.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department has no comprehensive information about the details of planning decisions made by local planning authorities. Information about planning decisions made by the Secretary of State, or decisions on scheduled monument consent applications, which have led to archaeological sites being covered by development could only be assembled at disproportionate cost.

Housing Action Trust, Lambeth

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much open space is included in the proposed HAT area in Lambeth; and how much public open space will remain if the consultants' proposals for the HAT in this area are implemented.

Mr. Trippier: The consultants' proposals are illustrative only and were developed simply to give an indication of what could be done to the estates and at what cost. Once established, a trust would be under a duty to consult those who live in its area about its proposals.

There is an estimated 5.0 Ha of open space in the proposed trust in Lambeth comprising approximately 2·7 Ha of public open space and approximately 2·3 Ha of semi-private open space. The illustrative proposals would increase the area of public open space to a total of approximately 3·3 Ha and provide additional private gardens.

Housing Action Trusts

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to be able to publish amended reports correcting the errors in the documents published by his department in March from the consultants appointed to study the proposed HATs in Southwark, Lambeth, Tower Hamlets and Sunderland.

Mr. Trippier: If the hon. Member knows of any errors in the consultant's reports about the proposed housing action trust areas in Southwark, Lambeth, Tower Hamlets and Sunderland published on 16 March, I should be grateful if he would write to me.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment further to his answer to the hon. Member for Hammersmith of 23 March, *Official Report*, column *780*, what further expenditure on consultancy or other work related to the proposed HAT areas he has agreed to; what are the briefs given to the consultants; which consultants have been appointed; and what is the estimated cost of the work they have been commissioned to do in *(a)* Lambeth, *(b)* Southwark, *(c)* Sandwell, *(d)* Leeds and *(e)* Sunderland.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has appointed consultants to discuss the proposals contained in the reports of the proposed trust areas published on 16 March. The objectives of the consultation exercise are:

(a) to explain to tenants, residents and other local interests the findings in the consultants' reports and the illustrative proposals put forward for improving the areas of the proposed trust estates.

(b) to consult tenants, residents and other local interests to establish their own views, ideas and suggestions about what could be done to improve their estates, including their reactions to the proposals contained in the reports.

(c) to produce reports in the form of commentaries on the key proposals contained in the original reports indicating tenant priorities; their attitudes towards the proposals, including their own suggestions for improvement; and the effect they would have on the prospects for achieving the primary objects of a Trust as set out in section 63 of the Housing Act 1988.

The consultants are led by Peat Marwick McLintock in Sunderland, by PIC Ltd. in Lambeth and Southwark and by PIEDA in Leeds. In Sandwell, the further study of the Cape Hill area by a consortium led by Price Waterhouse announced by my right hon. Friend in his answer to the hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) of 16 March at column *322* is still under way. The costs of the contracts will remain commercially confidential until they have been completed.

Listed Buildings

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to amend section 55 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 to provide that specified internal fixtures, including mirrors, be protected by the listing of a building.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Under section 54(9) of the Act any object or structure fixed to a listed building either internally or externally is protected by the listed building controls in section 55, in so far as its removal, alteration or extension would affect the character of the building as one of special architectural or historic interest. We have no plans to extend the controls to cover moveable objects.

Rain Forests

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, pursuant to his reply of 13 April, *Official Report*, column *667*, he will ask working group I of the United Nations environmental programme/world meteorological organisation inter-governmental panel on climate changes to make an interim report on the climatological consequences of felling and burning of rain forest in the Brazilian state of Para and eastern Amazonia in the first four months of 1989.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. The Government do not seek to interfere with the group's scientific work plan and reporting schedule agreed internationally by the inter-governmental panel on climate change. However, I understand that the hon. Member's particular concern about deforestation in eastern Amazonia is being addressed by the working group, which will report to the world climate conference in the autumn of 1990.

Domestic Rates

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his answer of 18 May to the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley), *Official Report*, columns *262-64*, he will publish a table showing in descending order the average domestic rate bill payable in each London borough in 1983-84 and 1989-90.

Mr. Ridley: The information requested is listed below.

Average domestic rate bills in London

	£
1983-84	
Kensington and Chelsea	712
Westminster	690
Camden	672

	£
Brent	631
City of London	612
Islington	611
Haringey	608
Southwark	519
Lambeth	498
Barnet	492
Hackney	490
Harrow	476
Lewisham	461
Greenwich	453
Tower Hamlets	449
Hammersmith and Fulham	417
Richmond-upon-Thames	405
Hounslow	401
Newham	397
Waltham Forest	392
Hillingdon	389
Merton	386
Havering	381
Bromley	369
Ealing	361
Enfield	361
Redbridge	360
Sutton	356
Kingston-upon-Thames	350
Bexley	338
Croydon	329
Wandsworth	327
Barking and Dagenham	299
1989-90[1]	
Brent	970
Haringey	906
Westminster	782
Camden	748
Barnet	713
Islington	677
City of London	658
Hounslow	657
Ealing	635
Newham	627
Richmond-upon-Thames	624
Harrow	612
Hillingdon	602
Enfield	590
Hammersmith and Fulham	586
Waltham Forest	583
Kingston-upon-Thames	582
Sutton	573
Kensington and Chelsea	550
Hackney	547
Greenwich	537
Lambeth	517
Merton	501
Havering	500
Croydon	499
Lewisham	483
Bromley	469
Bexley	459
Southwark	450
Redbridge	447
Barking and Dagenham	447
Tower Hamlets	419
Wandsworth	357

[1] Based on 1989-90 average rateable values.

Planning

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of planning appeal decisions for each of the last five years; and on which occasions he over-ruled the advice of his inspectors.

Mr. Howard: In the last five years a total of 81,992 planning appeals have been decided—78,669 by inspectors and 3,323 by the Secretary of State. In only 114 were the inspectors' recommendations not accepted.

Archaeology Investigations

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on archaeology and development.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he has given to developers to accommodate archaeological investigations in development briefs.

Mrs. Bottomley: Recent archaeological discoveries in London have highlighted the growing interest in our archaeological heritage.

Very considerable progress has been made in recent years. In 1986 a code of practice was agreed between archaeologists and developers which led last year to developers voluntarily contributing some £14m towards archaeological investigations.

The Government and English Heritage for their part must ensure that all those involved—local authoritities, local people, developers, businesses—have adequate information on the existing sources of expertise and on the relevant statutory and planning framework. We are proposing to issue new guidance this summer which will set out, amongst other things, guidelines on how archaeology should be handled in development plans and in development control decisions, the scope for prior archaeological evaluation before development, and the appropriate use of planning conditions for archaeological excavations.

Chicken Farm, Stokeham, Devon

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will approve the article 4 direction served on him in relation to the proposed erection of buildings at the chicken farm, Start Point, Stokeham, South Devon.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 28 April 1989]:* My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment approved the article 4 direction in relation to land at Hambrook, Stokeham on 24 May and has informed South Hams district council.

Drinking Water (House of Commons)

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the date and details of the most recent analysis of drinking water supplied in the House of Commons, and the European Community maximum admissible concentration levels for sulphate, fluoride, potassium, sodium, magnesium, iron, manganese, nickel, conductivity and turbidity.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 17 May 1989]:* Drinking water in the Palace of Westminster is taken direct from the Thames water authority's main supply. Sampling is therefore undertaken only when a specific need arises. The most recent testing on 14 March 1989 followed a complaint about an unpleasant taste in the water. The

laboratory of the Government chemist's tests confirmed that the samples were chemically and bacteriologically suitable for drinking.

The concentration levels requested from the samples were as follows:

Substance/condition	*Source of sample*		*EEC*
	Members' cafeteria sink	*Members' cafeteria drinking water machine*	*Maximum admissible concentration*
Sulphate as SO_4 (mg/e)	66	64	250
Fluoride (ug/l)	200	180	1,500
Potassium (mg/l)	6·5	6·5	12
Sodium (mg/l)	34·9	35·8	150
Magnesium (mg/l)	6·0	5·9	50
Iron (ug/l)	18	10	200
Manganese	5	5	50
Nickel (ug/l)	—[1]	—[1]	50
Conductivity (usiemans/cm at 20°)	747	599	1,500
Turbidity (NTU)	0·62	0·88	4

[1] Not determined.

Advertising

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide as much information as possible about his Department's expenditure on commercial television advertising, without breaching commercial confidentially, over each of the past five years.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 22 May 1989]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 15 May. The September 1984 television advertising referred to, formed part of an overall information campaign to ensure council tenants in England and Wales knew about extensions of their rights under the Housing Act 1980, introduced by the Housing and Building Control Act 1984. The television campaign in the first two weeks of April this year was aimed at motivating motorists to adjust their cars in order to be able to use unleaded petrol.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 25 May 1989

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Special Education

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about the provision of special education in Cheshire.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend has seen the petition which my hon. Friend submitted to him earlier this month concerning special education provision in Cheshire and in particular the LEA's arrangements for individual tuition.

The Department is currently making inquiries of the Cheshire LEA and I shall send a full reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Teachers

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of mathematics and science teachers in *(a)* Surrey and *(b)* England are not trained in the subjects they teach.

Mr. Butcher: Estimates of the numbers of teachers of mathematics and science without a qualification in these subjects, and of the amount of tuition they provide, can be derived from the 1988 secondary school staffing survey of maintained schools in England. The figures are as follows:

	Percentage of teachers teaching the subject who do not have a post A-level qualification in it	*Percentage of all tuition in the subject provided by teachers without a post A-level qualification in it*
	Per cent.	*Per cent.*
Mathematics	27	13
Biology	18	9
Chemistry	20	10
Physics	31	19
General science[1]	17 (71)	11 (67)
Other sciences[1]	23 (69)	16 (55)

[1] Figures exclude teachers (and tuition by teachers) with a post A-level qualification specifically in biology, chemistry or physics as well as those with general or other science qualifications. The bracketed figures show the result if this exclusion is not made.

No information is available in respect of Surrey—the survey sample is too small to permit reliable estimates for individual education authorities.

City Technology Colleges

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many city technology colleges are presently operating within the United Kingdom; and which are clearly scheduled to open in September 1989 and September 1990.

Mr. Butcher: Kingshurst CTC opened in September 1988, Nottingham and Teesside will open this September, and Dartford, Bradford, Gateshead and the London school for performing arts and technology will open in September 1990.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much capital money has been identified for development of city technology colleges between their inception and the year 2000.

Mr. Butcher: A total of £13·3 million has been incurred on city technology college capital expenditure between the inception of the programme and the end of the 1988-89 financial year.

Planned public expenditure to 1991-92, as published in Cmnd. 612, is £106·6 million. The balance of expenditure between capital and recurrent costs will depend on a number of factors, including the nature and condition of premises acquired and the speed at which sponsors' plans are implemented.

Plans for future years have yet to be considered.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much capital money has been provided by the Government to those city technology colleges in existence or scheduled to open shortly.

Mr. Butcher: Capital grants made to city technology colleges open or scheduled to open are as follows:

	£ million
Kingshurst	3·53
Nottingham	5·94
Teesside	3·34
Gateshead	0·30
Bradford	0·63
Dartford	0·24

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) how the running costs of city technology colleges will be met; and what the anticipated source or sources of the revenue funding will be;

(2) whether the running costs of a city technology college will be broadly comparable with similar costs associated with maintained schools.

Mr. Butcher: All normal running costs will be met through our recurrent grant to city technology colleges. The basis of this grant will be expenditure by local education authorities on maintained schools in similar areas. It will be open to city technology colleges, as it is to all schools, to raise additional funds from other sources.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how the travel expenses of children who live over 3 miles away from a city technology college will be met; and how the costs of uniform grants and other similar benefits will be met.

Mr. Butcher: Our recurrent grant to city technology colleges will be comparable to expenditure by local education authorities on schools in similar areas, including expenditure on home to school transport and on pupil support generally. It will be for the city technology college to decide how to meet these costs in specific cases.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what firms or other commercial interests have so far agreed to sponsor an entire city technology college and what are the names of these firms or other commercial interests.

Mr. Butcher: None has been asked to do so. The capital costs of all CTCs will be shared between the Government and private sector sponsors and thereafter normal running costs will be met by annual grant from my right hon. Friend. Sponsors have already pledged £36 million towards the establishment of CTCs across the country—an unprecedented response to an education initiative.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how long the period of consultations with parents and governors prior to the decision by the governing body to submit an application to become a city technology college was at *(a)* Sylvan high school, *(b)* Haberdashers Aske's schools, Hatcham and *(c)* Riverside school.

Mr. Butcher: Consultations on the future of the Sylvan high school, which is a county school, were undertaken by Croydon education authority; and the authority subsequently published proposals under section 12 of the Education Act 1980 to cease to maintain the school, so that a CTC might be established in its place. In the case of Riverside, also a county school, consultations were held on its future, but Bexley education authority subsequently decided against publishing section 12 proposals. The period for consultation was approximately three months and two months respectively. Our expectations on what public consultations should take place in these circumstances were set out in circular 3/87.

The Haberdashers' Aske's are voluntary schools and I understand that the governors are considering seeking our leave to give notice of their discontinuation under the provisions of section 14 of the Education Act 1944. That section carries no requirement for public consultations to take place. Nevertheless, we have made clear in my right hon. Friend's statements on 28 July 1988 and 23 January this year that in considering any application for leave under section 14, where the intention is to establish a CTC, we expect that there shall have been prior public consultations.

School Trips

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many representations he has received on the subject of charges for school trips.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend has received 540 letters on the subject of charges for school trips since the issue of the Department's draft circular of guidance in October 1988.

School Discipline

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what steps he has taken to establish a working group to develop serious incidents reporting systems in response to recommendation 132·1 of the Elton report of the committee of inquiry into discipline in schools;

(2) what steps he intends to take to clarify the legal basis of a teacher's authority over pupils in response to paragraph 73 of the Elton report on discipline in schools.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend announced on 13 March immediate Government action to follow up recommendations in the report of the committee of inquiry into discipline in schools. He is considering the recommendation on the legal basis of a teacher's authority and the recommendation, which was also directed to local education authorities, that a working group on serious incidents reporting systems be established.

Student Grants

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the average unit of funding for a university student assumed to be in the 1988-89 University Grants Committee settlement; by what percentage this assumed average unit was increased in real terms in the 1989-90 UFC settlement; and what assumptions were made for inflation in this increase.

Mr. Jackson: The public funding of universities is not determined on the basis of unit costs. The forecast level of inflation at the time of last year's Autumn Statement was five per cent. Including the additional funding for 1989 pay settlements, overall funding will increase by eight per cent. between 1988-89 and 1989-90. Student numbers are expected to increase by three per cent.

Under-Secretary of State (Engagements)

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the official engagements undertaken by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State with responsibility for higher education since the beginning of May.

Mr. Robert Jackson: Since the beginning of May, I have had the following official engagements to date:

2 May
Meeting: delegation from China; Oral Parliamentary Questions; address: the Council for Industry and Higher Education; address for design awards dinner.

3 May
Meeting: Professor Ihsan Dogramaci, Chairman of Turkish Higher Education Council; dinner and address: Presidents of Research Councils of Europe, Japan and the USA.

5 May
Address: Careers Research and Advisory Centre Conference.

8 May
Visit: Liverpool University.

9 May
Address: The Centre for Policy Studies; meeting: Mr. Bill Stubbs of the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council.

10 May
Lunch: Geoffery Melling of the Further Education Staff College.

11 May
Interview: Time Magazine; address for the Opening of the Medical Research Council Radiobiology Unit; address: Industry/Education Seminar (Oxfordshire County Council); meeting: Professor Stuart of the Agriculture and Food Research Council.

13 May
Telephone call to Bertel Haarder, Danish Education Minister.

15 May
Visit: Rycotewood College; dinner and address for Sir Ralph Dahrendorf and senior academics at St. Anthony's College, Oxford.

16 May
Address: The General Synod Further and Higher Education Committee; dinner and address for the Reform Club Political Committee; telephone call to Willem Deetman, Dutch Education Minister.

17 May
Meeting: Lord Chilver and Sir Peter Swinnerton-Dyer of the Universities Funding Council.

18 May
Address: conference for Continuing Professional

Development; meeting: the Association of Metropolitan Authorities; meeting: The Campaign for Public Sector History; telephone call to Juergen Muellemann, German Education Minister.

19 May
Lunch and address for Professor Brewer and senior academics at Emmanuel College, Cambridge; 25th anniversary dinner at Darwin College, Cambridge.

20 May
Telephone call to Javier Solana Madariaga, Spanish Education Minister.

23 May
Address for the National Information Services Conference.

24 May
Address: the Building Industry Council Conference; meeting: the Institute of Chartered Accountants; meeting: Dominique Perben, Depute (MP) and Mayor of Chalon-sur Saone; address: European Agricultural Research Initiative (EURAGRI) Conference; meeting: Richard Hodges, Director of the British School in Rome.

25 May
Meeting: Sue Whittle, President of the Mature Students Union; meeting: Professor Sloane, Aberdeen University; hosting: Reception for the British/French Colloquium on Educational Exchange.

26 May
Visit to the Institut Laue-Langevin and the European Synchrotron Radiation Facility (ESRF) in Grenoble.

In addition, I hold daily meetings with officials of the Department and maintain informal contact with a variety of people from the world of education and science.

Cash Limits

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether there are any changes to the cash limits for his Department's votes.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the cash limits for the following votes will be revised as follows:

Vote	*Current cash limit* £	*Change* £	*Revised Cash limit* £
Class XII Vote 1	493,133,000	+1,003,000	494,136,000
Class XII Vote 2	3,101,271,000	+22,490,000	3,123,761,000
Class XII Vote 5	824,368,000	−8,493,000	815,875,000

Additional provision is sought as follows:

(a) £25 million to make annual maintenance grants for expenditure on staff salaries and other running costs for schools which I have approved as grant maintained from September 1989 and from January 1990. This increase will be fully offset by recoupment, under section 81 of the Education Reform Act 1988, from the local authorities formerly maintaining the schools.

(b) £1,003,000 for the professional, industrial and commercial updating programme to enable the selective funding of PICKUP activities in local authority colleges to proceed.

(c) £23,493,000 towards the increased cost to universities, the Open university, the Royal college of art and the Cranfield institute of technology of employing non-clinical academic staff.

Provision for grant-in-aid to the Natural Environment Research Council is reduced by £8,493,000 because expenditure on the construction of a new research vessel for the British Antarctic Survey has been deferred to 1990-91.

The net increase of £15,000,000 will be charged to the Reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Boards of Governors

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of those people appointed by him to be independent members of the boards of governors of higher education corporations.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have today published in the *Official Report* a list of the people I appointed as independent members of the boards of governors of the higher education corporations.

I was impressed by the high calibre of many of the candidates who were willing to put themselves forward for appointment as governors. It is heartening to see that so many able people from a wide variety of fields want to be associated with these higher education institutions. Governors have been drawn from across the spectrum of industry and commerce, from major companies to individual entrepreneurs and from all the professions. This will help to give the new sector the best possible start.

Anglia Higher Education College

Independent Members	*Affiliation*
David Ball	Chairman, David Ball Group (Engineering Manufacture)
Sir Terence Beckett KBE	Former Director General, CBI; Former Chairman and Chief Executive, Ford Motor Co.
A. H. Cherry MBE	Chairman and Managing Director, Countryside Properties plc
Terence A. Coslett	Former General Manager, Fisons Pest Control Ltd.; Chairman of Governors, Cambridgeshire College of Arts and Technology
N. Hepworth OBE	Director, Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
G. R. Hoffman	Consultant, Sir Murdoch MacDonald & Partners (Consulting Civil Engineers)
Mrs. Diana Jakubowska	Divisional Manager, Jakubowska Construction Group
Terence James	Chairman, Schering Holdings UK (Chemicals, pharmaceuticals, agro-chemicals)
Richard King	Managing Director and Chief Executive, Cambridge Electronic Industries
R. W. Mellor CBE	Secretary, Institute of Mechanical Engineers; Former Vice President of Ford (Europe) and Managing Director, Ford Product Development
Graeme Minto	Chairman, Domino Printing Sciences Ltd.
John C. Shrigley	Director of Personnel Services, GEC Marconi Limited
Mrs. Jean Smith	Chairman, North East Essex District Health Authority

Note: Cambridgeshire College of Arts and Technology and Essex Institute of Higher Education merged on 1 April 1989 to form Anglia Higher Education College.

Bath College of Higher Education

Independent Members	*Affiliation*
C. J. Arnold-Baker	Chief Executive, BBC Enterprises
Mrs. Sally-Jane Coode	Founder and Director, POLAMCO Ltd. (precision mechanical engineering company)
James Dyson	Chairman, Prototypes (design and development company)
Peter Edwards	Own firm—Investment Management
John M. Mott	Managing Director, A. Grantham Ltd. (Uniform Clothing Manufacturer)
David C. Part	Chairman, The General Trading Company (large retail shop)
John Patience	Regional Secretary and Solicitor, British Gas South Western
Mrs. Stella Pirie	Divisional Financial Director, Rotork plc (manufacturing division)
Nigel Reynolds	Chairman and Chief Executive, Bath Press Ltd.
Leslie Southwell	Former Managing Director, Deltak Training Co. Ltd. (Software and consultancy training company)
Ms. Mary Toman	Independent Management Consultant—Strategic planning and marketing Founder, London Consulting Group
Mrs. Fay Weldon	Novelist and critic
Miss Jillian M. White	Senior Music Producer, BBC Bristol

Birmingham Polytechnic

Independent Members	*Affiliation*
Roydon Axe	Director Design, Austin Rover Group
Mrs. Valerie Bragg	Principal, City Technology College, Kingshurst, Birmingham
Rupert Crane	Chairman, National Giro Bank (West Midlands); Director, Sharp Technology Fund plc
Mrs. Margaret Savage	District Personnel Manager, British Telecom
Dr. John Sawkill	Former Managing Director, Tube Investments Research & Development; Currently consultant to TI on Education & Industry
Frank Shaw	Finance Director, Royal Automobile Club
David Waller	Partner, Human Resources Group, Deloitte Haskins and Sells
James Wilson	General Manager, Bournville Village Trust

Bolton Institute of Higher Education

Independent Members	*Affiliation*
Brian Bruce	Director, British Textile Employers' Association
Josephine Burns	Assistant Director, North West Arts, Manchester
Dr. Matthew Dixon	Business Development Manager, National Computer Centre
Eric H. Farnworth	Director and General Manager, Lostock
Mohammad Tarique Ghaffar	Acting Chief Inspector, Greater Manchester Police
J. Goldberg	Retired Solicitor
K. A. L. Johnson	Engineering Director, Fairclough Civil Engineering Ltd.
Julian G. Masters	Managing Director, Hick Hargreaves and Co. Ltd.
Pamela J. Senior	General Secretary, Bolton Area Resource Centre
John Joseph Shaw	Partner, Bentley and Co., Chartered Accountants, Bolton
J. P. Speak	Chairman and Managing Director, Warburtons Limited

Bretton Hall College of Higher Education

Independent Members	*Affiliation*
George Robert Adams	Former Senior Partner, Hadfield Cawkwell and Davidson, Architects, Engineers and Town Planners
Stephen P. Battye	Managing Director, Skopos Fabrics
Margaret Booth	Housewife; former Director of family Company with responsibilities in Sales and Finance
John Henshaw	Farmer; former conservative member of Wakefield MDC
Professor William Middlebrook	Former Dean of School of Education, Trent Polytechnic
David B. Simpson	Senior Partner, Simpson and Wood, Chartered Accountants; Director, Hepworth Ceramic Holdings plc
Charles Russell Smith	Chairman, Allied Textile Companies plc; Director, Lloyds Bank plc
Duncan Smith	Manager, Lloyds Bank Commercial Service
Keith Paul Welton	Director, Kirklees and Wakefield Chamber of Commerce and Industry Ltd.

Brighton Polytechnic

Independent Members	*Affiliation*
Michael J. Aldrich	Chief Executive, ROCC Computers Ltd.
David J. Burt	Managing Director, Hellermann Deutsch Ltd.
Mrs. Julia F. Cumberlege	Chairman, Brighton Health Authority Chairman, National Association of District Health Authorities
Clifford Thomas Dann	Senior Partner, Clifford Dann & Partners, Chartered Surveyors, Estate Agents, Auctioneers, Development Advisers
J. Garry Hawkes	Managing Director, Gardner Merchant Director, Trusthouse Forte
Gavin Henderson	Artistic Director, Brighton Festival
Michael C. McLaren Hume	Company Director
David Arthur Jones	Consultant, Ewbank Preece Group Ltd. Chairman, Made in Britain Ltd.
Dr. Edwin Norris	Former Chief Inspector, HMI
Oscar Roith	Former Chief Engineer and Scientist, DTI President, Institution of Mechanical Engineers

Bristol Polytechnic

Independent Members	*Affiliation*
Dr. Robert H. Glendinning	Retired General Practitioner
Philip Gregory	Regional Secretary, South West TUC
Clive A. Halton	Partner in charge, Deloitte, Haskins & Sells
Michael C. J. Jackaman	Chairman and Chief Executive, Allied Vintners Ltd
Michael E. Kelsey	Director and Chief Executive, Engineering Employers' Western Association
Michael Knight	Agent, Bank of England, Bristol
John K. McDowall	Chairman: Business Centre Wales Ltd; Horstmann Group Ltd; Bank of Wales (Jersey) Ltd; Director, Bank of Wales plc
Bel Mooney	Journalist and author
Karen Morgan	Non-Executive Director, Sussex County Building Society; Chairman, Marine Logic Ltd
John D. Prescott Thomas	Head of Broadcasting, BBC South & West
Peter Ward	Director, (Human Resources) European Operations, 3 COM
John D. Wragg	Director (Military Engines), Rolls Royce plc
Magsood Zamir	Executive (Special Projects), British Gas South Western

Buckinghamshire College of Higher Education

Independent Members	*Affiliation*
Colin Berry	European Education Manager, Tandem Computers Europe Incorporated
Lucian Ercolani	Chairman, Ercol Furniture Ltd.
Owen Harris	Former Financial Director, Compair Ltd.
William Haynes	Managing Director, Rye Machinery Ltd.
Miss Gillian Humphreys	Solicitor
Nicholas G. Hurry	Group Training Manager, Meyer International plc.
David R. Jones	Chief Executive, Wagon Finance Corporation Ltd.
T. C. R. Jourdan	Managing Director, Parker Knoll Ltd.
Peter Land	Chairman, Wycombe Health Authority
John Lorenz	Managing Director, Equity Capital for Industry
The Hon. Mrs. Hilary Lewis	Consultant Leisure Management
Michael E. P. Moss	Personnel Manager, Equity & Law Assurance Society
Raymond C. Samuels	Group Personnel Manager, Y. J. Lovell Group Services Ltd.

Bulmershe College of Higher Education

Independent Members	*Affiliation*
William Barclay	Director, Metal Box Company
P. R. Daish	Financial Director/Company Secretary, Strayfield International Ltd.
Sir James Hamilton	Former Permanent Under-Secretary, DES
Sir Donald Hawley	Former member of Diplomatic Service
A. H. Mann	Internal Training Consultant, Foster Wheeler Energy Ltd., Reading
William L. Stansfeld-Taylor	Former Chief Editor, BBC Monitoring Service, Soviet & Eastern European Affairs;
Professor Jack Wrigley CBE	Deputy Vice-Chancellor, University of Reading

Note: Bulmershe College of Higher Education merged with the University of Reading on 1 April 1989

Charlotte Mason College of Education

Independent Members	*Affiliation*
Mrs. Meredyth Bell	Dental Surgeon, School Governor
D. Browning	Chief Eduction Officer, Bedfordshire
Sir Charles Carter	Former Vice-Chancellor, University of Lancaster (retired)
Madeline Davies	Head, Queen Katherine School, Kendal
David Hannah	Head of Training, Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering PLC
Mrs. J. O'Hare	Head, George Romney Junior School, Dalton in Furness
J. Hole	Works Secretary, BNFL, Seascale
John Morris	Assistnant Solicitor
Prof. Alec Ross	Professor of Education, Lancaster University
Kenneth Walker	Executive Deputy Chairman, Provincial Insurance PLC

Coventry Polytechnic

Independent Members	*Affiliation*
Michael Collett	Policy Servicing Manager, Equity and Law, Coventry
Patrick B. Forde	Director and General Manager, Coventry Building Society
Leonard P. Grice, OBE	Personnel Director, GEC Telecommunications, Ltd.
Angela C. Griffin	Chief Executive Officer, Redditch Borough Council
Geoffrey Hughes	Barrister, GKN plc.
Stuart S. G. Linnell	Deputy Group Managing Director, Midlands Radio Holdings PLC and Chief Executive, Sound
Robert P. Lister	Former Director, Engineering Employers' West Midlands Association (retired)
Frederick A. M. Motture	Personnel Director, Coventry Region, GEC Plessey Telecommunications
Merrick W. Taylor	Deputy Chairman and Managing Director, Motor Panels (Coventry) Ltd.
Geoffrey H. Whalen	Managing Director, Peugeot Talbot Motor Co. Ltd.

Crewe and Alsager College of Higher Education

Independent Members	*Affiliation*
Cyril Acton	Managing Director, ERF Ltd, Sandbach
Vic Harris	Personnel Manager, Rolls-Royce Motor Cars Limited, Crewe
Derek B Jennings	Director, Jennings Coachwork Ltd, Crewe
Dr John A Payne	Information Systems Manager ICI Chemicals and Polymers
Phillip Plant	General Manager, Refractory Production, Josiah Wedgwood and Sons Ltd
Andrew P Rigby	Solicitor, Private Practice
Mrs. Barbara Sim Mutch	Superintendent, Cheshire Constabulary
David Withers	Manager, Allied Dunbar Financial Services

Dorset Institute of Higher Education

Independent Members	*Affiliation*
Marcus Beresford	Managing Director, Plessey Controls Ltd., Poole
Martin C. Copp	Chairman, Coolmation Ltd., Ringwood; Chairman, Wessex Board of Institute of Directors
Baroness Caroline Cox	Former Director of Nursing Education Research Unit, Chelsea College, University of London; Member of House of Lords with special interest in education
Norman Drew	Managing Director, The Ryvita Co. Ltd.
Alexander C. McKinlay	Partner, Peat Marwick & McLintock, Poole
Thomas Stanley Monkcom	Former Managing Director and Chairman, The De Vilbiss Co. Ltd.
Professor William Penny	Chairman, Penny & Giles International plc
John D. Slater	Director, Southern Tourist Board, Eastleigh
Roy J. Tazzyman	Managing Director, Davy McKee Ltd.

Ealing College of Higher Education

Independent Members	*Affiliation*
Geoffrey Cox	Chairman, Haymills Ltd.
Miss Tina Day	Head of Policy, National Consumer Council
Mrs. Judith Exelby	Television Presenter
Robin D. Gill	Director, 1970 Trust Ltd.
John G. Hendy, QC	Queens Counsel
Mrs. Dorothy MacKenzie	Managing Director of Brand New (Product Origination) Ltd.
Miss Helena Molyneux	Vice President Personnel Europe, Middle East, Africa Bankers Trust Co.
Colin Monk	Managing Director, Memtec Europe Ltd.
Dr. G. N. J. Port	Senior Managing Consultant, Peat Marwick McLintock
John Francis Purnell, GM	Chief Superintendent, Metropolitan Police, Officer Commanding Ealing Division

Independent Members	Affiliation
Miss Brenda Seel	Personnel Services Manager, Taylor Woodrow Group
Dr. John Spreadborough	Managing Director, J. Spreadborough & Co. Ltd.
J. Q. Thompson	Director, Coopers & Lybrand

Polytechnic of East London

Independent Members	Affiliation
Valerie Aggett	Chairman and Principal, HLT Group of Colleges; Solicitor; won Queen's award for exports
Ms. Jocelyn Barrow	Consultant on educational issues Governor of the BBC
Peter Blower	Scientific Adviser, Beechams Pharmaceutical
Alex Ferry	General Secretary, Confederation of Ship Building and Engineering Unions
Kypros Nicholas	Solicitor, Nicholas & Co.
Allan S. J. Morgan	Personnel Director, Rhone-Poulenc Ltd.
John Perry	Chairman & Managing Director, Unisys Ltd. (UK)
Andrew Rork	Creative Director, Saatchi & Saatchi
Naomi Sargent	Senior Commissioning Editor, Educational Programming, Channel Four; former Professor and Pro Vice-Chancellor at the Open University
Roger S. Shashoua	Chairman, The Shashoua Foundation
Ronald Shepherd	Manager, Education, Training and Personnel, Ford Motor Co. Ltd; Chairman of CBI Education & Training Committee;
John Tarrington	Senior Consultant, Peat Marwick McLintock
Joan Tomlin	Personnel Manager, Prudential Assurance Co.

Edge Hill College of Further Education

Independent Members	Affiliation
B. D. Blake	Chairman, Venture Capital Ltd., Manchester
Jonathan Chaytor	Senior Partner, Chaytor Steele and Co.
Charles Coombes	Manager of Group Central Services, Ocean Transport and Trading plc
John Cowdall	Chief Executive Officer, West Lancashire District Council
M. Ford	Headteacher, Heys Primary School, Ashton-Under-Lyne
Dr. Janet Kear	Assistant Director, The Wildfowl Trust; Curator, The Wildfowl Trust Centre, Martin Mere, Burscough
Raymond McManus	Official, Transport and General Workers Union, West Lancashire District
Brian Milner	Director (External Relations), Pilkington plc, St. Helens, Merseyside
R. A. Wilson	Director (Chief Executive), Thomas Bell International Ltd., Liverpool

Falmouth school of art and design

Independent members	Affiliation
Michael Bristow	Former deputy treasurer, Cornwall county council
Diane Colville	High sheriff of Cornwall
Richard Anthony Foster	Artist, former arts administrator
John Girdlestone	Finance-managing director, Ruckes Engineering Ltd. (automotive design engineers)
Clive W. Growsow	Director personnel and production, English China Clays
John Halkes	Director, Newlyn Orion Gallery
Gerard Mansell	Former deputy director-general, BBC; member, UK National Commission for UNESCO; chairman, British Committee of Journalist in Europe
Michael Edward Richards	Solicitor
Sir Kenneth Sharp	Partner, Baker Tilly chartered accountants
David Julian Taylor	Retail director, Barclays bank
Mrs. Jessica D. E. Thomas	Professional writer and broadcaster

Hatfield Polytechnic

Independent Members	Affiliation
Dudley R. Cloake	Director of Management Services, John Lewis Partnership plc
J. David OBE	Managing Director, Catomance Ltd.
Peter Cecil Farmer	Manager (Human Resources), British Petroleum
James F. McGown	Director and General Manager, Lee Valley Water Company
T. G. Mercer OBE	Chairman, Thomas Mercer Ltd.
Hugh Metcalfe	Former Deputy Chief Executive, British Aerospace Ltd; non-Executive Director, Hunting Engineering
Dr. Katie Petty-Saphon	Publishing Manager, Institution of Electrical Engineers
Mrs. Sheila Roy	Director of Nursing, North-West Thames Regional Health Authority
A. Stephenson	Engineering Manager of Civil Aircraft Division, British Aerospace plc
Dr. Richard Sykes	Chairman and Chief Executive, Glaxo Group Research Ltd.
M. Tempany OBE	Vice-Principal (External Affairs), Kings College London

The Polytechnic Huddersfield

Independent Members	Affiliation
Mrs. Jane Carter	Former Councillor of Kirklees Metropolitan Council
Reginald Cross	District President, AEU
Peter Fielden	Chairman and Managing Director, Olympic Holdings (South West) Ltd.
Lord John Gregson	Director, Fairey Holdings
J. Haigh	Managing Director, F. Drake & Co. Ltd.; Chairman, F. Drake Fibres Ltd.
Norman Haigh	General Manager, Millers Oils Limited
Mrs. Kay Hill	Partner, David Law & Company, Sheffield
Dr. John S. Hughes	Consultant Psychiatrist
Brian Ward	Senior Partner, Revell Ward, Chartered Accountants, Huddersfield

Humberside college of higher education

Independent Members	Affiliation
Roger Ewart Brown	District General Manager, Hull Health Authority
Ian Colquhoun	City Architect, Hull City Council
Anthony A. Dunn	Works General Manager, BP Chemicals Hull
Michael Edwards	Divisional Director and General Manager, British Aerospace, Brough
Frank Alan Flear	Director, Fitch, Lovell plc, Chairman and Managing Director, Bluecrest Foods Ltd, Grimsby
Dr. J. H. Hooper CBE TD	Chairman, East Riding Health Authority
David Frederick McGowan	Director, Hull and Humberside Housing Association

Independent Members	*Affiliation*
Andrew Milner	Managing Director, Humberside Fertilisers plc, Hull
Christopher M. Oughtred	Joint Managing Director, William Jackson and Son plc
Isobel Shepherdson	Self employed Education Consultant to LEAs (notably Humberside)
Donald G. Snelgrove	Bishop of Hull
John Francis White	Divisional Director, Faber Prest plc
Jennifer Wilson	Partner with firm of Solicitors

Kent Institute of Art and Design

Independent Members	*Affiliation*
Edward Booth-Clibborn	Chairman, Designers and Art Directors Association of London; Consultant and Lecturer
David Calicott	Chairman and Managing Director, John Michael Design Consultants Ltd.
George Trevor Carney	Senior Partner, Argles and Court, Solicitors
Graham Clarke	Professional artist and designer
Jill (Diana) Cochrane	Professional Broadcaster on radio and television
Dr. R. H. Cragg	Director, Pressprint Publicity (Kent) Ltd. (advertising agency)
Sir David Crouch	Chairman, Theatres Trust Former MP for Canterbury
Miss J. Fraser	Former Head of Industrial Design Division, The Design Council; CNAA Assessor at Ravensbourne Graphics
G. Gilbert	Managing Director, Pierre Elegante Ltd.
P. D. Marsh	Architect, Dudley Marsh Son & Partners; Surveyor to Canterbury Cathedral
Mrs. Fiona E. Miller	Buying Controller, British Home Stores plc
Peter Smith	Deputy Marketing Director, British Airways
W. Taylor	Consultant, Arthur Young's Former County Treasurer, Kent County Council

Kingston Polytechnic

Independent Members	*Affiliation*
Reginald W. Bailey OBE	Former Managing Director, Putney Division, Smiths Industries Aerospace & Defence systems
Mrs. Joan Bingley	Company Secretary, Imry Merchant Developers plc
Ronald F. Coleman	Chief Engineer and Scientist, DTI
J. Graham Day	Chairman and Chief Executive, Rover Group
Royston Doughty	Managing Director, Duracell (UK) Ltd.
George T. Freeman	Partner, Freeman, Robertson, Leese Design Consultants
Donald F. Heaver	General Manager, Marks & Spencer plc, Oxford Street Store
Jacob Lewin	Senior Partner, Lewin Fryer & Partners Consulting Engineers
Kenneth McAinsh	Managing Director, Putney Division, Smiths Industries Aerospace & Defence Systems
Eric A. G. Morgan	Former Managing Director, British American Cosmetics
Mrs. Jane Priestman	Director Architecture, Design & Environment, British Rail Board
Christopher R. West	Director & General Manager, British Aerospace plc, Military Aircraft Division

Lancashire Polytechnic

Independent Members	*Affiliation*
Clifford Birch	Regional Manager, Royal Bank of Scotland plc
Christopher Crewdson	Managing Director, Gilbert Gilkes & Gordon Ltd
David Eaves	Managing Director, Northern Region, Prudential Property Services
Sir Frank Kennedy	Ex Diplomat; Director, British Airways
Janice Langley	Manager of Catalyst—the Museum of the Chemical Industry; Part-time student of the Polytechnic
Sally Medlyn	Deputy Director, North West Arts
Gloria Oates	General Manager, Rochdale Health Authority
Frank Roe	Former Managing Director, Military Aircraft Division, British Aerospace
Keith Scott	Chairman, Building Design Partnership
Iain Smith	Chairman, Baxi Ltd
Tony Stephens	Director, British Nuclear Fuels Ltd
David Taylor	Managing Director, Lancashire Enterprises Ltd
Michael Watson	Chairman, Fentons (Engineering/Design)

Leeds Polytechnic

Independent members	*Affiliation*
Peter Alcock	Chairman, Hunslet (Holdings) plc
Ruth Bundey	Head of a Leeds Solicitors' firm
Paul H. Corby	Regional Secretary, UCATT
Yvette Gallagher	Company Secretary and Principal Co-ordinator, PATH Ltd.
Anthony Ernest Grant	Partner in Charge, Coopers and Lybrand, Leeds
David Pickersgill	Managing Director, Pickersgill Kaye
Peter Shakeshaft	Director, John Waddington plc
Leslie Silver	Chairman, Kalon Group plc

Leicester Polytechnic

Independent Members	*Affiliation*
Professor Peter Bell	Professor of Surgery, University of Leicester
Howard Davies	Controller of the Audit Commission for local authorities in England and Wales
Mrs. Elizabeth Esteve-Coll	Director, Victoria and Albert Museum since 1988
Simon Everard	Chairman, Ellis and Everard plc; Deputy Chairman, Alliance and Leicester Building Society
Sir Ronald Halstead	Deputy Chairman, British Steel
William Irwin	Chairman and Managing Director, Glovease Shoes Ltd.
Russell Kempton	Chairman, T. W. Kempton Ltd.
Dame Anne Mueller	Second Permanent Secretary, Her Majesty's Treasury
Dr. Udai Singh	Head of Aerodynamics, GEC
Dr. Joseph Valentine	Deputy Chairman, Fisons plc; Chairman, Fisons Pharmaceuticals
Dr. John White	Group Managing Director, BBA Group; Non-Executive Director, Burgess Group plc
John Whitehead	Chairman, John Whitehead Textiles Ltd. & M. Harrison & Co. Finishers Ltd.

Liverpool Polytechnic

Independent Members	*Affiliation*
Charles B. Corden	Senior Partner, C. B. Corden & Co., Chartered Surveyors
Henry Cotton	Development Director, Owen Owen Ltd.
Phillida G. S. Entwhistle	Director, J. Davey & Sons (Liverpool) Ltd.
John H. Forrest	District General Manager, British Telecom, Liverpool
Stanton Thomas Fuller	Chief Executive, Wavertree Technology Park Co.
Ms. Jane Kennedy	Branch Secretary, Liverpool City General Branch NUPE
John Moores	Main Board Director, The Littlewoods Organisation
H. M. P. Robinson	Director, Merseyside Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Professor Alec Smith	Division Manager, Unilever Research

London Institute

Independent Members	*Affiliation*
Alan Bennett	Managing Director, Astral Ltd., Director, House of Fraser Group
Sir Alan Bowness	Director, Tate Gallery; Director, Henry Moore Foundation
Robert J. Bright	Chairman and Managing Director, Wells of Mayfair (Tailors)
Ronald David Carter	Chairman, DCA Design International Ltd.; Chairman, Conran Foundation
Colin Cullimore	Managing Director, Retail Division, Union International plc
Bernard Gay	Former HMI
Jack Gold	Director TV and film documentaries and fiction
Rodney Fitch	Chairman, Fitch and Co.
Mrs. Angela Lascelles	Director, OLIM
Julian Markham	Chairman Glengate Holdings plc
David Padbury	Director, South Eastern Region, British Printing Industries Federation
James Pilditch	President and former Chief Executive, Allied International Designers
Mrs. Jenifer Rosenberg	Managing Director, J. & J. Fashions Ltd.

Loughborough College of Art and Design

Independent Members	*Affiliation*
Paul E. Atkinson	Design Director, Atkinson Design Associates
John Carter	Chairman and Managing Director, Carter Design Group Ltd.
Professor D. E. N. Davies	Vice Chancellor, University of Technology, Loughborough
Andrew Fairbairn	Former Director of Education, Leicestershire
Martin W. Fear	Design Director, Derwent Upholstery Limited
Raymond Hale	County Treasurer, Leicestershire County Council
David Manley	Art, Crafts and Photography officer, East Midlands Arts
Mrs. Jan P. Moscovitch	Design Manager, Moygashel Ltd.
Mrs. Cathy Stephens	Design Director, Cathy Stephens Jewellery
Michael Taylor	Chairman, the Taylor Partnership

Luton College of Higher Education

Independent Members	*Affiliation*
Julie Bonner	Personnel Manager, Monarch Airlines
David Brown CBE	Chairman, AWD Ltd., Artix Ltd., Multidrive Ltd. (Engineering & Manufacturing)
Clifford Bygrave	Senior Partner, Arthur Young
Peter Henman	Chairman, T. & E. Neville (Construction)
Philip Hoskins	Secretary-General, Luton, Bedford and District Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Anthony Lines	Personnel Manager, Vauxhall Motors Ltd.
Derek Ludlow	Chairman Ludlow Group (Automobile Engineering)
Professor John Matthews	Director, AFRC Engineering
David A. Palmer	Director of Finance & Administration, FI Group plc (Computer software)
George Slessor	Assistant Divisional Organiser, Amalgamated Engineering Union
Mrs. Julia Thorn	Managing Director, Corporate & International Division of Paragon Communications plc
Anthony Whitear	Director, Research & Development, Whitbreads plc
Dr. Gerald Watson	Managing Director, Measurement Technology Ltd. (Electronic equipment manufacturer)

Manchester Polytechnic

Independent Members	*Affiliation*
Sir Christopher Ball	Chairman, National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education in England
Mrs. Yvonne Bradbury	Director of Promotions, Greater Manchester Economic Development Corporation Ltd
William I Corlett	Solicitor
Miss Frances Dean	Former Secretary, Manchester TUC
Bryan D. Langton CBE	Chairman, Holiday Inns International
Philip G. Livesey	Former partner in charge, Coopers & Lybrand (North West Region)
Geoffrey Manton	Former Chairman, Sedgwick UK Ltd, North West (International Insurance Brokers)
Louis Mitchell	Management Consultant
David E. Plowright	Managing Director, Granada TV
Peter G. Schaefer	Chairman & Chief Executive, Lawtex plc
John A. Stanley	Senior Executive, Marks and Spencer plc
Alan A. Watson	Agent, Bank of England (Manchester Branch)
Thomas Weatherby CBE	Executive Chairman, Whitecroft plc (textiles, building supplies)

Middlesex Polytechnic

Independent Members	*Affiliation*
Clive H. Bateson	Managing Director, European Operations, Atlantic Petroleum Corporation
Dinah Casson	Partner Casson/Mann Design Consultancy
David Hyde	Deputy Marketing Director, British Airways
Professor John C. Levy OBE	Director, Engineering Profession of The Engineering Council; Engineering Consultant to Shell International Marine
Dr. E. L. Neufeld	Director, Systems Integration, IBM Europe
Gordon C. Pettit	General Manager, British Rail, Southern Region
Howard T. H. M. Phelps	Former Director of Operations, British Airways; Honorary Visiting Professor, Middlesex Polytechnic
Judith Henley Sear	District Nurse Officer, Barnet Health Authority
George W. A. Shiells	Chairman, Morgan-Grampian Local Newspapers

Independent Members	Affiliation
Francis P. Tridgell	Former Senior Deputy Divisional General Manager, National Westminster Bank; Chairman or Director of various banking enterprises

Nene College

Independent Members	Affiliation
Peter Bennett	Managing Partner, Howes Percival, Solicitors
Jim Burrell	Group Training Manager, Lex Automotive Ltd.
Christopher Davenport	Joint Managing Director, Robert Horne Group plc.
Michael Dove	Managing Director, Express Lift Co. Ltd.
Peter Elwood	Chief Executive, Barclaycard
Jeffrey Greenwell	Chief Executive, Northants County Council
Lady Gayle Robinson	Member of the Northamptonshire Association of Youth Clubs
Dr. Sheila Shribman	Consultant Paediatrician, Princess Marina Hospitals
Paul Southworth	President and Chief Executive, Avon Cosmetics Ltd.
Anthony Stoughton-Harris	Executive Vice-Chairman, Nationwide Anglia Building Society; Chairman of the Building Societies Association
The Rt. Rev. Wm. Westwood	Bishop of Peterborough

Newcastle Polytechnic

Independent Members	Affiliation
William Reay Atkinson	Chairman, Northern Development Company Ltd.; Former Assistant Under-Secretary, DTI
Mrs. Margaret Barbour	Chairman and Controlling Director, J. Barbour and Sons Ltd.
Miss Dorothy Blenkinsop	Regional Nursing Officer, Northern Regional Health Authority
John Frost	Television/Media Consultant; previously BBC Regional TV Manager (North East and Cumbria)
Lord Glenamara	Member of House of Lords; Former Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Education
Bent Henriksen, OBE	Consultant to Industry in UK and USA
Charles Francis Herzberg	Consultant; Enterprise Counsellor, DTI; Director, Northern Investors Co. Ltd.
Peter McKendrick	A Senior and Managing Partner, Sanderson Townend and Gilbert (Surveyors)
James Christopher Sharp	Managing Director, Northern Rock Building Society
Graeme C. Stanton	Editor, "Evening Chronicle", Newcastle
R. N. D. Stephenson	Managing Director, Newcastle Breweries Ltd.
John Streeton Ward	Regional Director, Barclays Bank plc, Northern Region
Susan M. Wilson	General Manager—Personnel (Divisional Responsibility) Vickers Defence Systems

North Riding College

Independent Members	Affiliation
John Jackson Carrier	General Manager (Operations), Scarborough Building Society
H. J. Evans	Chief Executive and Clerk, North Yorkshire County Council
Andrew R. Gare	Managing Director, Boythorpe Ltd.
Professor Peter H. J. H. Gosden	Chairman of School of Education, University of Leeds
Professor G. R. J. Jones	Professor Historical Geography, University of Leeds
Arthur William Kendrick	Head of Personnel, Rowntree PLC
A. D. McCain	Deputy Managing Director, McCains Foods (GB) Ltd.
Mrs. Mary McCormack	Headteacher, Hinderwell Primary School
G. T. V. Pindar	Chairman, G. A. Pindar & Son Ltd.; Chairman, Scarborough Building Society
Hilary Susan Truefitt	Partner, Buchannan & White (Solicitors)

Oxford Polytechnic

Independent Members	Affiliation
Peter Bagnall	Managing Director, W. H. Smith
Dr. Paul Brankin	The Oxford Instruments Group plc Managing Director, Oxford Medical Ltd.
Stephen Dexter	Senior Partner, Grant Thornton, Chartered Accountants
Bernard Harty	Former County Treasurer, Oxfordshire County Council
Dr. Paul Kent	Former member Oxford City Council Lecturer
Mrs. Caroline Miles	Chairman, Oxfordshire Health Authority
Andrew Smith MP	Member of Parliament for Oxford, East

Portsmouth Polytechnic

Independent Members	Affiliation
Charles Brims	Chief Executive, Portsmouth & Sunderland Newspapers Ltd.
Maurice G. Hardy	Chairman and Chief Executive, Pall Europe Ltd. (Engineering)
James W. Harper	Architect—own practice
John Huffell	IBM UK Resident Director, Hampshire
Victor J. Jenner	Chairman, Planning and Resource Allocation Panel—Portsmouth and South East Hampshire Health Authority
Nicholas Jonas	Chairman, Hampshire Development Association; formerly with IBM on main UK Holdings Board
Jerome O'Hea	Joint Group Managing Director of Colt Group Ltd. (Manufacturing company)
Sandra Roberts	Assistant Company Secretary, Legal and Administration Department, Lederle Laboratories
Dr. Helen M. Rule	Marine Archaeologist and Author
Charles H. Tidbury	Director, Whitbread; President/Chairman of various trusts and foundations
Stuart H. Waring	Chairman, Heaton Holdings Ltd.
George G. Zahler	Consultant to Thermal Scientific Group plc; Director of Dartec Ltd. and of Rosand Precision Ltd.
A. D. Zemenides	Managing Director, Sealectro Ltd. (subsidiary of BICC plc)

Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication

Independent Members	Affiliation
Christopher William Bellamy	Barrister at law
Richard Anthony Brook	Managing Director, Scientific Instruments Research Association
Brian Markham Cooper	Formerly Registrar, Royal College of Art
Neville Fox-Davies	Art Director, Reader's Digest
Mrs. Lyn Christine How	Head of International Unit, Pensions Fund Department, Phillips and Drew
Ray Leigh	Non-Executive Director and Design Consultant, Gordon Russell plc

Independent Members	Affiliation
Dr. Janet Morgan	Adviser to the BBC, Panasonic UK Ltd., Granada Group; formerly member of the Central Policy Review Staff at Cabinet Office
Guy David Neely	Finance Director, Mercers Company
Mark Stevens	Director of Staff Relations, Thames Television plc

Royal Northern College of Music

Independent Members	Affiliation
Sebastian De Ferranti	Director, GEC plc; Director, National Nuclear Corporation
Sir Charles Groves CBE	Conductor
David Hunter MBE	Chairman, Henry Cooke Lumsden plc; Director, Halifax Building Society
Mrs. Joyce Hytner	Manager, External Affairs, Granada Television Ltd
Michael Kennedy OBE	Journalist and writer on music; formerly Northern Editor, Daily Telegraph
Christopher Kenyon	Chairman & Group Chief Executive, William Kenyon & Sons Ltd
Sir Idwal Pugh KCB	Chairman, Chartered Trust Ltd; Director of Standard Chartered Bank & of Halifax Building Society
Robert Scott	Managing Director, Manchester Theatres Ltd
Simon Towneley	Lord Lieutenant of Lancashire; Director of Granada Television

Salford College of Technology

Independent Members	Affiliation
Anthony Boore	Managing Director, Manchester Evening News
David Coleman	Director of Management, Colegate-Palmolive Limited
Sarah Dallas	Designer/Partner for own company 'Sarah Dallas' (fashion)
Peter Foster	District General Manager, Salford Health Authority
Dr. Jack Goldberg	Retired Solicitor; Chairman, Salford University Council
D. J. Kent	Regional Manager, Copthorne Hotels Ltd.
Peter Lauener	Area Manager, Training Commission
Susan Roberts	Editor, Open Air (live programme)
Robert Shields	Chief Executive, Trafford Park Development Corporation
Simon Sperryn	Chief Executive, Manchester Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Gil Thompson	Chief Executive, Manchester Airport plc
David Wilson	Director of Banking, British Linen Bank
David Woods	Chairman and Managing Director, Fearnley Construction Group

Sheffield Polytechnic

Independent Members	Affiliation
Dr. Debjani Chatterjee	Principal Community Relations Officer with the Sheffield Council for Racial Equality
Richard Field OBE	Deputy Chairman, J & J Dyson plc; Chairman, Kent Aerospace Castings Ltd
Mrs Jasmine Harfoot	Managing Director, Land Instruments International Ltd
Peter Horsepool	Managing Director, Ackroyd & Abbott Ltd
John Illingworth	Retired Chief Shopstewards' Convenor, British Forgemasters
Ian A Johnston	Deputy Director General, Training Commission
Nicholas C Kemp	Director, Engineering Employers' (Sheffield) Association
Malcolm Newman	City Treasurer, Sheffield City Council
Peter J Newman	Chief Executive—Metals, Davy McKee
Derek Simpson	District Secretary, AUEW
Harold B Stokes	Chairman & Chief Executive, Bassett Foods plc
David Stone	Managing Director, Stocksbridge Engineering Steels
Ms Clare Venables	Director, Crucible Theatre

Southampton IHE

Independent Members	Affiliation
Dr. Stanley Crooks	Chairman, Pirelli Group
Peter William Doble	Managing Director, Southampton Container Terminals Ltd. (subsidiary of Associated British Ports)
John Fallow	Regional Director of Personnel, British Gas plc, Southern
B. R. J. Gill	Senior Partner with Messrs Ernst & Whinney
Dr. Jan Harding	Equal Opportunities Consultant
Malcolm Hedley Le Bas	Solicitor with Paris, Smith & Randall
Michael John Love	Managing Director, Lloyd Instruments plc
Ian A. Pirie	Chairman and Managing Director, Hydralon Ltd.
John Rendle	Managing Director, Shell Tankers (UK) Ltd.
James Edward Stanley	Chairman and Managing Director, Gabare Ltd.
Rita Steel	Sales Associate, Allied Dunbar Assurance plc

South West London College

Independent Members	Affiliation
Dr. Walter Vego Baker	Chief Executive, South London Business Initiatives
Mrs. Janet Elliott	Director-General, Pitman Examination Institute
Colonel Thomas R. Fairclough	Resettlement Training Policy Officer, Ministry of Defence
T. G. P. Rogers	Chairman, BTEC; Chairman, Regional Health Authority
Dr. Roy Salter	Director of Corporate Planning, BAT Industries plc
Dr. Margaret L. Spong	Education Secretary, Chartered Association of Certified Accountants
Michael David Stott	Regional Communications and External Programmes Manager, IBM UK Ltd.
Roger Donald McSweeny	Director of Personnel, Trustees Savings Bank
Efstratios Zographos	Finance Director, TV-am plc

Polytechnic South West

Independent Members	Affiliation
Charles Ansell	Former Chairman of Devon County Council
Professor B. L. Bayne	Director, Plymouth Marine Laboratory
R. Bentley	Planning Officer—Plymouth City Council; Member of Plymouth Health Authority
Mrs. Mary Gretton	Executive Committee, Devon Science and Technology Regional Organisation; former Personnel Manager, Plessey Semiconductors Ltd.
Roger J. Harris	Senior Partner, Peat Marwick McLintock

Independent Members	Affiliation
Alan J. Macfarlane	Former Managing Director, Farley Health Products Ltd. (Subsidiary of Glaxo Holdings plc)
Victor Parsons	Managing Director, Wandel and Goltermann Ltd.
Dr. Patricia Pay	Solicitor; Chair of Exeter and District Community Health Council
Charles Stuart	Chairman and Chief Executive, Brymon Airways
Peter Thorpe	Former Bank Manager
John C. C. Warren	Deputy Chairman, Company of Designers plc

Staffordshire Polytechnic

Independent Members	Affiliation
J. Broome CBE	Chairman and Chief Executive, Alton Towers Ltd.
G. W. Buckley	Director and General Manager, GEC Turbine Generators Ltd.—Generator Division
Ms. Valerie Burton	Planning Manager, Bass plc
Patrick P. Byrne	Chairman and Chief Executive, Wedgwood Group
Stanley W. Clarke	Chairman and Chief Executive, St. Modwen Properties
T. E. Cowlishaw	Company Secretary, West Midland Estates Ltd.; Consultant
D. A. Isherwood	Director, Century Oils Ltd.
Mrs. Helen S. Perkins	Personnel Co-ordinator—British Steel
David Scahill	Managing Director, Cannon Industries Ltd.
Michael Shaw	Chairman and Managing Director, Britannia Building Society

Sunderland Polytechnic

Independent Members	Affiliation
William Darling	Retail Pharmacist; Chairman, South Tyneside Health Authority
Kenneth Douglas	Former Managing Director, Austin & Pickersgill Shipbuilders
Stephen Harbottle	Senior Partner, Wilkinson Maughan Solicitors
William Hay	Chief Executive, Newcastle Initiative
Frank Nicholson	Joint Managing Director, Vaux Breweries plc
Herbert Rice	Chartered Accountant, Spicer & Pegler
Ms. Esmee Slattery	Staff Tax Partner, Price Waterhouse
Peter Wickens	Director of Personnel, Nissan (UK) Ltd.
Peter Vardy	Chairman and Managing Director, Reg Vardy Ltd.

Teeside Polytechnic

Independent Members	Affiliation
Dr. John N. Bridge	Chief Executive, Northern Development Company
Mrs. Susan Bush	Manager Personnel & Administration, Davy McKee (Stockton) Ltd
Mrs. Joy Chapman	District Nursing Officer, North Tees Health Authority
David J. Grant	Chairman, Darchem Ltd; Deputy Chairman, William Baird plc
Miss Stella Guy	District Officer, Transport & General Workers Union, Stockton
John P. Hackney	Chief Executive, Tees & Hartlepool Port Authority
Richard Harker	Managing Director, Harkers Engineering
G. Hunter	Chief Executive, Belasis Hall Technology Park
Richard Lines	Chairman & Chief Executive, Marlborough Technical Management
Christopher Shaw	Chairman, Micro-Metalsmiths Ltd (Light Precision Engineering)
Dr. James Smith	Process Engineering Group Manager, Research & Technology Dept, ICI Chemicals & Polymers Ltd
Dr. Robert G. J. Telfer	Director, Manchester Business School
Michael D. Ward	Director, Teeside Works, British Steel Corporation

Thames Valley College of Higher Education

Independent Members	Affiliation
Dr. John Frederick Cavalla	Vice President of Research & Development, Wyeth Research (UK)
Miss Pamela Mary Cooper	District Nursing Officer, East Berkshire Area Health Authority
John Danzeisen	Finance Director, ICI Paints Division
D. W. Gration	Chief Operating Officer, Celltech Limited (Biopharmaceuticals)
Professor Thomas Kempner	Principal, Henley The Management College
Brian R. Law	Former Managing Director, Mars Ltd.
Mrs. E. M. McClure	Personnel Manager, AEG (UK) Ltd.
Ms. Janet Nuttall	Strategic Human Resource Consultant, Deloitte Haskins & Sells
Godfrey Harland Odds	Former Deputy Leader, Berkshire County Council
G. Pye	Personnel Director, Trust House Forte Hotels (UK)
Leslie Peter Robinson	Director & Chief Executive of South Bucks & East Berks Chamber of Commerce & Industry
John Michael Spurr	Chief Manager, Corporate Banking Group, National Westminster Bank plc
John W. Thompson	Deputy Managing Director, Smiths Industries plc

Trent Polytechnic

Independent Members	Affiliation
E. Cliffe	Board member of Boots Company Group & Managing Director of Industrial Division
Dr. Christine Hopton	General Manager, Community Services, Nottingham Health Authority
Stephen John Hyde	Chairman & Managing Director, Hicking Pentecoste plc; Chairman & Managing Director, Globebirch-Business Consultancy
His Hon. Judge T. O. Kellock QC	Circuit Judge
I. McLean	Chairman, Plessey Communications Systems Ltd & Chairman, Plessey Finance Ltd
Stephen John Plummer	Deputy Chairman, Lee Colourplan Ltd (Textiles)
T. Richmond	National Managing Partner, Pannell Kerr Forster Chartered Accountants
Gordon Ralph Waine	Regional Executive Director National Westminster Bank plc
D. White	Deputy Chairman, National Freight Consortium Ltd; Chairman, Nottingham Health Authority

West Surrey College of Art and Design

Independent Members	Affiliation
L. Anthony Bracking	Consultant in Public Affairs
George Burnett	Managing Director, Ashtead Group plc

Independent Members	Affiliation
David Gillespie	Sculptor and Business Consultant; Founder of David Gillespie Associates
Professor David Hamilton	Professor of Ceramics and Glass, Royal College of Art
Richard Hoare	Partner, Barlow Lyde & Gilbert, Solicitors
Ian T. Jenkin, OBE	Director, The Open College of the Arts
Audrey Levy	Self employed Designer and Design Consultant; Teacher
John Miller	Head of Features and Education with Television South
Creighton Redman	Chief Manager, National Westminster Bank, Lothbury Officer
Doreen Simmons	Chairman, Farnham Voluntary Services and Community Association; Former Teacher

Winchester School of Art

Independent Members	Affiliation
Edward Chamberlain	Design Centre Manager, IBM Hursley Park
Francis Graham-Dixon	Director, Francis Graham-Dixon Gallery
Francoise Jollant	Design Director, Louis Vuitton, Paris
John Miles	General Manager, Next Interiors
Peter B. Moody	Joint Managing Director, Generics Holdings Ltd. (Scientific and business consultancy)
Dr. Marcia Pointon	Reader in History of Art, University of Sussex
William Pye	Sculptor
Kingsley Williams	Solicitor; Chairman of Council and Pro Chancellor, Southampton University.

Wolverhampton Polytechnic

Independent Members	Affiliation
John Gatenby	Deputy Regional Director, National Westminster Bank plc
Dr. Michael Harrison	District General Manager, Sandwell Health Authority
Miss Susan Massey	Solicitor
Glynne Morris	Managing Director, Marston Palmer Ltd. (Engineering)
Ms. Sonia Peters	Health Visitor and Field Work Teacher, Wolverhampton Health Authority
John Rice	Chief Executive, Wolverhampton Chamber of Commerce and Industry
John Sayers	Managing Director, InterTAN (UK) Ltd. (Tandy Ltd.) Walsall
Anthony Smith	Group Financial Director, Wagon Industrial Holdings plc
Neville A. Soper	Former Executive Director, Tarmac Construction Ltd.
Michael J. Tandy	Partner, Arther Young, Chartered Accountants, Telford
John H. Young	Technology Research Manager, Synthetic Chemicals Ltd.

Note: West Midlands College of Higher Education merged with Wolverhampton Polytechnic on 1 April 1989.

Worcester College of Higher Education

Independent Members	Affiliation
Christopher J. Blackman	Managing Director, Deansway Catering Company Ltd.
Mrs. Margaret H. Buchan	Administration Manager, National Westminster Bank plc (Malvern)
Eric W. Dickinson	Joint Registrar of the County Courts
Raymond T. George	Former Managing Director, Royal Worcester Spode (Worcester Porcelain)
Mrs Pamela C. Hawkeswood	Company Accountant, Cosworth Engineering
Lowry D. Maclean	Chairman & Chief Executive, Tomkinsons plc
Dr. Brian McCloskey	Acting District Medical Officer, Worcester & District Health Authority
Albert Morris	Company Director, Old Worcestershire Furniture Company Ltd.
Richard H. C. Pugh	Director, Great Universal Stores, Kay & Company Ltd.
Major Peter L. Tapply	Chairman, Tapply Management Consultants
Wilfred R. Tomlinson	Director, Worcester Group plc
Gordon Trueman	Director, Hereford & Worcester Chamber of Commerce & Industry
Ms. Mary Vaughan	Manager, Sapphire Training Worcester

NATIONAL FINANCE

Growth Rates

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish figures showing for each of the past 15 years United Kingdom growth rates, the growth rate of each of the United Kingdom's partners in the European Commission, and world growth rates, respectively.

Mr. Lilley: Figures for United Kingdom GDP can be found in the United Kingdom National Accounts Blue Book and in the Financial Statement and Budget Report. For EC countries growth rates for the years 1974 to 1987 can be found in the latest *OECD Economic Outlook*. Provisional figures for 1988 are given in *OECD Main Economic Indicators*, published monthly. Figures for world growth are given in the *International Financial Statistics Yearbook* and in the latest *World Economic Outlook*, both published by the IMF. All these publications can be obtained from the Library of the House.

EC Goods (Fast Lane Clearance)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress he has made on the introduction of a fast lane clearance system for European Economic Community goods.

Mr. Lilley: Customs and Excise is developing two fast lane schemes as interim measures to speed up the clearance of freight in the period leading to completion of the single market. They depend on the use of computer systems to facilitate rapid clearance and to simplify requirements for most kinds of goods imported from the Community.

The first scheme is planned to start nationally on 1 August 1989, from which date the Customs computer will be able to grant immediate clearance to the majority of Community goods upon arrival. The necessary paper documentation will be processed after clearance of the goods. The fast lane facility will not, however, remove the need for essential preventive checks in the case of drugs and other prohibited or restricted goods.

The second scheme will also allow immediate clearance for the same kinds of goods but the detailed information will be provided by importers later in the form of schedules transmitted to Customs electronically. This system will

make use of recent developments in technology and will be used this winter on a trial basis before becoming generally available next year.

In consultation with the trading community Customs and Excise is also reviewing export procedures to see whether there is further scope for simplification in order to speed exports to other member states in the Community.

Premium Bonds

Mr. Jack: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what rate of premium savings bond sales in January were in denominations of less than £100.

Mr. Lilley: The number of premium bonds sold in January 1989 in denominations of less than £100 was 172,000. These bonds accounted for only about 12 per cent. of the total value.

Government Actuary

Mr. Hind: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has any plans to change the 1989-90 cash limit and running costs limit for the Government Actuary's Department.

Mr. Lilley: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate the cash limit for class XIX, vote 4 will be increased by £25,000 from £548,000 to £573,000, and the running costs limit by £178,000 from £2,510,000 to £2,688,000, to provide for recently implemented pay increases for actuarial staff, and the completion of the conversion of a major pension programme to in-house microcomputers. The increase in the cash limit will be charged to the Reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Close Investment-Holding Companies

Mr. David Davis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the provisions in the Finance Bill concerning close investment-holding companies.

Mr. Norman Lamont: We have received a number of representations.

The purpose of the provisions concerning close investment-holding companies is to enable the highly complex and lengthy legislation about close company apportionment to be abolished while preventing the avoidance of tax on investment income and capital gains by an individual placing personal investments in a closely controlled investment company. There is general agreement on these objectives.

The approach of the provisions in the Finance Bill is to tax CICs like individuals, so far as possible. However, although there have been some misunderstandings of the effect of the provisions, we are persuaded that this approach has its own difficulties and could place some close companies at a competitive disadvantage in comparison with non-close competitors. This was not the intention. We therefore propose to bring forward amendments.

We have no doubt that the right approach remains to abolish apportionment and replace it by an appropriate tax charge on the company. We now propose that CICs will continue to be taxed like other companies, with the normal reliefs for interest and expenses. But, whatever the level of their profits, they will no longer receive the benefit of the small companies rate and so will be taxed at 35 per cent. This approach will result in rules that are simpler than both the old apportionment provisions and the provisions in the Bill. And it will protect the Exchequer since under existing law there is a further tax charge if an investor withdraws accumulated profits from a company or sells his or her shares.

We also propose to amend the definition of a CIC. No trading company (including a dealing company) will be a CIC. The existing apportionment provisions recognise that property investment companies may need to retain income for the purposes of the business and in practice these companies are little affected by apportionment—so these too will not be CICs. These changes will give a more simpler regime for taxing CICs, while guarding against tax avoidance.

An Inland Revenue press release is being issued today giving further details of the proposals. The necessary amendments for the Committee stage of the Finance Bill will be put down as soon as possible.

Central Statistical Office

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the financial provision will be in 1989-90 for the enlarged Central Statistical Office.

Mr. Lawson: A new Estimate (class XIX, vote 18) will be presented to Parliament, in the summer Supplementary Estimate round, to provide for expenditure by the new department from 31 July 1989. The provision sought will be offset by corresponding reductions shown in Revised Estimates for the Cabinet Office (class XX, vote 2), of £2,764,000, the Department of Trade and Industry (class V, vote 3), of £8,533,000, and the Department of Employment (class VII, vote 2), of £2,430,000 (which is part of the overall reduction on that vote), which will be presented to Parliament on the same day. It will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure. The cash limit for the new Central Statistical Office vote is £13,727,000 and the running costs limit is £10,804,000.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

European Community

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in which presidencies the enlargements of the European Community were legally concluded.

Mrs. Chalker: The treaty of accession of the United Kingdom, Denmark and Ireland was signed in January 1972 during the Luxembourg presidency, and entered into force on 1 January 1973. The treaty of accession of Greece was signed in May 1979 during the French presidency, and entered into force on 1 January 1981. The treaty of accession of Spain and Portugal was signed in June 1985 during the Italian presidency and entered into force on 1 January 1986.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which member states in their capacity as president have represented the European Community at ministerial level meetings in the general agreement on tariffs and trade, Uruguay round.

Mr. Alan Clark: The United Kingdom spoke as the President of the Council at the meeting in Punta del Este in 1986, Greece at the meeting in Montreal in 1988. The European Commission negotiated on behalf of the Community and its member states.

Endangered Species

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many shipments and what weight of ivory have been seized by the Hong Kong authorities to date in the current year; and how many shipments and what weight of ivory have been imported from CITES approved sources in the same period.

Mr. Eggar: The Hong Kong Government have seized 15 consignments of illegal ivory so far this year, weighing a total of 0·5 tonnes. In the same period, 249 shipments of ivory, total weight 55·5 tonnes, have been imported from CITES approved sources.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration has been given to the establishment of a Pan-African animal task force to monitor and protect endangered species; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We are working to protect endangered species by strengthening the rules of organisations in this field. On 23 May we announced our support for a change in the rules of the convention on international trade in endangered species which would have the effect of banning trade in new ivory. We have not heard so far of a proposal for a Pan-African animal task force, but we are willing to consider new ideas.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what information he has regarding the involvement of Renamo forces in the poaching of elephants in Mozambique; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what information he has regarding the involvement of UNITA forces in the poaching of elephants in Angola; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what representation he has made to the South African Government regarding their acceptance of ivory from UNITA forces in Angola in exchange for military and other assistance; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: There is extensive poaching of elephants for their ivory in Angola and Mozambique, as in other parts of Africa. We have no conclusive proof of the involvement of UNITA or Renamo in poaching. We utterly condemn poaching, whoever perpetrates it.

The United Kingdom will be calling for concerted European support for a total ban of trade in new ivory at the next Council meeting of Environment Ministers on 8 June in Luxembourg.

Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

Mr. Benn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to give consideration to applications from non-governmental organisations with a central interest in nuclear proliferation, for funds to support their attendance at the 1990 fourth review conference of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Waldegrave: The draft rules of procedure for the 1990 non-proliferation treaty review conference adopted at the 1st preparatory committee (held in New York from 1-5 May) will allow representatives of non-governmental organisations to attend plenary sessions and main committees of the review conference, and to receive the documents of the conference. However, it is not our policy to subsidise their attendance.

Disarmament Initiatives

Mr. Benn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what unilateral disarmament initiatives in nuclear, conventional, or chemical weapons, and in troop deployments have been made by the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Treaty Organisation since May 1979; and what response the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation has made to these initiatives.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Soviet Union and its Warsaw pact allies have, since 7 December 1988, announced unilateral conventional force reductions which, if implemented, would reduce their conventional superiority over NATO in tanks and artillery from 3:1 to 2·4:1 and in aircraft from 2·1:1 to 1·8:1. Details are set out on page 226 of the first report of 1989 of the Foreign Affairs Committee on Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. These reductions do not call for any unilateral NATO response: a sizeable conventional imbalance would remain after their implementation. But NATO has made proposals at the conventional arms control talks in Vienna for more far-reaching reductions leading to an outcome of parity between the two sides in key items of equipment.

The Soviet Union has stated that its conventional reductions in Europe will involve the withdrawal of 24 out of its 1,608 short-range nuclear-capable missile launchers. On 11 May it also announced the withdrawal from the countries of Eastern Europe to the Soviet Union (but not the elimination) of 500 Soviet theatre nuclear warheads. NATO has 88 short-range nuclear missile launchers. It has reduced its stockpile of nuclear warheads in Europe from 7,000 in 1979 to 4,600 now. The Soviet Union announced a unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing on 29 July 1985. This ended on 26 February 1987, when a Soviet nuclear device was exploded.

The Soviet Union has claimed that it ceased chemical weapons production in 1987 but we doubt this. The Soviet Union has stated that it intends to begin destruction of its existing chemical weapon stocks in 1989, but has yet to give details of the quantities and time scale.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the number of Council of Ministers meetings since 1979, and indicate at which the Scottish Office was present in a Civil Service capacity in support of a United Kingdom Minister.

Mrs. Chalker: There were 652 meetings of the Council of Ministers from 1980 until the end of 1988.

The United Kingdom delegation to all meetings of the Council of Ministers represents the Government of the United Kingdom as a whole.

ENERGY

Generating Turbines

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many privately operated electricity generating turbines are installed on rivers in England and Wales; if he will list them by location; and which Government Department has responsibility for permitting and overseeing their operations.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The number of privately operated electricity generating turbines installed on rivers in England and Wales is not known to the Government.

The National Association of Water Power Users has a membership of some 250. The association states that about half its members operate power generating turbines.

The appropriate local water authority has responsibility for permitting and overseeing the operation of water turbine users. To remain within the existing law, each user has to obtain a water abstraction licence from the relevant local water authority.

My Department has commissioned a study by Salford university of all potentially feasible and operating small-scale hydro energy sites in the United Kingdom. The report of this study is expected to be published shortly.

Coal Imports

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how much coal was imported into the United Kingdom for the latest year for which he has figures; what strategic planning he has forecast for the next five years by year; and if he will make a statement on what reviews have been carried out or are planned with respect to the importation of coal and closure of deep-mined pits in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Spicer: In 1988, coal imports into the United Kingdom were 11·993 million tonnes[1], 7·390 million tonnes of which was coking coal. The Government do not make forecasts of coal imports. Decisions on the future of individual deep-mine pits are a matter for the British Coal Corporation.

[1] *Source:* Her Majesty's Customs and Excise. This is a provisional rounded figure, which may be subject to marginal adjustments, but is expected to be confirmed later this year.

Nuclear Power Stations (Decommissioning)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the total cash provision to date in electricity industry accounts for the costs of decommissioning nuclear power stations.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The 1987-88 Central Electricity Generating Board accounts include provisions of £568 million for the decommissioning costs of the board's nuclear power stations.

Electricity Connections

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has obtained any further information from the Electricity Council regarding the number of households not connected to the electricity grid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for the industry and I have asked the chairman of the Electricity Council to write to the hon. Member.

Nuclear Materials (Safeguards)

Mr. Benn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his policy to initiate negotiations with the European Commission, Euratom and the International Atomic Energy Agency towards the deletion of article 14 of the tripartite safeguards agreement of August 1978 permitting the withdrawal of nuclear materials from safeguards for reasons of national security.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No.

Carbon Dioxide

Mr. Benn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* giving the amounts of carbon dioxide released in the production of *(a)* coal for fossil fuel fired power plants and *(b)* nuclear fuel for nuclear power plants in the present United Kingdom generating plant stock.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 20 February 1989, at column *470*.

Civil Nuclear Fuel Cycle

Mr. Benn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will set out those areas of information in regard to the civil nuclear fuel cycle, from uranium import, processing, fuel manufacture, fuel load, reactor operation, fuel unload, spent fuel store at reactor, spent fuel transport to Sellafield, and reprocessing and store of plutonium, uranium and radioactive waste products by British Nuclear Fuels plc about which it is his policy for reasons of commercial confidentiality or national security not to publish full details in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The information supplied on all these matters has to be restricted to some degree for reasons of commercial confidentiality or national security.

Cash Limits

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether any changes will be made to his Department's cash limit or running costs limit for 1989-90.

Mr. Parkinson: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimates, the following changes will be made.

The cash limit for class VI, vote 3 will be increased by £2,290,000 from £35,599,000 to £37,889,000. This extra provision is sought to meet an increase of £2,190,000 in the cost of the Piper Alpha technical investigation and public inquiry. It will also include £100,000 to cover the cost of setting up the Office of Electricity Regulation prior to the appointment of the Director General of Electricity Supply as head of the Office of Electricity Regulation, expected to take effect from 1 September 1989. This latter amount will increase the Department of Energy's running costs limit from £38,022,000 to £38,122,000. It will be offset by a corresponding decrease from £30,000,000 to £29,900,000 in the cash limit for class VI, vote 6, where this provision was originally included.

The cash limit for class VI, vote 7, which is a new vote providing for expenditure by the Office of Electricity Regulation, will be £7,796,000, of which £6,320,000 will be the running costs limit.

Expenditure on vote 7 and the appointment of the Director General of Electricity Supply are both subject to the passage of the Electricity Bill currently before Parliament.

These increases will be charged to the Reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Coroners' Officers

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether any studies have been undertaken into coroners employing their own officers;

(2) why coroners' officers have to be employed by a police force.

Mr. Hurd: Home Office circular 93 of 1985 drew attention of county councils to a review of the work and methods of coroners' officers carried out by the Home Office organisation and methods branch and recommended that in consultation with coroners and chief officers of police they should review their own arrangements for the provision of coroners' officers. A copy of the circular and of the review are in the Library. The review had studied inter alia areas where, at that time, civilianisation had taken place. There is no requirement that civilian coroners' officers must be employed by a police authority, although that is the option we prefer.

Crime Prevention

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his reply of 6 March, *Official Report*, column *383*, how information technologies involving the provision of information to the public is being used to combat crime; if he has any further plans to apply the newest technologies in this field; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: The police service applies information technology extensively in the fight against crime. Many of these applications involve providing information to the public. For example, as part of the process of detecting crime, information technology is used to assist the public to identify suspects and to build up a photographic image of a suspect from witnesses' descriptions.

More generally, work is well advanced in the implementation of a new police national computer system, incorporating the latest software and hardware technology, which will come into operation by the end of 1990. This is the first step in a programme of development of police national information services which the Department is drawing up in collaboration with the Association of Chief Police Officers and which is aimed at applying information technology to police operational needs.

Firearms

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made in discussions on the draft directive on the mutual recognition of firearms certificates; whether the proposals fall to be considered by majority vote or by unanimity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: No discussions have been held by the European Commission since last June on its proposal for a Council directive on the control of the acquisition and possession of weapons. The Commission has based this proposal on article 100A, which would enable its adoption by majority voting. The United Kingdom has registered the view that the directive should be founded, like other frontier measures, on article 235, which requires unanimity. We have entered a formal reserve about the legal basis and will continue to press the Commission to accept our view.

We understand that the Commission intends to issue shortly a revised version of the draft directive. When this has been received we will consider it carefully.

Malcolm Booth (Car Keys)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what communications it has received from Malcolm Booth, alias Ian Ross, who originally traded as M. B. Locksmiths and is now trading as Westway Locksmiths, about the keys he claims will open 95 per cent. of British and foreign cars; what discussions his Department has had with Tameside trading standards departments about these keys; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I understand that Mr. Booth has recently been committed for trial on a number of charges. In the circumstances, it would not be appropriate to comment further.

Prisoners (Transfers)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he anticipates making a decision on the applications for transfer to a gaol in Northern Ireland from prisoners *(a)* 851715, John McComb, *(b)* 463799, Ronald McCartney, *(c)* 119034, Paul Holmes and *(d)* 3369204, Thomas Quigley.

Mr. Hurd: I am aware of no recent applications for transfer from Mr. McComb or Mr. Quigley. The applications by the other two inmates named will be answered as soon as possible.

Passports

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current average length of time taken to issue a full passport from the time of application at each of the main issuing offices; and what was the average time taken in 1979, 1983 and in the last five years.

Mr. Renton: Passport applications are processed according to the applicant's travel requirements, with priority being given to urgent cases. As a result, processing times in a given period vary considerably, and averages are not recorded.

The current maximum processing times for straightforward non-urgent postal applications at the six United Kingdom passport offices are shown in the table, together with those of the corresponding periods of the last four years. I regret that information for earlier years is not available.

Passport office	Time between receipt of application and issue of passport				
	21 May 1989	22 May 1988	22 May 1987	23 April 1986	24 May1985
London	25	55	62	24	10
Liverpool	68	15	22	15	6
Peterborough	38	32	19	14	11·5
Newport	45	20	44	25	12
Glasgow	50	33	33	30	10
Belfast	4	4	7	5	4

Most applications are processed well within these maximum periods.

A sharp increase in demand early this year has led to a general increase in processing times. Staff at Glasgow and Liverpool are having to adapt to a new computerised system of passport issuing, and accommodation changes at other offices have also affected output. Additional staff have been employed to help deal with the backlog, and a system of free two-year extensions to the life of expired passports submitted for replacement has been introduced at Liverpool to help relieve the immediate problem there.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state for the Liverpool passport office the average length of time it takes to process a correctly completed passport application form for the most recent convenient period for which figures are available, and the comparable figure for the previous year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: Passport applications are processed according to the applicant's travel requirements, with priority being given to urgent cases. As a result, processing times in a given period vary considerably, and averages are not recorded. Straightforward non-urgent postal applications are at present being processed at the Liverpool passport office within a maximum 63 working days, compared with 18 last year. Most applications are processed well within this period.

A sharp increase in demand early this year has increased processing times at Liverpool, where staff are also having to adapt to a new computerised system of passport issuing. Additional staff have been employed to help deal with the backlog, and, as I announced to the House on 11 May, at column 978, a system of free two-year extensions to the life of expired passports is being introduced to help relieve the immediate problem.

Foxes and Deer

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement summarising the proposals made by the European Parliament for the control and restriction of the hunting of foxes and deer; and whether the EEC Commission has plans to present proposals on the implementation of these proposals.

Mr. Hurd: I am not aware of any such proposals.

Firearms Consultative Committee

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is yet able to announce the name of the chairman of the Firearms Consultative Committee.

Mr. Hurd: I am pleased to announce that Lord Kimball, former chairman of the British Fields Sports Society, has been appointed chairman of the Firearms Consultative Committee. The names of the other members of the committee will be announced shortly.

Hull Prison

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many remand prisoners from the Doncaster area were being held at Her Majesty's prison, Hull, on the latest date for which he has figures; if he will show in his answer the ages of these inmates; and if he will list the figures for one year; five years and 10 years ago.

Mr. Hurd: On 19 May there were in Hull prison 28 unsentenced prisoners whose home addresses were recorded as in Doncaster. The table shows their ages at the time of reception into custody.

Age	Number of prisoners
17	4
18	3
19	2
20	2
21	3
22	2
23	2
24	1
25	1
26	1
27	2
28	1
29	1
30	1
31	1
44	1
TOTAL	28

Comparable figures for one year ago are not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Comparable figures for five and 10 years ago do not exist, as unsentenced prisoners were not held at Hull prior to February 1986.

Immigration

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many visitors to the United Kingdom in the last five years have been refused entry because of *(a)* homosexuality and/or *(b)* being HIV seropositive.

Mr. Renton: These are not of themselves grounds for refusal of entry.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what instructions have been given to immigration officials to question visitors to the United Kingdom about the sexual orientation or their HIV antibody status.

Mr. Renton: None.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he has taken to ensure that immigration officials do not discriminate against *(a)* homosexual visitors and *(b)* HIV seropositive visitors to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Renton: Immigration officers are aware of the need to apply the normal requirements of the immigration rules to all visitors.

Criminal Justice Bill

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when he intends to introduce a Criminal Justice Bill.

Mr. John Patten: The Government keep the operation of the criminal justice system under regular review, and will bring forward proposals for legislative changes where these appear necessary, and when parliamentary time permits.

Hillsborough Inquiry

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his present estimate of the cost of the Hillsborough inquiry which will be borne by the police authority of South Yorkshire; and what is his estimate of the amount per head which this will involve.

Mr. Hurd: It is not clear at this stage what the total additional costs of the Hillsborough police inquiry will be. South Yorkshire police authority has made representations which my noble Friend Earl Ferrers, the Minister of State, will be discussing with the authority shortly.

Homosexuality

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy not to implement the Law Commission proposal to lower the age of consent for buggery between men.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 23 May 1989]:* Yes.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether, in the light of the draft criminal code Bill published by the Law Commission, he has any plans to introduce legislation on the age of consent for homosexual acts between males; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 23 May 1989]:* No.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Tropical Rain Forests

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the projects that are currently being undertaken to reduce the destruction of the tropical rain forests.

Mr. Chris Patten: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle) on 15 May, at column 21.

Africa

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much his Department spent in aid payments to countries in the African subcontinent, in total, in the last five years.

Mr. Chris Patten: Over the last five years for which firm figures are available—1983 to 1987—gross bilateral aid to Africa totalled £1·39 billion. Including the estimated United Kingdom share of multilateral aid this figure rises to some £2·5 billion.

Endangered Species

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if any requests for assistance have been received from countries attempting to safeguard elephant populations.

Mr. Chris Patten: There have been no recent requests for such assistance; but we are already actively assisting the Government of Kenya and stand ready to discuss further support for wild life conservation, including the safeguarding of elephant populations, with the Governments concerned.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance is now being given to African countries to combat the poaching of elephants; and what is his latest information about current levels of the elephant population in Africa.

Mr. Chris Patten: In Kenya we are currently funding a wildlife adviser and two game wardens in the wildlife department as part of our technical co-operation programme with the Government of Kenya. Nineteen lorries for use in anti-poaching activities have also been provided. The possibility of further assistance with the rehabilitation of vehicles, equipment and training for conservation activities is under discussion.

We are also providing assistance for wildlife conservation under the joint funding scheme with British voluntary agencies in Cameroon, Liberia, Zambia and Nepal; and we are contributing £1 million to the World Wide Fund for Nature to assist the fund in activities to conserve natural resources including wild life.

There are no reliable figures for the current elephant population in Africa. In 1979 the estimated total population was 1·3 million. In the last decade this is thought to have fallen to 750,000 or fewer. According to some estimates the figure lies between 300,000 and 400,000.

Non-governmental Organisations

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the official bodies and organisations outside the United Kingdom that make grants to United Kingdom non-governmental organisations engaged in overseas development; and what was the amount of grant given to each United Kingdom non-governmental organisation by such bodies in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Chris Patten: This information is not available.

Lomé IV

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made on the negotiations for Lomé IV.

Mr. Chris Patten: Work on the renegotiation of Lomé IV has continued at official level since the first ACP/EC ministerial negotiating meeting in February. I expect to attend the second ACP/EC ministerial negotiating meeting in Brussels in early June, where I hope further progress will be made.

Bophuthatswana

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he plans to offer any assistance by way of education or technical training to Bophuthatswana; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: In common with every country except South Africa we do not recognise the "independence" of Bophuthatswana. Our training and scholarships programmes are available to individual applicants from Bophuthatswana as from elsewhere in South Africa.

WALES

Brussels

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many times *(a)* in the last 12 months and *(b)* since June 1987 he has visited Brussels; and what were his discussions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I visited Brussels in February 1988 and met Commissioner Varfis to discuss proposals for integrated development operations in Wales.

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to visit Brussels on behalf of the Welsh agriculture industry during this Session of Parliament; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am ready to go to the Council of Agriculture Ministers should the need arise.

Research and Development

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had with the agriculture industry in Wales about the future of research and development in agriculture; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has had discussions with various sectors of the farming industry, including the farming unions, about the

Government's proposals to withdraw public funding from near market research and development. My officials have also had contacts with the farming unions.

Inspectors of Schools

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many of Her Majesty's inspectors practice in Wales; and how many work in each of the sectors of the education service in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: There are currently 56 of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools in Wales. Each Inspector usually operates in a number of the education sectors—primary, secondary, further and higher education—and is not confined to any one.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he proposes to increase the number of Her Majesty's inspectors in Wales to cope with the operation of the national curriculum; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: The number of inspectors in Wales is kept under review in the light of the demands of the work needing to be done.

Kidney Transplants

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people in Wales await kidney transplants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Information on the number of Welsh patients awaiting kidney transplantation at hospitals in England and Wales is not available centrally. However, it is understood that 81 patients are awaiting kidney transplantation at the Welsh regional centre at Cardiff royal infirmary. Consideration will be given to further ways of improving the supply of organs to increase the number of kidney transplants performed each year at the Cardiff centre once the Asscher report on renal services in Wales has been studied in detail and the outcome is known of the Medical Reseach Council funded study of factors determining the supply of cadaver organs for transplantation which is being conducted in Wales.

Welsh Language Teachers

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many qualified teachers of the Welsh language are employed in each of the counties of Wales in both primary and secondary sectors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: This information is not available in the form requested. However, I am able to provide the following:

	Qualifications in Welsh held by teachers in primary schools[1]		*Qualifications in Welsh held by teachers in secondary schools*[2]
	(a)	*(b)*	*(c)*
Clwyd	484	681	220
Dyfed	605	922	258
Gwent	39	75	34
Gwynedd	626	899	331
Mid Glamorgan	N/A	N/A	246
Powys	104	174	60
South Glamorgan	138	241	113
West Glamorgan	342	484	170

[1]As at spring term, 1987.
[2]As at spring term, 1984.
Column (a) Number of post A-level qualifications held by teachers with Welsh as the main or subsidiary subject of study.
Column (b) Teachers who had studied Welsh as a first or second language as a subject in training.
Column (c) Any post A-level qualifications held by teachers with Welsh as the main or subsidiary subject of study.

We are currently estimating the number of teachers required to meet the needs of Welsh within the national curriculum.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take special measures to increase the number of teachers of the Welsh language in the local education authorities of Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: Arrangements are already being put in place to facilitate the retraining of teachers to teach Welsh as a second language. Officials are estimating what numbers of teachers of Welsh will be needed and will be consulting with local education authorities.

Higher Education

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many students there were in higher education in Wales in the last year for which figures are available and in each of the establishments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information is given in the following tables:

Number of students enrolled on higher education courses in Welsh public sector institutions in 1987-88

	Number
Clwyd	
North East Wales Institute of Higher Education	2,385
Llandtillo Technical College	142
Dyfed	
Carmarthenshire College of Technology and Art	326
Pembrokeshire College of Further Education	36
Ceredigion College of further Education	13
College of Librarianship	410
Welsh Agricultural College	81
Trinity College	600
Gwent	
Newport College of Further Education	108
Gwent College of Higher Education	3,210
Cross Keys Tertiary College	8
Ebbw Vale College of Further Education	51
Gwynedd	
Gwynedd Technical College	167
Normal College of Higher Education	551
Mid Glamorgan	
Bridgend College of Technology	134

	Number
Pontypridd Technical College	38
Polytechnic of Wales	5,761
South Glamorgan	
Welsh College of Music and Drama	305
South Glamorgan Institute of Higher Education	3,387
West Glamorgan	
West Glamorgan Institute of Higher Education	2,431
Neath College	57
Afan College	6
TOTAL, WALES PSHE	20,207

Number of students enrolled on higher education courses in the university of Wales in 1987-88

	Number
University College, Aberystwyth	3,492
University College of North Wales, Bangor	3,199
University College, Cardiff	6,356
University College, Swansea	5,082
University of Wales Institute of Science and Technology	3,016
St. David's University College, Lempeter	769
University of Wales College of Medicine	972
TOTAL, WALES	22,886

The total number of students in higher education in Wales has increased by 28 per cent. between 1979-80 and 1987-88. The increase in the university sector has been 10 per cent. an in the public sector 56 per cent. in that period.

Caravan Sites

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he proposes to meet Alyn and Deeside council to discuss its objections to caravan sites under the Caravan Sites Act 1968; and if he will make a statement

Mr. Peter Walker: No.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will indicate how many protests he has received from residents in *(a)* Clwyd and *(b)* Deeside concerning likely caravan sites; and if he will make a statement

Mr. Grist: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my reply in the Library of the House.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of caravan sites for which he has made orders under section 12 of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 since 1980 in Wales; and if he will make a statement

Mr. Grist: One district in Wales—Arfon—has been designated under section 12 of the Caravan Sites Act 1968.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to indicate which caravan sites will be designated in Clwyd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Grist: Under the Caravan Sites Act 1968 it is the duty of county councils in Wales to provide adequate accommodation for gypsies residing in or resorting to their area. Identification of suitable sites in Clwyd is a matter for the county council in consultation with the relevant district councils.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet Connah's Quay town council, Shotton county council, Sealand county council, Queensferry county council, Saltney council, Hawarden county council, Kinnerton county council and Penyffordd county council to discuss their concern regarding the potential implementation of the Caravan Sites Act 1968; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: No.

Church-aided Schools (Capital Projects)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he proposes to review his Department's policy in respect of funding of capital projects for Church-aided schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: No. Voluntary-aided schools remain an important part of total education provision and it remains the Government's policy to grant-aid necessary capital projects at such schools. Resources are targeted to those projects where needs are greatest.

NHS Reform

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will indicate which community health councils in Wales will merge on the proposed reorganisation of the National Health Service in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The proposal contained in the White Paper is for the establishment of one community health council in each district health authority area in Wales. However, no decisions have yet been taken and a consultation document on the matter will be published in the summer.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the hospitals in Wales which *(a)* he has earmarked for, *(b)* he has received representations for or *(c)* fulfil his criteria for self-governing status; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Welsh Office officials are engaged in discussions with health authorities officers about the concept of self-governing hospitals. No hospitals have been identified as candidates for self-governing status at this stage.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he proposes to meet the chairmen of family practitioner committees in Wales to discuss the White Paper "Working for Patients";

(2) when he last met family practitioner committees in Wales to discuss health matters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend met chairmen of family practitioner committees on 15 May to discuss the White Paper "Working for Patients". I meet chairmen from time to time to talk about a range of health matters. The last such meeting was on 11 December 1987.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning the implications of the new general practitioners' contracts for rural practices in Wales.

Mr. Grist: During discussion with representatives of GPs on 4 May a number of modifications to the new GP

contract were agreed which are of special relevance to rural practices for example the 26-hour rule, payment for minor surgery and the criteria for payment of basic practice allowance. Furthermore, it was agreed that the operation of the rural practice payment scheme should be referred for review to the central advisory committee on that scheme. This agreement makes clear that Health Ministers have taken account of the concerns expressed by the profession not least in respect of rural areas, and implementation of the contract as proposed will be an important step towards achieving our objectives of raising even higher the standard of the family doctor service and the care patients can expect to receive.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if, in the light of the written representations he has received concerning the National Health Service reform proposals from Alyn and Deeside, he will undertake to meet both the Clwyd area health authority and the Clwyd family practitioner committee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: I met the chairmen of both Clwyd DHA and FPC in the company of their DHA and FPC chairmen colleagues on 15 May to discuss the NHS review White Paper.

"New Roads by New Means"

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the implications for Wales of the consultation paper "New Roads by New Means".

Mr. Peter Walker: The consultation paper has been widely circulated in Wales and I await the comments of interested parties, including the Welsh counties and the local authority associations. An assessment of the implications for Wales of the proposals in the Green Paper will depend on the responses from consultees, including the private sector.

Clinical Waste

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of how safely health authorities in Wales handle and dispose of clinical waste; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: District health authorities in Wales are responsible for the safe handling and disposal of their clinical waste. The criteria for good operational practice were laid down in "The Safe disposal of Clinical Waste" (Health and Safety Commission: Her Majesty's Stationery Office 1982) which was circulated to health authorities in Wales in 1982. A further circular is shortly to be issued reminding authorities of the criteria and seeking confirmation that the guidance is being followed. Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution is not aware of any incidents involving improper disposal in Wales in the last year.

Nursery Education

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the number of nursery school places per 1,000 children in each of the counties of Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: The number of children in each county in nursery school or in a nursery class in a primary school per 1,000 of 3 and 4-year-olds is as follows:

	Number
Clwyd	416
Dyfed	261
Gwent	344
Gwynedd	235
Mid Glamorgan	446
Powys	280
South Glamorgan	302
West Glamorgan	566
Wales	372

As at January 1988.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what measures he will take to increase the number of nursery school places in the local education authorities of Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: It is for individual local education authorities to decide whether they wish to increase the numbers of nursery school places, in the light of local needs and circumstances.

Welsh Water Authority plc

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to make a statement about the capital structure of WWA plc.

Mr. Grist: Decisions on the capital structure of the successor company will be taken nearer to the date of flotation.

Roads (Expenditure)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what additional funding is to be made available for roads in Wales in the 1990s in addition to that announced in Roads in Wales, published earlier in the current year.

Mr. Peter Walker: The funding provision up to March 1992 for the programme described in "Roads in Wales 1989" is set out in the public expenditure White Paper (Cm. 617) and in the accompanying Welsh Office commentary. Public expenditure provision is reviewed annually.

Bovine Somatotropin

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many dairy herds in Clwyd are subject to the use of bovine somatotropin; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: Bovine somatotropin is currently under test in a limited number of field trials. Section 118 of the Medicines Act 1968 prohibits the disclosure of information supplied by applicants for product licences and test certificates. It is therefore not possible to divulge the number or the location of the herds involved in the trials.

Midwives

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many midwives there are in Wales; how many claims for regrading he has received; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: As at 31 March 1989 it is estimated there were 1,368 qualified midwives of all grades in post. Some 1,345 of these posts were regraded under the new clinical grading structure and I have received 10 representations from or on behalf of midwives about the grades they were allocated.

Under the NHS Whitley procedures appeals against gradings are a matter for the health authorities.

Cancer Screening

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to improve breast cancer screening in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Breast screening is currently being introduced into the NHS in Wales with the objective of covering the whole of the Principality by 1990. This timetable, which is the same as that for England, is the fastest at which this entirely new service can realistically be implemented in a safe and effective way. A total of £1·8 million has been made available for the service in the current financial year.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to improve cervical cancer screening in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Cervical screening is the responsibility of district health authorities. In order further to improve the service a recurring sum of £600,000 has been made available in Wales this financial year in addition to the £800,000 a year which has been allocated to health authorities in previous years.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Advertising

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will provide as much information as possible about his Department's expenditure on commercial television advertising, without breaching commercial confidentiality, over each of the past five years.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 22 May 1989]:* The total expenditure on advertising and publicity, including TV advertising in the last five years, is set out in the table:

	£
1984-85	434,889
1985-86	617,914
1986-87	804,638
1987-88	820,226
1988-89	1,145,033
TOTAL	3,822,700

Broadleaved Woodland

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total area of land in Northern Ireland entered into the broadleaved woodland grant scheme between 1985 and 1988; and what is the area approved for each of the following operations: *(a)* thinning, *(b)* selective felling, *(c)* clear felling, *(d)* natural regeneration under 20 years of age, *(e)* neglected woodland under 20 years of age, *(f)* restocking by replanting, *(g)* restocking by natural regeneration and *(h)* new planting.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 23 May 1989]:* The total area of land in Northern Ireland approved under the broadleaved woodland grant scheme between 1985 and 1988 was 181·30 hectares.

The areas approved for each of the categories is as follows:

	Area
1. Thinning	Nil
2. Selective felling	Nil
3. Clear felling	Nil
4. Natural regeneration under 20 years	Nil
5. Neglected woodland under 20 years	1·3 hectares
6. Restocking by replanting	Nil
7. Restocking by natural regeneration	4·2 hectares
8. New planting	175·8 hectares

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Electromagnetic Compatibility

Mr. Jack: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the implications of the European Community directive on electromagnetic compatibility; and how he proposes to draw the attention of the United Kingdom electrical and electronics industry to them.

Mr. Atkins: As part of the Department's single market campaign, we have issued much material drawing industry's attention to the implications of the EMC and other "new approach" directives, and we have consulted companies and trade associations regularly on the negotiations. Now that the directive has been agreed, we shall issue shortly a booklet on its terms, and later this year a consultative document on its implementation.

Industry must prepare itself for the implementation of the directive, and we are planning a major awareness campaign to ensure that companies are aware of the opportunities, as well as the technical requirements. We have already commissioned a study by W. S. Atkins (Management Consultants) on the availability of accredited test facilities, and the results show a considerable shortfall in the capacity which will be needed. The awareness campaign will address this problem.

Director General of Telecommunications (Report)

Mr. Jack: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether his Department has yet received a report by the Director General of Telecommunications for the year 1988, as required under section 55 of the Telecommunications Act 1984.

Mr. Atkins: Yes. The fifth report by the Director General of Telecommunications was published on 23 May. It covers the period 1 January to 31 December 1988. Copies of the report have been laid before each House of Parliament.

Cash Limits

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether any changes will be made to his Department's cash limit and running cost limits for 1989-90.

Mr. Newton: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary revised estimates, the case limit for class V vote

2 (support for industry) will be reduced by £1,830,000 from £580,467,000 to £578,637,000, and the cash limit for class V vote 3 (administration, regulation of domestic trade and industry, and consumer protection) will be reduced by £8,533,000 from £251,763,000 to £243,230,000. The running cost provison for class V vote 3 will also be reduced by £7,930,000 from £185,620,000 to £177,690,000, giving a revised total running cost limit for the Department of £304,760,000.

The decrease in the cash limit for class V vote 2 results from a reduction of £3,175,000 in grant in aid provision for the English Industrial Estates Corporation, reflecting reduced estimates of capital expenditure on the managed workspace programmes. Consequential changes have been made to tables 3 and 4 to reflect this. These tables also reflect matching reductions of £11 million in capital expenditure and receipts which have no effect on the level of grant in aid. The reduction in grant in aid is partially offset by an increase of £1,345,000 in provision to meet the initial United Kingdom contribution to the first account of the common fund. The fund will form part of the framework for international commodity policy agreed by the United Nations conference on trade and development. The necessary resources will be found from the agreed PES provision for overseas aid. Provision for inward investment promotional expenditure is being increased by £526,000, and provision for regional enterprise grants is being reduced by the same amount. The opportunity is also being taken to reallocate provision between the Department's research establishments.

The decrease in the cash limit for class V vote 3 (and the running cost limit) reflects a transfer of provision for the Business Statistics Office and other statistical sections to class XIX vote 18 (Central Statistical Office), in line with the announcement by the Prime Minister on 5 April 1989 (at column *190-191* of the formation of an enlarged Central Statistical Office.

These changes will not add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Post Office

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when the Post Office will publish the results from its new end-to-end monitoring system for letter delivery performance.

Mr. Newton: The Post Office, jointly with its users council POUNC, has today published the first results from its new independent end-to-end monitoring system based on the time taken from collection of letters to their actual delivery. Thus performance will now be measured in a way which reflects users' actual experience of the postal system.

The Post Office has also announced, with the endorsement of POUNC, new targets for improving the performance revealed by the figures, and a number of other steps to improve its service, including improved transport arrangements and the provision of better information to households about the best time to post for particular destinations.

Endangered Species

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has on imports into the United Kingdom of *(a)* worked and *(b)* raw ivory by weight and value in each year since 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: In 1988 imports of raw ivory were recorded as 12·1 metric tonnes valued at £470,000; information prior to 1988 is not available. Imports of worked ivory are given in the following table:

United Kingdom imports of worked ivory

	Metric tonnes	*£'000s*
1979	22·8	382
1980	17·2	487
1981	3·0	238
1982	4·6	263
1983	4·7	311
1984	2·9	455
1985	1·1	267
1986	1·8	252
1987	0·8	241
1988	8·0	208

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics.
Note:—1988 figures provisional.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has about the import of *(a)* worked and *(b)* raw ivory into Hong Kong in each of the last five years by weight, value and country of origin.

Mr. Alan Clark: The available information is in the following tables:

Hong Kong's imports of worked ivory[1 2]
1984

Country	*Weight kg*	*Value HK$ 000*
China	13,874	21,875
Japan	586	1,719
Macau	770	989
United States of America	119	365
Thailand	361	282
India	111	239
United Kingdom	100	218
Federal Republic of Germany	38	148
Republic of Korea	16	122
Italy	35	110
Switzerland	20	76
Singapore	12	71
France	12	55
Taiwan	21	42
Belgium/Luxembourg	22	33
Insular Spain	10	29
United States Oceania	19	24
United Arab Emirates	10	12
Australia	1	3
Total	16,137	26,413

1985

Country	*Weight kg*	*Value HK$ 000*
China	25,596	27,094
Japan	6,831	3,869
Macau	4,693	5,190
Singapore	663	977
United States of America	445	1,305
India	122	159
France	100	199
Belgium/Luxembourg	61	135
Federal Republic of Germany	49	79
Sri Lanka	15	39
Netherlands	11	11
New Zealand	5	15
Canada	3	14
Taiwan	3	7
Total	38,597	39,094

1986

Country	Weight Kg.	Value HK$ '000s
China	n/a	26,646
Macau	n/a	14,271
Singapore	n/a	7,144
Japan	n/a	4,492
United States of America	n/a	1,071
Qatar	n/a	247
Italy	n/a	207
India	n/a	82
Thailand	n/a	80
France	n/a	68
Federal Republic of Germany	n/a	62
South Africa	n/a	50
Canada	n/a	38
Sri Lanka	n/a	16
Switzerland	n/a	12
Total	n/a	54,486

1987

Country	Weight Kg.	Value HK$ '000s
China	n/a	27,437
Singapore	n/a	16,066
Macau	n/a	10,708
United Arab Emirates	n/a	3,582
Taiwan	n/a	1,716
United States of America	n/a	630
Japan	n/a	573
Sri Lanka	n/a	444
Italy	n/a	141
Thailand	n/a	89
Denmark	n/a	84
India	n/a	45
France	n/a	26
Federal Republic of Germany	n/a	3
Total	n/a	61,544

1988

Country	Weight Kg.	Value HK$ '000s
China	n/a	39,444
United Arab Emirates	n/a	9,048
Macau	n/a	6,413
Singapore	n/a	1,896
Japan	n/a	1,575
United States of America	n/a	1,394
South Africa	n/a	1,051
Taiwan	n/a	600
France	n/a	245
Republic of Korea	n/a	239
India	n/a	102
Zaire Kinshasa	n/a	84
Italy	n/a	41
Belgium/Luxembourg	n/a	18
Switzerland	n/a	10
Canada	n/a	7
Total	n/a	62,165

Source: Hong Kong Trade Statistics.

[1] The figures are based on country of consignment.

[2] Hong Kong imports and exports classifications: Item 899.111

n/a—Not available.

Hong Kong's imports of unworked ivory[1 2]

1984

Country	Weight kg	Value HK$000
Japan	293,275	105,158
Belgium	44,887	21,214
South Africa	22,001	9,204
Federal Republic of Germany	10,232	4,958
Tanzania	2,445	1,250
Sudan	2,141	480
United States of America	2,081	893
United Kingdom	1,946	1,149
China	336	69
Total	381,927	144,907

1985

Country	Weight kg	Value HK$000
Japan	174,345	78,282
South Africa	27,109	12,992
Sudan	13,500	2,085
Belgium	9,727	5,208
Switzerland	6,080	2,941
China	2,566	1,579
United States of America	1,540	859
Tanzania	1,070	591
France	455	227
India	255	141
Total	235,318	105,076

1986

Country	Weight Kg	Value HK$ 000
Somali Democratic Republic	61,486	38,221
Japan	47,242	20,220
Sudan	22,880	3,569
South Africa	17,234	9,900
Belgium	16,333	10,574
Zambia	5,147	3,172
United Kingdom	4,780	2,720
Central Africa Republic	2,115	1,848
Taiwan	1,103	519
Netherlands	780	462
Botswana	357	237
Tanzania	213	125
Macau	177	147
Austria	151	124
Zimbabwe	105	54
United States of America	95	51
China	45	23
France	23	12
Total	181,522	92,790

1987

Country	Weight Kg	Value HK$ 000
Belgium	67,627	43,082
Japan	57,061	22,462
Singapore	53,068	33,598
Sudan	13,382	2,083
South Africa	11,638	10,169
Congo Peoples Republic	11,114	9,774
Ethiopia	4,550	2,955
Netherlands	1,915	2,324
France	1,549	1,429
United Kingdom	1,058	945
Zimbabwe	1,008	1,400
Macau	696	667
Zambia	471	441
Federal Republic of Germany	233	172
Total	225,370	131,501

1988

Country	Weight kg	Value HK$ 000
Singapore	112,767	79,642
Sudan	52,090	8,126
Japan	24,644	15,323
Belgium	14,208	12,453
Mozambique	13,616	15,401
Somali Democratic Republic	12,663	11,213
Congo Peoples Republic	11,667	17,293
Djibouti	10,901	14,539
France	5,211	6,990
South Africa	3,358	3,715
Macau	1,660	978
United Kingdom	1,298	355
Zambia	1,047	2,042
China	703	454
United States of America	618	443
Ivory Coast	512	553
Ethiopia	461	304
Uganda	281	110
Federal Republic of Germany	63	58
India	31	25
Total	271,669	190,218

[1] The figures are based on country of consignment.
[2] Hong Kong Imports and Exports Classification: Items 291162, 291165 and 291166.
Source: Hong Kong Trade Statistics.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, further to his reply of 27 April, *Official Report*, columns 614-15 concerning gross output of finished manufactures and imports of semi-manufactures, intermediate products and basic materials, whether he will provide comparable figures for manufactures less food, drink, tobacco, paper, printing and publishing; and if he will add figures for 1973 and for exports.

Mr. Alan Clark: The figures are estimated to be as follows:

Estimated Gross Output (£ billion, 1985 prices)

	Finished manufactures	Finished manufactures less food, drink, tobacco. Paper, Printing and Publishing
1970	129·5	n/a
1973	145·8	96·2
1979	144·5	92·7
1988	156·6	101·2

n/a = not available.

Manufactures (SITC 5-8) less paper and paperboard (1) and printed matter (2) (OTS basis)

	£ billion 1985 prices Exports	Imports
1970	31·6	17·2
1973	38·8	26·6
1979	45·9	39·9
1988	59·8	75·4

Notes:
1. SITC 64
2. SITC 892

	£ billion 1985 prices Semi-Manufactures (SITC 5 + 6)	Intermediate finished manufactures (part of SITC 7 +8)	Basic materials (SITC 2 + 4)
Imports			
1973	13·0	4·7	6·4
Exports			
1970	12·2	7·6	1·2
1973	15·4	10·2	1·4
1979	18·5	11·6	1·9
1988	23·8	14·2	2·2

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, further to his reply of 27 April, *Official Report*, columns 614-15, concerning gross output of finished manufactures and imports of semi-manufactures, intermediate products and basic materials, whether he will provide an estimate for the increase in the United Kingdom content of United Kingdom exports of finished manufactures between (i) 1970 and 1979 and (ii) 1979 and 1988 on the assumption that the United Kingdom content of exports was the same in each year as the United Kingdom content of United Kingdom output, leaving out of account food, drink and tobacco as well as paper, printing and publishing.

Mr. Alan Clark: The question could be answered only at disproportionate cost.

Telecommunications

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met the Director General of Telecommunications to discuss premium rate telephone services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 23 May 1989]:* Both my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and I meet the Director General of Telecommunications from time to time to discuss a range of telecommunications issues. The last such meeting was in January when our discussion included premium rate telephone services.

Air Transportation (Delays)

Mr. Warren: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will undertake consultations as to the costs to United Kingdom trade of delays in the handling of air transportation in the air over the United Kingdom and on the ground at major United Kingdom airports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We keep in regular contact about these matters both with the Department of Transport and with representatives of the business community. As my hon. Friend will be aware, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport is at present awaiting advice from the Civil Aviation Authority on the adequacy of United Kingdom airport and airspace capacity, through to 2005.

Microchips

Mr. Warren: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what revisions are planned to the programme of

financial support for the development of gallium arsenide microchips following the withdrawal of the major United Kingdom industrial participation.

Mr. Newton: Earlier this year we initiated a review of the gallium arsenide advanced technology programme in the light of the slower development of the market for these devices than had been expected. I understand that the recently announced closure of the Plessey Three Five Group represents only a partial withdrawal from gallium arsenide microchip technology, and that the company will continue to manufacture gallium arsenide integrated circuits at its existing facilities situated in the Plessey research and technology complex at Caswell.

SCOTLAND

Sand Eel Fishing

75. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received about the licensing of sand eel fishing.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A number of representations have been received in response to the consultation paper issued by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland on 4 April 1989. These are currently being considered and an announcement about licensing arrangements for the fishery will be made shortly.

Teachers

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken to ascertain the numbers of teachers in Scotland who came from minority ethnic groups along the lines of similar surveys being carried out in England and Wales.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There are no plans to conduct similar surveys in Scotland.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of teachers who qualify in Scotland do not go into teaching the following year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A survey conducted by colleges of education in March 1988 indicates that over 20 per cent. of teachers who qualified in June 1987 had not entered teaching by that date. Results from a March 1989 survey are not yet available.

Torness Power Station

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give an estimate of the costs to his Department of official participation in the opening of Torness power station on 13 May, including security.

Mr. Lang: The total cost to the Scottish Office of official participation in the opening of Torness power station on 13 May was £358. There was no cost to the Scottish Office in respect of security which was provided by Lothian and Borders police, as part of their normal responsibilities, and by the South of Scotland Electricity Board for security within the station.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to the cost to the South of Scotland Electricity Board of the opening ceremony for Torness power station.

Mr. Lang: This is a matter for the South of Scotland Electricity Board. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Gentleman.

School Records

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to be able to make regulations providing parents and older pupils with a right of access to school records, and students with a right of access to further education records.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: We are currently examining the points raised in consultation and will make regulations as soon as possible.

Internal Market

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list the Scottish Office civil servants who have advised or assisted the European Commission in its formulation of policy initiatives towards the internal market in the particular areas of *(a)* public procurement, *(b)* excluded sectors proposals, *(c)* compliance directives, and *(d)* the mutual recognition of professional qualifications;

(2) if he will list the Scottish Office civil servants by grade and rank who have provided the European Commission with technical or other advice on the following major framework directives: *(a)* pressure vessels, *(b)* toys, *(c)* construction materials, *(d)* electromagnetic compatibility, *(e)* machine safety, and *(f)* food law;

(3) if he will list the Scottish Office civil servants by grade and rank who have advised the European Commission on *(a)* the non-life insurance directive, *(b)* the liberalisation of audio-visual services, *(c)* the directive liberalising long term capital movements, and *(d)* the directive liberalising short term capital movements.

Mr. Rifkind: Scottish Office officials give policy, technical and other advice to the European Commission, both in conjunction with colleagues in other United Kingdom Departments and direct, as appropriate, on a whole range of issues including many of those referred to by the hon. Member.

Industrial Production

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the index of industrial production by market sector, with 1979 = 100.

Mr. Lang: These figures are regularly published by the Scottish Office and are updated each quarter. Current figures are based with 1985 = 100, and a statistical bulletin is shortly to be published showing annual market sector indices back to 1958.

The market sector indices for 1988, rescaled to 1979 = 100, are as follows:

	1988 Index (1979 = 100)
Production industries	104·8
Total consumer goods	94·0
Consumer durables	70
Consumer non-durables	97
Investment goods	121·8
Intermediate goods	103·3

Source: Index of Industrial Production for Scotland.

Cash Limits

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he proposes to make any changes to the cash limits and running cost limits for 1989-90 within his responsibility.

Mr. Rifkind: Yes. I intend to make changes to four of the cash limits within my responsibility.

Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimates, the cash limit for class XVI, vote 14—prisons, hospitals and community health services, etc, Scotland—will be increased by £15,758,000 from £1,987,631,000 to £2,003,389,000. Most of the increase, £16,000,000, follows the decision to implement the recommendations on pay of the review bodies in respect of doctors, dentists, nurses, midwives and health visitors, and professions allied to medicine as announced on 16 February 1989. This is partially offset by a reduction of £322,000 following the transfer of responsibility for radiography training from Greater Glasgow health board to Queens college, Glasgow. A corresponding increase will be made to class XVI, vote 15. In addition £80,000 has been transferred from class XVI, vote 17 to cover the cost of appointing dental practice advisers.

Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the cash limit for class XVI, vote 15 education, arts, libraries and social work, Scotland—will be increased by £322,000 from £215,327,000 to £215,649,000 to meet the costs of running the Glasgow school of Radiography following transfer of responsibility from Greater Glasgow health board to Queen's college, Glasgow. This is being offset by a corresponding reduction in class XVI, vote 14.

Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate the cash limit for the Scottish Office administration vote, class XVI, vote 21 will be increased by £148,000 from £120,210,000 to £120,358,000 to meet the cost of processing data for England and Wales in connection with the beef special premium scheme. As a consequence the running costs limit for the Scottish Office will be increased by £148,000 from £205,717,000 to £205,865,000. This increase will be offset by corresponding reductions in the cash limits and running cost limits of the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food and the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce, class IV, votes 5 and 2.

Cashblock SO/LA2, which covers mainly housing capital expenditure by local authorities and capital expenditure by new towns and presently stands at £327,500,000, is to be decreased by £600,000 to £326,900,000. Subject to parliamentary approval of the Supplementary Estimate for class XVI, vote 9 (new towns and the urban programme), this amount will be used to meet increased requirements for the urban partnership initiatives.

These changes represent a net charge on the Reserve of £15,678,000 and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Forfar Bypass (Accidents)

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received any recommendations, following the consultations between his Department and Tayside region, about accidents on the Forfar bypass; if the monitoring of traffic and the study of junction design lay-out by his Department, Tayside region and Tayside police has led to recommendations; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 22 May 1989]:* An analysis of road accidents on the Forfar bypass prepared by Tayside regional council has recently been received and has been considered by the Scottish Development Department. As a result, the regional council has been asked to prepare urgently short-term measures to improve safety that can be implemented quickly. They have also been requested to look at options for a more major upgrading of the junctions.

Advertising

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide as much information as possible about his Department's expenditure on commercial televison advertising, without breaching commercial confidentiality, over each of the past five years.

Mr. Malcolm Rifkind *[holding answer 22 May 1989]:* The expenditure was as shown in the table:

Year	*£*
1984-85	161,218
1985-86	101,176
1986-87	82,275
1987-88	115,791
1988-89	474,844

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much advertising air time his Department purchased with each commercial television company in each of the last five years.

Mr. Malcolm Rifkind *[holding answer 15 May 1989]:* Information on television advertisements in the form requested is commercially confidential.

EMPLOYMENT

Community Insulation Projects

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has regarding the number of community insulation projects which are likely to terminate on 31 May at the end of the three month extension to the community programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: This information is not available.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the applicability in Great Britain of the action for community employment scheme run by the Department of Economic Development in Northern Ireland, with particular reference to the future of insulation projects; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: No assessment has been made because employment and training conditions in Northern Ireland are different from those in the rest of the United Kingdom.

Cash Limits

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether any changes will be made to his Department's cash limits or running costs limits for 1989-90.

Mr. Fowler: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary summer Supplementary and Revised Estimates, the following changes will be made.

The cash limit on class VII, vote 1 (training programmes) will be increased by £155,522,000 from £2,467,895,000 to £2,623,417,000, due to organisational changes within the Employment Department group resulting in responsibility for some enterprise and small firms functions and other activities transferring to the Training Agency from the Department of Employment. The majority of this increase is offset by a reduction in class VII, vote 2 (employment programmes and central services).

The cash limit on class VII, vote 2, will be reduced by £151,893,000 from £785,824,000 to £633,931,000. This is a net result of the transfer of £155,522,000 to the Training Agency (class VII, vote 1) of some enterprise and small firms functions and associated running costs and other administrative costs; an increase in provision of £5,873,000 to make payment to the Department of Social Security (class XV, vote 7) in respect of work done by that Department in connection with payments to employment training and youth training scheme participants; a net transfer of £1,326,000 in provision to the Central Statistical Office (CSO) (class XIX, vote 18), due to the transfer of some statistical work relating to the retail prices index and the family expenditure survey from the Department of Employment to CSO; receipts of £1,104,000 from CSO (class XIX, vote 18) in respect of the statistical and administrative support work which the Department of Employment will carry out on a repayment basis; £11,000 additional receipts for work carried out by the Department of Employment for other Government Departments; a transfer of £244,000 from the Department of Social Security (class XV, vote 7), following the change in responsibility for accommodation costs at Reading and Livingston; and a net decrease in provision of £47,000 for payments to seconded Employment Department group staff.

There will be a new cash limited vote, class VII, vote 5, to facilitate the privatisation of the Skills Training Agency (STA). This new token vote of £1,000 includes provision for expenses to be incurred by the Department of Employment in connection with the privatisation of STA. The Secretary of State for Employment announced the intention to privatise to the House of Commons on 13 March 1989, at column 23.

These changes will not add to the planned total of public expenditure.

There will be a decrease of £193,000 in the Employment Department group's overall running costs to £960,532,000. This is the net result of changes in the running costs limits on class VII, vote 1 and class VII, vote 2. The running costs limit on class VII, vote 2 will be reduced by £7,021,000 from £649,165,000 to £642,144,000. This is the net result of transferring £6,828,000 to class VII, vote 1 to cover the staffing of the small firms service and the enterprise allowance scheme; transferring £437,000 to the Central Statistical Office (class XIX, vote 18); and increasing provision by £244,000 from the Department of Social Security (class XV, vote 7) for accommodation costs. The running costs limit for class VII, vote 1 will correspondingly be increased by £6,828,000 from £204,799,000 to £211,627,000.

Employment Training

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the number of persons *(a)* entering and *(b)* leaving the employment training programme since its inception (i) for each month and (ii) cumulatively.

Mr. Nicholls: The information required is given in the following table.

Employment Training entrants and leavers

	Entrants	*Leavers (estimated)*
September	21,500	1,000
October	31,100	5,000
November	35,200	7,000
December	28,900	7,000
January	36,700	11,000
February	43,800	19,000
March	42,200	26,000
April	36,300	n/a
Cumulative total	274,900	76,000

n/a—Not available.

Note: The total of the monthly entrants figures does not equal the cumulative total because of rounding and later adjustments.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total number of employment training places available on the latest date for which information is available in Scotland.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 19 May 1989]:* I have been asked to reply.

In May 1989 there were 34,900 contracted employment training places in Scotland.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total number of employment training places occupied on the latest available date for which information is available in Scotland.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 19 May 1989]:* I have been asked to reply.

On 12 May 1989 there were 22,000 people participating in employment training in Scotland.

Graduates

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total number of graduates in employment, and as a percentage of all in employment, in each of the standard regions and Wales for each of the years 1983 to 1988;

(2) what was the total number and percentages of graduates in employment in each of the standard regions and Wales in each year from 1983 to 1988.

Mr. Lee *[holding answers 19 May 1989]:* Estimates from labour force surveys are as shown in the following table:

Graduates of working age[1], in employment by region

Spring estimates
Thousands and per cent.

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	[2]1988
Graduates in Employment (000's)						
Northern region	58	59	50	64	73	62
Yorkshire and Humberside region	100	97	91	112	117	120
East Midlands region	77	88	93	99	91	104
East Anglia region	43	46	48	55	60	60
South East region	680	696	754	785	783	807
of which Greater London	331	340	386	372	393	414
South West region	96	117	115	117	127	115
West Midlands region	95	106	108	115	123	133
North West region	148	134	147	138	176	181
Wales	51	56	56	74	61	60
(i) Percentage of all in employment						
Northern region	4·9	5·0	4·2	5·3	5·9	4·9
Yorkshire and Humberside region	5·1	4·9	4·5	5·6	5·7	5·8
East Midlands region	4·7	5·3	5·6	5·8	5·4	5·8
East Anglia region	5·4	5·6	5·8	6·4	6·8	6·4
South East region	9·3	9·2	9·8	10·2	10·0	9·9
of which Greater London	11·4	11·5	12·9	12·7	13·2	13·5
South West region	5·4	6·4	6·0	6·1	6·4	5·8
West Midlands region	4·6	5·1	5·1	5·3	5·7	5·8
North West region	5·9	5·3	5·7	5·4	6·7	6·7
Wales	5·1	5·4	5·4	7·1	5·7	5·5
(ii) Percentage of all graduates						
Northern region	85·4	83·5	82·2	82·7	84·2	84·3
Yorkshire and Humberside region	80·4	85·7	84·6	86·3	86·5	79·4
East Midlands region	86·0	84·7	88·5	87·3	86·8	90·0
East Anglia region	80·1	88·7	88·3	82·8	83·9	85·6
South East region	82·9	85·5	84·5	84·7	85·6	87·8
of which Greater London	82·9	84·5	83·7	82·1	86·0	87·8
South West region	80·8	82·9	83·6	84·9	90·2	88·2
West Midlands region	81·7	83·5	82·9	90·2	86·6	88·3
North West region	84·7	78·9	84·8	86·1	87·7	88·5
Wales	83·8	82·0	79·2	86·7	80·1	82·0

Source: Labour Force Surveys.
[1] Men aged 16-64, women aged 16-59. Graduates can only be identified for this age group.
[2] Preliminary results (1988 only).

Qualifications

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were *(a)* the total number of people of working age, *(b)* the percentage with (i) A-levels or equivalents or highers, (ii) O-levels or equivalent, (iii) achievements below O-level and (iv) no vocational or educational qualifications, for each of the standard regions and Wales, for each of the years 1983 to 1988.

Mr. Lee *[holding answer 19 May 1989]:* Estimates from labour force surveys are as shown in the following table:

Persons of working age[1] by highest qualification and region

Spring estimates
Thousands and per cent.

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	[2]1988
Northern region						
All of working age (000's = 100 per cent.)	1,876	1,879	1,879	1,877	1,878	1,886
'A' level or higher	27·5	32·0	32·5	34·3	34·7	33·1
'O' level or equivalent	13·0	14·3	13·1	15·0	16·2	15·5
Below 'O' level	10·6	7·6	10·1	9·6	11·5	12·3
No qualification	49·0	46·2	44·3	41·1	37·6	39·1
Yorkshire and Humberside region						
All of working age (000's = 100 per cent.)	2,939	2,956	2,964	2,969	2,977	2,990
'A' level or higher	28·8	31·3	32·8	33·1	33·8	33·7
'O' level or equivalent	12·7	13·6	14·9	16·3	17·0	16·3
Below 'O' level	9·2	8·8	9·9	10·4	10·6	12·4
No qualification	49·3	46·2	42·4	40·3	38·7	37·6
East Midlands region						
All of working age (000's = 100 per cent.)	2,329	2,355	2,377	2,398	2,418	2,428
'A' level or higher	28·2	32·8	33·7	33·6	32·0	33·0
'O' level or equivalent	12·9	15·5	14·6	14·9	16·0	16·8
Below 'O' level	9·8	9·0	10·0	11·2	12·1	13·3

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	[2]1988
No qualification	49·1	42·7	41·7	40·3	39·9	36·9
East Anglia region						
All of working age (000's = 100 per cent.)	1,137	1,151	1,170	1,185	1,201	1,206
'A' level or higher	28·6	31·9	32·4	33·5	35·1	34·3
'O' level or equivalent	13·6	15·5	16·4	16·5	17·7	18·7
Below 'O' level	12·3	10·1	11·1	12·6	12·6	13·0
No qualification	45·5	42·5	40·2	37·4	34·6	34·1
South East region						
All of working age (000's = 100 per cent.)	10,289	10,394	10,462	10,524	10,570	10,623
'A' level or higher	34·5	37·0	38·4	37·8	38·2	37·9
'O' level or equivalent	16·3	17·7	18·2	18·2	19·1	19·6
Below 'O' level	10·3	10·0	10·0	11·4	11·6	13·0
No qualification	38·9	35·3	33·4	32·6	31·1	29·4
Greater London						
All of working age (000's = 100 per cent.)	4,145	4,166	4,170	4,180	4,179	4,203
'A' level or higher	33·7	36·8	39·0	37·7	37·7	37·7
'O' level or equivalent	15·6	16·6	16·8	16·2	17·5	17·4
Below 'O' level	9·1	8·9	9·6	11·0	10·8	13·1
No qualification	41·6	37·8	34·5	35·1	33·9	31·9
South West region						
All of working age (000's = 100 per cent.)	2,564	2,594	2,629	2,660	2,697	2,709
'A' level or higher	32·0	36·7	37·1	36·4	36·9	36·3
'O' level or equivalent	16·7	18·1	17·8	18·3	18·4	19·6
Below 'O' level	9·9	10·1	10·6	12·4	12·3	13·1
No qualification	41·3	35·1	34·5	32·9	32·3	31·0
West Midlands region						
All of working age (000's = 100 per cent.)	3,143	3,162	3,175	3,179	3,194	3,208
'A' level or higher	26·3	29·6	30·1	31·3	30·7	30·2
'O' level or equivalent	13·0	13·9	14·5	14·8	16·1	16·4
Below 'O' level	10·0	10·2	9·5	11·4	11·4	13·5
No qualification	50·7	46·3	45·9	42·4	41·8	39·9
North West region						
All of working age (000's = 100 per cent.)	3,825	3,849	3,846	3,850	3,858	3,875
'A' level or higher	30·3	33·7	34·8	33·1	35·5	34·8
'O' level or equivalent	14·0	15·0	16·4	16·2	16·3	17·0
Below 'O' level	9·3	9·1	9·1	10·9	10·4	12·4
No qualification	46·4	42·2	39·7	39·9	37·8	35·8
Wales						
All of working age (000's = 100 per cent.)	1,659	1,665	1,673	1,681	1,694	1,701
'A' level or higher	25·2	30·8	31·6	32·4	31·1	31·7
'O' level or equivalent	15·2	15·7	16·4	16·6	16·8	17·1
Below 'O' level	10·0	7·5	8·3	8·7	9·9	11·7
No qualification	49·6	46·0	43·8	42·3	42·2	39·5

[1] Men aged 16 to 64, women aged 16 to 59.
[2] Preliminary results (1988 only).

Source: Labour Force Survey.

Second Jobs

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the number of people with a second job in each of the standard regions and Wales for each of the years 1983 to 1988, inclusive.

Mr. Lee *[holding answer 19 May 1989]:* Estimates from labour force surveys are as shown in the following table:

Persons in employment with a second job, by region
Spring estimates (Thousands)

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	[1]1988
Northern region	31	31	34	33	40	45
Yorkshire and Humberside region	48	51	73	79	72	87
East Midlands region	42	52	56	67	70	67
East Anglia region	23	29	33	33	38	47
South East region	185	270	284	284	286	344
(of which Greater London)	*59*	*94*	*89*	*97*	*93*	*105*
South West region	58	70	85	89	87	88
West Midlands region	42	55	66	68	73	92
North West region	53	74	79	88	83	95
Wales	19	21	22	28	33	40

[1] Preliminary results (1988 only).
Source: Labour Force Surveys.

Labour Statistics

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the unemployment rate by age and sex for the standard regions and Wales, and for each of the years 1983 to 1988 based on the labour force survey.

Mr. Lee *[holding answer 19 May 1989]:* Estimates from labour force surveys are as shown in the following table:

Unemployment[2] rates by age, sex and region
Spring estimates
Thousands

	1983		1984		1985		1986		1987		[3]1988	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Northern region												
All 16[2]	16·9	11·3	16·9	14·1	16·0	12·4	15·8	11·6	14·9	11·0	15·0	11·6
16-19	36·2	27·4	24·7	29·5	28·7	20·3	25·0	21·6	25·6	17·3	18·8	17·8
20-24	23·8	16·3	31·9	17·9	23·9	16·2	28·6	18·8	22·8	13·7	16·1	13·8
25-34	17·6	12·3	16·3	17·4	14·5	16·6	15·4	13·0	15·1	14·7	17·3	14·3
35-49	10·9	6·0	12·9	10·0	12·6	8·7	11·7	7·1	10·4	8·1	12·7	8·3
50-59	11·3	[1]—	11·5	[1]—	14·2	[1]—	11·8	[1]—	12·6	[1]—	14·6	[1]—
60+	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
Yorks and Humberside region												
All 16[2]	13·8	10·2	12·4	11·2	12·9	10·9	12·4	10·3	12·4	9·5	11·7	9·4
16-19	28·6	21·7	24·2	21·5	21·4	19·9	18·4	22·8	21·2	17·3	19·1	16·8
20-24	21·0	16·2	22·2	15·1	22·3	16·8	19·8	15·1	20·2	13·2	18·7	12·7
25-34	14·6	12·6	11·4	13·6	12·7	13·4	11·2	12·1	12·5	11·7	11·3	11·5
35-49	8·5	6·1	9·0	7·7	8·6	6·2	9·4	7·0	7·5	5·9	7·5	5·9
50-59	10·6	[1]—	8·6	7·2	9·8	7·8	11·0	[1]—	10·5	6·5	11·6	[1]—
60+	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	14·8	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
East Anglia region												
All 16[2]	9·6	9·4	7·2	8·1	7·5	9·7	7·3	8·7	7·6	9·1	4·7	6·1
16-19	20·0	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
20-24	20·6	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
25-34	[1]—	[1]—	9·9	[1]—	[1]—	13·1	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
35-49	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	5·8	[1]—	[1]—	7·7	[1]—	[1]—
50-59	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
60+	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
South East region												
All 16[2]	8·7	8·3	8·0	8·5	7·8	8·2	8·4	8·2	7·8	7·4	5·8	6·1
16-19	19·6	16·7	16·8	14·1	15·7	13·1	16·5	12·7	12·9	10·4	9·2	8·1
20-24	14·0	9·5	12·8	11·6	11·2	9·3	12·8	9·6	10·0	9·8	8·4	8·2
25-34	8·2	10·2	7·2	9·4	7·8	10·4	8·8	10·8	7·4	8·9	5·0	7·1
35-49	5·8	6·6	5·2	6·8	5·8	6·5	5·5	6·2	5·8	6·0	3·9	4·6
50-59	6·6	4·9	6·8	5·5	5·6	5·7	6·9	5·8	7·6	5·1	6·7	5·1
60+	7·4	[1]—	7·5	5·8	7·1	[1]—	6·2	[1]—	8·4	[1]—	6·0	[1]—
Greater London												
All 16[2]	10·3	8·8	9·7	10·1	9·5	9·5	11·0	9·3	10·2	7·6	8·3	7·5
16-19	20·3	15·0	20·7	19·5	17·1	18·5	23·1	16·4	18·5	12·7	14·1	13·1
20-24	15·5	10·6	14·1	14·5	12·1	10·2	14·7	11·5	13·7	10·0	11·8	9·4
25-34	10·9	10·6	9·2	10·7	10·4	10·2	12·8	10·4	9·7	8·2	7·6	7·6
35-49	7·9	7·1	7·1	8·1	7·4	8·4	8·0	7·5	8·6	6·2	5·7	5·6
50-59	6·9	5·0	7·4	5·1	6·9	6·1	8·4	6·3	8·7	5·2	9·9	6·9
60+	9·2	[1]—	9·5	[1]—	9·4	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	8·1	[1]—	7·0	[1]—
South West region												
All 16[2]	8·9	8·5	8·1	8·9	7·2	8·2	8·5	8·5	7·8	8·8	5·8	6·8

	1983		1984		1985		1986		1987		[3]1988	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
16-19	21·3	18·1	16·9	13·8	12·8	12·6	19·5	15·5	17·0	11·2	11·2	[1]—
20-24	12·7	11·7	11·6	17·5	12·1	10·4	14·8	10·2	9·0	10·9	8·8	9·6
25-34	8·6	9·5	8·5	10·4	7·6	10·7	6·7	9·9	8·3	12·9	4·9	9·2
35-49	6·4	6·1	5·8	5·9	4·9	6·6	4·9	7·3	5·1	6·5	4·2	5·5
50-59	5·2	[1]—	6·3	[1]—	5·1	[1]—	8·1	[1]—	6·8	[1]—	5·1	[1]—
60+	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
West Midlands region												
All-16[2]	14·9	12·0	14·6	12·0	14·3	12·5	12·2	10·9	13·2	10·4	8·8	7·8
16-19	23·4	25·4	26·9	24·6	25·9	23·7	21·1	22·0	25·7	16·6	16·2	11·2
20-24	22·1	16·2	24·4	16·2	20·3	20·1	16·4	16·9	13·9	13·8	9·4	10·4
24-34	14·9	13·3	13·9	15·6	13·9	14·4	12·8	13·1	13·5	13·7	8·5	10·1
35-49	11·3	9·4	10·6	7·5	11·3	7·7	9·7	6·7	10·9	8·0	7·0	6·1
50-59	12·9	[1]—	11·1	[1]—	11·2	6·7	10·2	[1]—	13·3	[1]—	8·1	[1]—
60+	14·5	[1]—	13·0	[1]—	11·5	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	10·7	[1]—
North West region												
All 16[2]	15·0	11·6	15·6	12·3	14·0	11·4	14·3	11·9	12·9	11·8	12·2	10·1
16-19	26·1	24·2	28·3	24·3	22·6	24·4	26·3	26·6	21·8	21·3	21·6	18·7
20-24	24·9	17·0	25·8	18·7	24·1	15·5	21·3	18·8	19·5	17·6	18·3	14·6
25-34	14·7	13·5	16·0	12·4	14·9	11·0	15·9	12·7	13·0	12·9	12·8	12·9
35-49	10·8	8·0	10·1	8·3	9·9	8·7	10·1	7·2	9·2	8·4	8·2	6·0
50-59	12·1	6·2	12·4	8·2	9·9	6·7	8·8	7·3	10·5	7·8	9·1	6·6
60+	9·8	[1]—	10·9	[1]—	10·0	[1]—	12·6	[1]—	11·0	[1]—	12·9	[1]—
Wales												
All 16[2]	15·9	11·4	14·6	13·3	13·8	11·3	15·2	112·3	14·2	11·3	11·9	10·4
16-19	34·5	28·0	25·9	30·4	23·7	22·3	23·8	24·9	21·0	23·6	18·2	[1]—
20-24	27·3	15·5	25·7	18·3	23·0	15·7	27·7	18·0	21·6	[1]—	17·9	[1]—
25-34	15·0	11·4	15·4	15·1	12·9	11·5	15·9	15·5	15·7	18·6	10·5	13·6
35-49	10·4	7·4	10·4	9·1	10·2	9·2	10·6	9·7	12·2	7·4	8·7	8·2
50-59	11·0	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	11·9	[1]—	9·9	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	13·6	[1]—
60+	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—

Source: Labour Force Surveys.

[1] Sample size too small for a reliable estimate.

[2] Labour Force Definition.

[3] Preliminary results (1988 only).

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will give the occupational analysis of people in employment by broad grouping, based on the labour force survey, in each of the standard regions and Wales, for each of the years 1983 to 1988;

(2) what was the total number of people, based on the labour force survey of occupational analysis of people in employment by sex *(a)* for each of the broad groupings in the survey and *(b)* on Government employment and training programmes, for each standard region and Wales for each of the years 1983 to 1988.

Mr. Lee *[holding answer 19 May 1989]:* Estimates from labour force surveys are as shown in the following table:

Persons in employment by broad occupation group, sex and region

Spring estimates, Thousands

	1983		1984		1985		1986		1987		[3]1988	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Employees and Self-employed[2] Managerial and Professional												
Northern region	181	98	186	98	189	104	209	120	220	136	205	128
Yorkshire and Humberside region	312	188	344	183	358	185	353	206	351	225	371	219
East Midlands region	278	141	308	163	323	158	307	164	299	169	326	174
East Anglia region	149	64	162	77	163	87	179	87	177	99	179	98
South East region	1,652	801	1,741	873	1,859	907	1,887	908	1,823	952	1,908	997
of which Greater London	605	350	652	374	725	405	705	376	677	399	723	406
South West region	350	186	383	215	394	211	412	214	392	230	409	245
West Midlands region	369	173	373	187	395	201	417	215	379	222	423	242
North West region	443	257	440	252	484	284	470	269	486	298	489	322
Wales	183	108	202	127	194	112	211	126	198	115	198	130
Clerical and related												
Northern region	34	125	28	119	30	125	27	135	33	145	33	140
Yorkshire and Humberside region	48	212	59	216	51	220	46	223	54	225	49	242
East Midlands region	40	174	45	189	43	189	37	190	39	199	46	202
East Anglia region	25	92	25	89	21	97	20	104	27	97	26	113
South East region	341	1,080	319	1,104	302	1,149	290	1,172	330	1,217	354	1,237
of which Greater London	168	464	136	446	139	480	128	473	154	510	162	482
South West region	64	209	62	216	60	228	54	227	62	249	62	266
West Midlands region	53	243	44	248	47	252	49	262	51	260	56	255

	1983		1984		1985		1986		1987		[3]1988	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
North West region	88	306	74	292	86	306	71	297	89	312	85	336
Wales	27	106	24	103	26	110	27	118	29	107	28	115
Other Non-Manual												
Northern region	37	66	30	66	33	60	42	63	41	55	46	67
Yorkshire and Humberside region	69	87	63	89	66	95	70	92	66	92	71	91
East Midlands region	60	63	62	66	54	66	64	64	63	66	70	71
East Anglia region	38	34	43	35	41	33	47	32	42	43	40	48
South East region	289	279	297	314	305	305	289	301	306	310	323	306
of which Greater London	103	102	107	104	114	104	105	109	106	102	113	120
South West region	80	80	82	82	80	92	81	94	86	85	92	99
West Midlands region	68	84	66	76	68	80	71	85	77	89	88	91
North West region	83	101	78	97	87	107	90	119	81	114	85	116
Wales	31	47	34	44	33	50	32	52	32	51	36	48
Craft and similar												
Northern region	207	24	219	22	205	25	197	22	196	19	193	24
Yorkshire and Humberside region	331	36	346	44	342	41	337	41	334	35	324	40
East Midlands region	286	67	286	56	285	59	299	71	289	63	287	61
East Anglia region	120	13	127	12	133	12	126	14	132	13	135	[1]—
South East region	1,050	83	1,065	86	991	95	967	83	1,018	89	1,034	100
of which Greater London	389	41	381	37	346	34	328	31	347	34	335	34
South West region	285	21	263	22	282	26	280	29	306	27	305	24
West Midlands region	373	31	375	44	369	45	367	42	370	42	376	52
North West region	406	50	413	59	397	42	375	53	377	61	399	51
Wales	171	14	173	13	175	20	155	14	156	22	171	19
General Labourers												
Northern region	27	[1]—	22	[1]—	21	[1]—	16	[1]—	13	[1]—	13	[1]—
Yorkshire and Humberside region	44	[1]—	39	[1]—	31	[1]—	24	[1]—	17	[1]—	18	[1]—
East Midlands region	37	[1]—	30	[1]—	31	[1]—	19	[1]—	15	[1]—	13	[1]—
East Anglia region	[1]—	[1]—	10	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
South East region	47	11	47	[1]—	38	[1]—	47	[1]—	30	[1]—	26	[1]—
of which Greater London	13	[1]—	12	[1]—	14	[1]—	19	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
South West region	16	[1]—	16	[1]—	10	[1]—	11	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
West Midlands region	28	[1]—	28	[1]—	27	[1]—	23	[1]—	20	[1]—	21	[1]—
North West region	30	[1]—	40	[1]—	31	[1]—	25	[1]—	20	[1]—	21	[1]—
Wales	23	[1]—	19	[1]—	14	[1]—	13	[1]—	11	[1]—	11	[1]—
Other Manual												
Northern region	206	173	199	187	205	173	191	177	191	176	207	180
Yorkshire and Humberside region	346	299	327	300	331	294	321	300	333	302	338	287
East Midlands region	283	214	259	221	236	219	280	226	297	212	286	238
East Anglia region	151	123	147	120	145	112	135	119	144	115	163	142
South East region	1,063	789	1,091	856	1,105	827	1,075	845	1,095	847	1,158	867
of which Greater London	450	300	467	317	436	292	436	294	434	285	449	287
South West region	293	239	293	234	310	256	289	241	308	262	310	259
West Midlands region	344	300	341	300	333	282	338	301	268	300	392	312
North West region	408	345	408	367	400	369	431	369	425	338	425	352
Wales	165	130	167	141	172	140	171	138	178	141	188	149
On Government employment and training programmes												
Northern region	16	11	16	[1]—	19	13	23	11	30	19	31	17
Yorkshire and Humberside region	22	15	18	10	29	12	33	13	36	20	36	19
East Midlands region	14	10	16	10	20	[1]—	21	11	24	12	25	16
East Anglia region	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	10	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	12	[1]—
South East region	47	36	36	28	40	31	45	25	45	25	49	34
of which Greater London	14	11	13	[1]—	11	12	15	12	19	[1]—	18	14
South West region	17	10	16	[1]—	17	10	22	12	17	14	27	15
West Midlands region	20	12	20	13	34	20	36	18	38	21	29	24
North West region	29	20	31	20	33	19	36	13	50	29	48	27
Wales	13	[1]—	12	[1]—	18	[1]—	15	[1]—	23	14	26	11

[1] Sample size too small for a reliable estimate.
[2] Occupation data are only available for employees and self-employed. Not all persons on Government employment and training programmes are asked the appropriate question.
[3] Preliminary results (1988 only).

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give, based on the labour force survey, the total number employed in services in each of the standard regions and Wales for each of the years 1983 to 1988.

Mr. Lee *[holding answer 19 May 1989]:* Estimates from labour force surveys are as shown in the following table:

Employees and self-employed in service industries (SIC's 6-9), by region[1]

Spring estimates
Thousands

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*[2]1988*
Northern region	679	696	672	719	763	754
Yorkshire and Humberside region	1,124	1,175	1,196	1,219	1,264	1,265
East Midlands region	865	921	896	941	951	1,011
East Anglia region	495	510	511	545	579	605
South East region	5,092	5,334	5,413	5,495	5,618	5,855
of which Greater London	2,187	2,230	2,259	2,276	2,340	2,402
South West region	1,149	1,190	1,275	1,230	1,366	1,386
West Midlands region	1,121	1,124	1,154	1,197	1,231	1,320
North West region	1,500	1,506	1,601	1,593	1,646	1,701
Wales	592	628	633	686	652	684

Source: Labour Force Surveys.

[1] Industry data are available only for employees and self-employed. Not all persons on Government employment and training programmes are asked the appropriate question.

[2] Preliminary results (1988 only).

Wages Councils

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment in which of the wages councils a majority of the employer bodies supported abolition of wages councils in the recent public consultation.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 19 May 1989]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 16 May, at columns *155-56*, to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes).

ENVIRONMENT

Community Charge Leaflet

Mr. Maples: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to provide minority language versions of the community charge leaflet which is being sent to all households in England during May.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements have been made to translate the leaflet "The Community Charge (the so called Poll Tax): How It Will Work for You" into other languages.

Mr. Gummer: Yes. The leaflet is being translated into Bengali, Cantonese, Gujerati, Hindi, Punjabi, Turkish, Urdu and Vietnamese. The translated versions will shortly be available free of charge. My Department will send them to councils and community associations, and will take advertisements in selected newspapers, to ensure that their availability is widely known.

Football Membership Scheme

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) of 3 May, *Official Report*, column 129, whether he will describe the circumstances when the police security services, Inland Revenue, or Customs and Excise will be able to obtain personal data, originally collected in relation to the football membership scheme, for purposes unconnected with the operation of the scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I can envisage no circumstances in which the organisations mentioned would have access to the information collected for purposes unconnected with the national membership scheme for football supporters. Discussions with the data protection registrar have taken place and will continue as the scheme is drawn up by the Football Membership Authority.

Urban Aid (Bolton)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total amount that Bolton has received in inner urban aid funding over the last 10 years; how much funding is being made available for next year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Bolton borough council has received £34 million in urban programme resources since 1980. Decision on the urban programme allocations for local authorities next year will, as usual, be announced in the Autumn Statement.

Drinking Water

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by location in the county of South Yorkshire *(a)* which Government and local authority buildings do not meet the European economic Community guide levels and maximum admissible concentration levels for pollutants in their drinking water supply and *(b)* the pollutants concerned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Information about supplies to individual Government and local authority buildings is not held centrally. In the county of South Yorkshire Government buildings are supplied by the Yorkshire water authority. Information on the quality of such supplies is available from the Yorkshire water authority.

West Midlands (Strategic Guidance)

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to monitor the implementation of the strategic guidance for the west midlands published by his Department in respect of *(a)* the pace and scale of urban regeneration and efforts to stimulate industrial and housing development and to improve the environment, *(b)* trends in the factors affecting housing provision in the metropolitan district,

(c) the rate at which high technology firms are attracted to sites on the periphery, *(d)* the outward growth of built-up areas and development in innner city areas, and *(e)* the effects of shopping development outside town centres on those centres and on the shopping public.

Mr. Ridley: The seven metropolitan boroughs in the west midlands, acting jointly, have recently published a monitoring report on the 1988 strategic guidance entitled "Planning Trends in the West Midlands: 1988 Annual Monitor". This covers many of the points raised by my hon. Friend. I am arranging for a copy to be sent to him.

Community Housing

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to assist community housing and starter homes.

Mr. Trippier: The Government support a wide range of initiatives designed to provide housing for local people and those who are seeking to establish a home for the first time. these include:

—the Housing Corporation's approved development programme for housing associations. Over the next three years, the number of new homes for rent approved by the Corporation is set to rise by 50 per cent. (to 24,000) while the low cost home ownership programme should nearly double in that period;

—subsidised shared ownership schemes provided by local authorities and housing associations which allow the shared owner to buy out the remainder of the equity, thus providing a route to full home ownership;

—assistance to tenants in the housing association and local authority sectors who wish to form housing co-operatives or other types of local management initiatives. In addition, there is a growing number of co-ownership societies constructing new homes in which members either have an equity stake or can buy outright; and

—assistance by local authorities, in their role as enablers, to other landlords in their area using powers in section 25 of the Local Government Act 1988.

Community Charge

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Ealing, North of 22 May, he will give the notional community charge for the London borough of Ealing for the year 1989-90; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) on 25 April, *Official Report*, column *532*.

Noise

Mr. Wolfson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give consideration to providing a code of practice to local authorities on the action to be taken with regard to noise nuisance in order to establish a common standard for each action.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Secretary of State has approved a number of codes of practice on noise from various different sources which are designed to help local authorities to take a reasonably consistent approach to similar problems, while retaining the flexibility necessary to deal with local problems in a realistic way.

Endangered Species

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish in the *Official Report*, the submission of the United Kingdom to this October's meeting of the CITES; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The form of the United Kingdom submission to these conferences is normally finalised at the conference itself. Proceedings of conferences are regularly and routinely published by the CITES secretariat.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representation he has made to the CITES organisation regarding its retrospective approval of ivory cargoes initially detained in the United Kingdom due to documentation discrepancies; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In accordance with CITES controls on raw African ivory, the Department consults the CITES secretariat ivory unit on all import and export applications. No import of ivory is permitted without its concurrence.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what stage has been reached in his Department's consideration in conjunction with CITES of an import licence for approximately 1025 kilos of ivory exported from Zaire without a licence in June 1988 by Mr. Shivaz Virji of Ealing; what information he has regarding the ultimate proposed destination of the ivory; and what steps he has taken to determine whether it originated from elephants slaughtered illegally.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department has received no such application for an import licence.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to ensure that Britain is not used as a transit route for poached ivory.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department complies fully with the controls of the convention on international trade in endangered species on trade in ivory. Import and export permits for trade in raw African ivory are granted only with the approval of the CITES secretariat ivory unit, and if all other requirements of EC regulation 3626/82 are met.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those 18 African countries where the EEC considers the elephant population is no longer capable of sustaining commercial exploitation.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are currently 19 African countries where the EEC considers that the elephant population is incapable of sustaining commerical exploitation as follows: Benin, Burkina Faso, Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Ghinea, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Togo, Uganda, Somalia.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further restrictions on the import of ivory are due to be announced by the European Commission.

Mrs. Bottomley: The Department has no information on further restrictions on the import of ivory to be announced by the European Commission other than those included in my answer to the hon. Member's question on 15 March 1989.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) why an import licence was granted by his Department for 1,464 kilos of raw ivory which arrived from Zaire on a British Airways flight on 21 October 1988 with false tusk numbers; to whom in the United Kingdom the tusks were delivered; what information he has regarding the ultimate destination of the ivory; and if he will make a statement;

(2) why his Department allowed the 252 tusks which arrived at Gatwick airport on 21 October 1988 to be renumbered; and what steps were taken to ensure the ivory was not from elephants slaughtered illegally.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Details of individual import and export applications are confidential and cannot be released. However, following confirmation from the CITES secretariat ivory unit that a particular consignment had been legally exported and on being satisfied that the requirements of EC regulation 3626/82 were met, the Department granted import licences for ivory from Zaire. The circumstances were that on arrival in the country it was discovered that the ivory had been incorrectly marked at its port of origin. After clarification and confirmation from the CITES secretariat that the cargo was legal, an official of the Zaire Government was authorised to re-mark the ivory. I understand that this ivory remains in Customs and Excise control.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has regarding the current number of ivory dealers in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department has no information on the current number of ivory dealers in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has regarding the level of funding received by the CITES organisation from ivory dealers.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: According to the CITES secretariat ivory unit budget for 1989, a total of 35,000 US dollars is being contributed to the unit's funding by private concerns. Contributions from Governments including the United Kingdom, and conservation organisations, total 108,500 US dollars.

Community Charge Leaflet

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements have been made to produce versions of the leaflets "The Community Charge (the so called Poll Tax): How It Will Work for You" in Braille and moon for the blind and deaf-blind people.

Mr. Gummer: My Department is currently discussing with the Royal National Institute for the Blind ways in which the leaflet might be adapted for the visually handicapped.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements have been made to translate the leaflet "The Community Charge (the so called Poll Tax): How It Will Work for You" into British sign language, on video, for profoundly deaf people whose only language is BSL.

Mr. Gummer: I am currently considering whether such arrangements might be necessary.

Roman Baths (Huggin Hill)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made to safeguard the Roman bath complex at Huggin hill; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Hammerson Group announced last week that it had decided to redesign its building to preserve and protect the Roman remains, under the close supervision of English Heritage. In the circumstances this is a good solution to a difficult problem, and is the result of all parties working constructively together.

Greenhouse Effect

Mr. Benn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to contact the Rocky Mountain Institute in Snowmass, Colorado, in order to evaluate the policy options researched by the institute to combat the greenhouse effect in the energy sector.

Mr. Ridley: In studying the energy sector's contribution to the greenhouse effect and in participating fully in the work of the intergovernmental panel on climate change, we take account of all published work in this field including that of the Rocky Mountain Institute.

Birds

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what opinions have been put by the EEC Commission to Her Majesty's Government on the extent to which the shooting of crows, rooks, jays and magpies, as covered by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, is consistent with the EEC birds directive 79/409; and what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government on this issue.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Commission has suggested that the provisions of the directive require that the killing of the species listed on schedule 2 part II to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 by authorised persons should be subject to a strictly controlled system of individual licensing. We consider that this would represent an unnecessary bureaucratic burden on farmers and landowners, would be costly to administer and would bring no conservation benefits. We have supplied the Commission with scientific data that shows that the population of none of the species concerned are endangered by present United Kingdom practices. We are trying to secure an amendment to the directive which would clarify the position on sensible pest control.

Wildlife Conservation

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the response of Her Majesty's Government to the resolution of the EEC Parliament entitled "Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural

Habitats" with particular reference to the proposals for the management and control of hunting and the prohibition of the use of lead shot, document A2-179/88; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Government have noted the European Parliament's views as expressed in the motion for a resolution calling for a ban on the use of lead shot in shooting, including clay pigeon shooting, and for controls on bag limits.

Current evidence does not provide justification for a national ban on the use of lead shot. The situation is being kept under review. The Nature Conservancy Council is consulting all interested parties to assess any potential danger to wildlife and its habitats. A working group of the British Association for Shooting and Conservation is co-ordinating research into all aspects of lead shot, with environmental issues as one of its main priorities.

Flags

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much money is spent annually on putting up flags from Government buildings for visiting dignitaries from overseas.

Mr. Chope : The flying of flags on Government buildings on the ceremonial route and on Raleigh green at each ceremonial state visit, organised by the Lord Chamberlain's office on instructions from the Government, cost approximately £15,700 inclusive of labour and material for framework supports, flying of flags and hire of flagpoles.

Football Grounds

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the weekly attendances at football grounds; how many arrests have taken place in football grounds over the last 12 months; and how many complaints about the proposed membership scheme for those attending football grounds he has received over the last five months.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer, 23 May 1989]:* The Football League estimates that the weekly attendance at Football League matches is of the order of 450,000.

The Association of Chief Police Officers collate the figures for the total number of arrests at Football League matches after the end of each season. Figures for 1988-89 are not yet available but in the first two months of the season there were over 1,700 arrests. The total for 1987-88 was 6,106.

I have received 2,673 representations against the proposed national membership scheme for football supporters since 1 January.

Leaflets

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many information leaflets were published by his Department in each of the past five years; and what was the total cost each year.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 24 May 1989]:* The numbers and cost of new information leaflets and new editions of existing publications produced by my Department in each of the past five years were:

1984-85 17 at a cost of £710,686 (approx)
1985-86 28 at a cost of £252,281
1986-87 19 at a cost of £321,195
1987-88 30 at a cost of £216,147
1988-89 37 at a cost of £615,932

In addition:

1. The Royal Parks and Palaces Division produced leaflets aimed at the United Kingdom and overseas tourist market to the value of:

1985 6 at a cost of £10,605
1986 6 at a cost of £37,040
1987 7 at a cost of £11,645
1988 7 at a cost of £39,180

2. The Property Services Agency has produced the following new leaflets and new editions:

1984-85 None
1985-86 2 at a cost of £15,487
1986-87 7 at a cost of £77,641
1987-88 13 at a cost of £38,964
1988-89 18 at a cost of £148,145

Air Pollution

Mr. Buckley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what the target number of inspections and vists to be undertaken by the air pollution inspectors will be in the year 1989-90.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 12 May 1989]:* A target of 6,000 visits, to or in connection with registered works, is proposed for HMIP inspectors involved in air pollution control. This is a realistic estimate taking into account the need for significant amounts of inspector-time in developing a new system for registrations that will provide more information for the public.

Water

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his answer of 12 January, *Official Report,* column 742, he will state whether the chairmen and chief executives of the remaining water authorities are to receive an annual bonus giving the amount paid as a percentage of annual salary.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 30 January 1989]:* No. None of the chairmen or executive members of the Anglian, South West or Thames water authorities received bonus payments for the financial year 1987-88.

Bathing Water

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the estimated cost for each of *(a)* Calshot, *(b)* Milford-on-Sea, *(c)* Christchurch bay, *(d)* Colwell bay, *(e)* Gurnard, *(f)* Cowes, *(g)* Ryde, *(h)* Seagrove, *(i)* St. Helens, *(j)* Bembridge, *(k)* Whitecliff bay and *(l)* Ventnor of (i) a long sea outfall, (ii) full sewage treatment works with a short sea outfall and (iii) full sewage treatment works with a long sea outfall to enable them to comply with EEC bathing water directive 76/160/EEC; and when the appropriate solutions will be in place, giving the estimated date of commencement and completion.

Mr. Howard: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him today.

Lead Water Pipes

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the number of

households which will need to replace or will be required to replace lead water pipes during the next *(a)* five and *(b)* 10 years; and what is his estimate of the average cost per household which this replacement will involve.

Mr. Howard: The lead concentration in a dwelling's water supply is dependent on a variety of factors, the relevance of which varies considerably in different parts of the country. The need to replace lead pipes will depend on the concentration in water of lead derived from those pipes. In view of this, it is not possible to give an estimate of the number of dwellings where pipe replacement may be desirable. The cost of lead pipe replacement for a dwelling will vary greatly depending on circumstances.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Pensions

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the percentage increase from 1979 of *(a)* the state retirement pension, *(b)* the retail prices index and *(c)* the pensioner prices index.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Between November 1979 and April 1989[1] the level of the state retirement pension increased by 87·1 per cent. Between November 1979 and September 1988[2] the retail prices index increased by 79·9 per cent. Between the quarter ending September 1979 and the quarter ending September 1988[3] the pensioner prices index (one person household) increased by 75·5 per cent.

Notes:

[1] Information given is for uprating dates.

[2] The level of retirement pension payable from April 1989 is based on the RPI figure for September 1988.

[3] Pensioner prices indices (for both one-and two-person households) are produced quarterly.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any proposals to change the present arrangements for payment of protected contributions for 1987-88 to private pension providers in respect of individuals who contracted out of the state earnings related pension scheme before 6 April; if he will give his latest estimate of the number of such individuals who contracted out during 1988-89 and backdated their election to 1987-88; by what date he expects 90 per cent. of relevant payments of 1987-88 protected contributions to have been made; if he will estimate the number and total value of such payments yet to be made; whether he will make it his policy to offer interest on late payment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The current arrangements for payment of the contracted-out rebate to pension providers are working satisfactorily. Personal pension applications have been processed promptly, and payments made to providers in respect of sums due for 1987-88 within a very short period of time. The very heavy volumes received in the last few weeks, however, will inevitably lead to some delay.

It is estimated that approximately 3 million pensions have been taken out by the end of 1988-89, and the expectation is that nearly all of them have elected to backdate to the 1987-88 tax year. It is hoped that the vast majority of payments of the contracted-out rebate in respect of 1987-88 will have been made by the end of August. This will involve about a further 2 million payments at an estimated total of £750 million in rebates. The payments will be made as quickly as possible, so the question of interest on late payments does not arise.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many employees are contracted out in defined benefit schemes, group money purchase schemes and personal pension schemes, respectively; and what would be the effect on the income and expenditure of the national insurance fund, in respect of each of these groups, of reducing the contracted-out rebate and the minimum contribution to personal pension schemes by 1 per cent. of relevant earnings.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 15 May 1989]:* It is estimated that approximately 3 million personal pensions (PP) have been taken out by the end of 1988-89. There is no information currently available on the effects of the changes under the 1986 Act to the numbers of contracted-out members of occupational schemes. On the assumption that contracted-out scheme membership is broadly unchanged it is estimated that there are about 9·5 million members of schemes. On this basis, it is estimated that a 1 per cent. reduction in the rebate rate in 1988-89 would have reduced the PP rebates in respect of that year by approximately £185 million and rebates for scheme members by approximately £850 million.

Any effect on expenditure would depend upon precisely how the reduction in the rebate was reflected on the guaranteed minimum pensions (GMPs) which schemes have to provide in respect of contracted-out members, and in the notional GMPs which are deducted from SERPS benefits from those who have contracted-out money purchase or PP rebates.

A change in the balance between the value of the rebate and the benefits forgone may affect the numbers opting to contract out, but no allowance has been made for this in the figures given.

Source: Government Actuary's Department.

Transitional Protection Payments

Mr. Ted Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his latest estimate of the savings following the end of transitional protection payments since the last uprating of social security benefits.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Following this year's uprating, some people continue to receive income support and housing benefit transitional protection. The extra cost of paying income support transitional protection on top of uprated benefit income of all claimants is estimated at £100 million for 1989-90.

It is estimated that the annual expenditure on housing benefit transitional payments has reduced by about £3·2 million as a result of awards ending in April 1989 because of the flat rate reduction of £2·00.

Charities (Hostel Status)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will now conduct an urgent investigation into the circumstances in which his Department granted hostel status to the premises in 9A Oliver crescent, Harwick, run by the charity called the Reflections Trust 1987 Ltd.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is not the responsibility of this Department to grant hostel status to any establishment.

The income support general regulations define "hostel" for income support purposes. Whether or not an establishment is a hostel is a matter of fact for determination by the adjudication officer in considering individual claims for benefit.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what procedures are used to investigate the bona fide nature of Scottish charitable organisations which apply for Department of Social Security hostel status.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Department does not routinely investigate the nature of charitable organisations in Scotland. There are therefore no set procedures.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether his Department is currently considering any application for Department of Social Security hostel status for any premises situated in Scotland and managed by the Reflections Trust 1987 Ltd.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We know of no such premises which are currently under consideration.

Loans

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of *(a)* budgeting loans and *(b)* community care grants were awarded to each of the 15 client groups defined by his Department for (i) the midlands region and (ii) each of the 21 offices serving the West Midlands county area for the financial year 1988-89.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total value of applications for *(a)* budgetary loans, *(b)* cash loans and *(c)* community care grants from the social fund for the financial year between 4 April 1988 and 31 March 1989 in respect of his Department's local offices at Eston, Hartlepool, Redcar and Stockton.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Details, by month, of the number of budgeting loans, crisis loans and community care grants processed by each local office since 11 April 1988, together with the value of these applications, is available in the Library. However, social fund data for March 1989 are not yet available as a check of the figures has revealed some inaccuracies which have resulted from a new method of calculating the month-end balances.

The necessary adjustments are being made and the tables will be placed in the Library at the earliest possible opportunity.

In addition, the value of applications processed during December 1988 remains unavailable because of an earlier computer malfunction.

Leaflets

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans are being made to provide extra resources to the Department's leaflets unit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: An additional separate distribution service, the Industrial Services Consortium in Bradford, has been contracted to supply statutory and care organisations with their leaflet requirements.

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the current average length of time taken to dispatch bulk orders of DSS welfare benefit leaflets to independent advice and law centres, local authorities and libraries.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A newly contracted additional leaflets distributed service, which began operations from 1 May, is dispatching bulk orders of DSS leaflets on the basis of a five-day turnabout to advice centres, care agencies and local authorities. A 48-hour urgent demand service is also available. Libraries are being supplied by the leaflets unit at Canons Park and the average time is expected to be reduced with the introduction of the new arrangements from the present unacceptable average of six months to an average time of four weeks.

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the estimated cost of the leaflet, "Our Business Is Service", being distributed to staff in local offices of his Department.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The total cost of printing and distributing the brochure "Our Business is Service" is £42,000. This includes the cost of distribution to staff within headquarters offices and the central offices at Newcastle and North Fylde.

Fraud Prosecutions

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish the number of prosecutions for social security fraud in Wales giving the sums of money and the number of people involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A total of 459 persons were prosecuted in courts in Wales for social security fraud in the period from 10 February 1988 to 28 February 1989. Of these, 393 cases involved offences concerning benefit fraud and 66 related to fraudulent encashment of instruments of payment. Information relating to the total amount of overpaid benefit in these cases is not held centrally and can be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, in 197 cases compensation orders totalling £97,174·01 were made in favour of the Department as a result of these proceedings.

Household Incomes

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the comprehensive set of indicators of the standards of living of households with incomes below the average developed by his Department and referred to in his speech, "The End of the Road for Poverty"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to "Households Below Average Income: A Statistical Analysis 1981-85" May 1988 and to "Low Income Statistics: Report of a Technical Review" March 1988. Copies of both publications are available in the Library.

Date of Birth (Evidence)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what instructions he gives to local Department of Social Security offices about information which is acceptable as evidence of date of birth; and what further guidelines apply for individuals born outside the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Instructions to local office staff on the verification of age for social security purposes are covered in the general benefits (GB) code, for contributory benefits, and in the "Income Support Manual".

For individuals born outside the United Kingdom, a certificate produced by the appropriate authority abroad is accepted unless there is any reason to doubt its validity.

Cash Limits

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether there have been any changes to the cash limits or running costs limit of his Department for 1989-90.

Mr. Scott: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the cash limit for class XV, vote 6 (Housing Benefit Administration) will be increased by £312,000 from £128,592,000 to £128,904,000. The revision provides for an additional payment to a local authority in Scotland towards the costs incurred in preparing for the introduction of the community charge rebate scheme.

Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the cash limit for class XV, vote 7 (Administration and Miscellaneous Services) will be increased by £3,226,000 from £1,578,122,000 to £1,581,348,000. The revision takes account of a reassessment of requirements resulting from the division of the Departments of Social Security and of Health, namely £220,000, a transfer of responsibility for certain expenditure items previously borne on class XIV, vote 3, £3,257,000, a transfer of £5,873,000 from DE (class VII, vote 2) to meet additional DSS administration expenses in making payments to employment training and youth training scheme participants, and a transfer to DE of £244,000 to reflect a change in responsibility for accommodation costs at Reading and Livingston. These additional requirements are partially offset by an increase in receipts of £5,880,000 to the vote. The balance of the increase will be offset by transfers from other votes and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

As a result the running cost limit of the Department of Social Security is increased by £6,566,000 from £1,705,319,000 to £1,711,885,000.

Elderly People (Benefits)

Mr. Hanley To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will prepare in tabular form a chart showing the provision of state pensions and other benefits for the elderly in terms of pounds sterling for each of the 12 countries in the European Community.

Mr. Peter Lloyd I refer my hon. Friend to the Department's publication "Tables of Social Benefit Systems in the European Communities (Position at 1 January 1988)," a copy of which is in the Library. These tables set out the levels of benefit in the national currencies together with the sterling equivalent converted according to the OECD's purchasing power parity figures as explained in the introduction to the tables.

Widows

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many widows and widowed mothers were affected by his announcement on 28 February, as respects his advice to women widowed before 11 April 1988, to contact local Department of Social Security offices if not contacted within six weeks; and how many have received payment under the new arrangements.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 22 May 1989]:* I regret that the information is not available. Some widows have been paid but the exact numbers are not known.

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether those widows and widowed mothers who, during the period after 11 April 1988, obtained benefit, have to repay the Department of Social Security when they receive their widow's pension.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 22 May 1989]:* Widows affected by my right hon. Friend's announcement on 28 February 1989 will not have to repay the benefit they have already received. Where the benefit obtained is income-related or overlaps with widow's pension, the arrears of widow's pension will be abated.

TRANSPORT

Severn Crossing

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to paragraph 30 of the consultation paper "New Roads by New Means" *(a)* what he regards as an appropriate toll level on the second Severn crossing and *(b)* what form of control Her Majesty's Government will place on the level of toll to be charged on the second Severn crossing.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Toll levels on the second Severn crossing will depend on tenderers' bids. We shall come forward in due course with proposals for the tolling regime.

Roads Programme

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) when he expects work to commence on the A41 No Mans Heath and Maceden bypass;

(2) when he expects work to commence on the A49 Tiverton bypass;

(3) when he expects work to commence on the A54/A556 to Kelsall bypass;

(4) when he expects work to commence on the A556/A49—Morley Lane stretch;

(5) when he expects work to commence on the A556 at Oakmere to Old Rectory Farm, Delamere;

(6) when he expects work to commence on the Duddan and Clothen A51 bypass;

(7) when he expects work to commence on the Tarpandey bypass to Tow Lane Ends;

Mr. Peter Bottomley: These corridor improvements were added to the national trunk road programme on 18 May by "Roads for Prosperity". The first step is for the Department to select a design agency which will investigate possible schemes. A programme for construction will be drawn up when this preparatory work has been completed.

Marine Coastal Pollution Unit

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to ensure that the marine

coastal pollution unit can exercise control over a harbour authority in the event of a major oil spill occurring within the harbour limits.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In the event of an accident to or in a ship causing or threatening to cause oil pollution on a large scale in the United Kingdom or United Kingdom territorial waters—inluding harbour areas—the Secretary of State has extensive statutory powers of intervention which would enable the marine pollution control unit to direct and control clean-up operations.

Pollution (Cars)

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals there are to introduce standards equivalent to the United States emission standards on small cars within the remainder of countries of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The European Commission has recently made proposals which include the introduction of standards equivalent to the United States emission standards on small cars in 1993, throughout the Community.

The Government support this move, provided it is implemented in a sensible way, without intermediate stages and respecting the unity of the market.

The adoption of three-way catalysts could in some cases increase emission of CO_2—the principal greenhouse gas. We shall therefore be pressing the Commission to bring forward proposals to tackle this.

London Underground (Police)

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the total number of British Transport police officers now employed on the London Underground; how many are on secondment from the Metropolitan police; if he has any proposals for increasing the number of officers engaged in this work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A total of 338 British Transport police officers are currently employed on the London Underground and 80 officers from the Metropolitan and City police forces are also serving on the Underground while BTP officers are recruited and trained to fill the increased establishment of 400 announced last December for the Underground division of the force.

That represents an increase of 50 officers and followed an increase from 280 to 350 in 1986.

The establishment of the force is a matter for the British Transport police committee.

Concessionary Bus Fares

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of the English districts outside London that do not have a system of concessionary bus fares for those of state pensionable age.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department of Transport conducted a survey of all local authorities outside London in autumn 1986 to discover the details of concessionary fares schemes operating at that time. The results showed that there was no travel concessionary scheme for elderly people in the following 28 districts. We have no more recent information. It is possible that schemes may now operate in some of these areas.

Avon
Woodspring DC

Cornwall
Caradon DC
Carrick DC
Kerrier DC
North Cornwall DC
Penwith DC

Cumbria
Eden DC

Devon
East Devon DC
Mid Devon DC
South Hams DC
West Devon DC

Lincolnshire
Boston BC
South Holland DC
West Lindsey DC

North Yorkshire
Hambleton DC
Harrogate BC
Richmondshire DC
Scarborough BC

Shropshire
South Shropshire DC

Dorset
West Dorset DC

Somerset
Taunton Deane BC
West Somerset DC

Warwickshire
Stratford-upon-Avon DC

Hereford/Worcester
Leominster

Wiltshire
Kennet DC
North Wiltshire
Salisbury DC
West Wiltshire DC

Pilot Autoguide System

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how he proposes to ensure that the pilot autoguide system will not include route guidance for through traffic to use local roads; what powers local highway authorities will have of control over the guidance routes chosen and the equipment to be installed; and whether there will be any appeals procedure to resolve differences between local highway authorities and operators.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Under the Road Traffic (Driver Licensing and Information Systems) Bill currently before Parliament, the operation of an autoguide system in relation to public roads would require a licence from the Secretary of State.

Clause 10(8) of the Bill would enable the Secretary of State to specify in a licence the classes of descriptions of

public road which may be included in route guidance. The Bill does not extend local highway authorities' existing powers to manage traffic in their areas.

An autoguide pilot scheme would need to include the use of some local roads to allow a full assessment of the likely effects of a large scale commercial system. The Department of Transport has set up a group which would oversee the monitoring and evaluation of a pilot autoguide scheme in London, should a licence for one be awarded. The group includes representatives of local authority associations and the police.

An autoguide operator's power to install equipment would, under clause 12 of the Bill, be subject to the street works code in the Public Utilities Street Works Act 1950. This would require an operator to notify relevant highway authorities of proposals, and sets out procedures for resolving disputes.

North Devon Link Road

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many accidents involving personal injury have been recorded on the north Devon link road since it was opened and how many motorists have been cautioned or prosecuted for speeding on this section of the road from Tiverton to South Molton.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There have been six personal injury accidents on the section of north Devon Link between Tiverton and Newtown. Two of these accidents involved fatalities.

There has been a high police presence on the road. They estimate that about 860 motorists have been cautioned or prosecuted for speeding.

Bus Fares

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the most recent information his Department has on the level of bus fares since deregulation.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Between 1985-86 and the 12 months ended September 1988, local bus fares outside London rose by an average of 19 per cent. Following the imposition of precept control, fares in metropolitan areas rose sharply from very low levels. In other areas outside London, the rise of 11 per cent. was broadly in line with inflation.

M25

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the date when the M25 road was built; what was the cost at current prices of *(a)* re-surfacing work, *(b)* concrete relaying and *(c)* road rebuilding (i) undertaken since that date up to the present time and (ii) which he estimates is needed to bring the road up to high quality standard; who had the initial road-building contract; what assessment he has made of the adequacy of that work bearing in mind the longevity and usage of the road; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Information is not kept in the form requested and could be produced only at disproportionate cost. The first section of what was to become the M25 London orbital motorway was opened in 1972 and the final section in 1986. Fifteen main civil engineering contractors were involved in its construction.

Major maintenance work, defined as capital schemes costing more than £500,000 (more than £250,000 before April 1987), has cost as follows:

£ million

Year	*Outturn cost*
1985-86	0·6
1986-87	—
1987-88	2·4
1988-89	[1]9·8
1989-90	[2]3·8

[1] Estimate.
[2] Provisional.

Some major renewal has been necessary earlier than expected mainly because of much higher usage of the motorway than was originally forecast. Regular surveys are carried out to assess the continuing need for maintenance and major works are programmed in the most cost effective manner. All present major maintenance needs will be met by the expenditure provision for 1989-90. These works will be designed and executed to minimise disruption to traffic.

M11

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the date when the M11 road was built; what was the cost at current prices of *(a)* resurfacing work, *(b)* concrete relaying and *(c)* road rebuilding (i) undertaken since that date up to the present time and (ii) which he estimates is needed to bring the road up to high quality standard; who had the initial road-building contract; what assessment he has made of the adequacy of that work bearing in mind the longevity and anticipated usage of the road; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Information is not kept in the form requested and could be produced only at disproportionate cost. The first section of the M11 London-Cambridge motorway was opened in 1975 and the final section in 1980. Seven main civil engineering contractors were involved in its construction.

Major maintenance work, defined as capital schemes costing more than £500,000 (more than £250,000 before April 1987), has cost as follows:

Year	*Outturn cost (£ million)*
1985-86	0·3
1986-87	—
1987-88	1·3
1988-89	[1]1·1
1989-90	[2]9·0

[1] Estimate.
[2] Provisional.

The works have mainly been resurfacing and overlay which serves to preserve the road and defer the need for costly reconstruction. Regular surveys are carried out to assess the continuing need for maintenance and major works are programmed in the most cost effective manner. All present major maintenance needs will be met by the expenditure provision for 1989-90. These works will be designed and executed to minimise disruption to traffic.

Search and Rescue

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport why the Lepe-based Venturers search and rescue service

has not been accepted by the coastguard's regional controller as an operational partner in life-saving activities in the Solent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My hon. Friend the Minister for Aviation and Shipping wrote to my hon. Friend on 21 March 1989 giving the background to this matter, and explaining his decision. I have nothing further to add to the contents of that letter.

Prestwick Airport

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will make available accounts for Prestwick airport for the period 1985 to 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Figures relating to Prestwick airport appear in the annual reports by the British Airports Authority and its successor, BAA plc; copies are in the Library. For any further material I suggest my hon. Friend contacts BAA plc direct.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will publish the evidence which led him to conclude that there had been a steady improvement in the financial position of Prestwick airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information supplied, which was drawn from the relevant annual reports of the then British Airports authority and latterly BAA plc, was as follows:

£ million

	1983-88	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
Income					
Traffic charges	3·7	3·8	4·0	4·5	5·3
Concessions and property	2·0	2·1	2·0	1·9	2·5
Total	5·7	5·9	6·0	6·4	7·8
Expenditure					
Staff costs	3·2	3·9	4·3	4·3	5·2
External charges	4·1	3·3	2·8	2·8	3·6
Depreciation	1·8	1·5	1·4	1·2	1·1
Total	9·1	8·7	8·5	8·3	9·9
Trading (loss)	(3·4)	(2·8)	(2·5)	(1·9)	(2·1)

A BAA note to these figures remarked the extraordinary expenditure of £0·75 million in 1987-88 in marketing support for an airline, Highland express; this sum may be discounted from the expenditure account evaluating the trend of financial performance.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will list the representations he has received from commercial and business organisations in support of his policy of maintaining Prestwick as Scotland's gateway airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Representations to my right hon. Friend about Scottish lowland airports policy have taken the form of private correspondence. It would be for those concerned to make their views public, if they wished.

Harbour Projects

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many harbour projects in *(a)* Yorkshire, and *(b)* Humberside have been carried out in the period from May 1979 to May 1989; where are the locations; how much money was granted to these projects; and what were the sources of the funds.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department does not have this information. Harbour developments do not require my right hon. Friend's approval, and except for certain fishery facilities have not been financed since 1979 by Government loans or grants.

However in 1980 a grant of £19,200 was made for one harbour project in Yorkshire from the European regional development fund, and since 1980 grants totalling £6,382,800 have been made from the fund for 20 harbour projects on Humberside.

Orange Badge Scheme

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many London boroughs allow the orange badge scheme to be used only by disabled people resident in their own borough; which of the royal boroughs refuse to operate the orange badge scheme; and for what reasons.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The orange badge scheme allows all badge holders to use the parking concessions wherever the scheme operates.

The scheme does not operate in the Royal boroughs of Kensington and Chelsea, nor in the City of London, City of Westminster and parts of London borough of Camden. This reflects the particular traffic problems in central London. The four authorities each operate their own concessionary scheme for people with disabilities who live or work in their area.

We recently announced proposals to ensure that orange badges go only to those severely disabled people who need them most, and to curb abuse of the scheme. In the light of that, we have invited the four authorities to consider introducing elements of the national scheme in their areas.

British Rail

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received regarding the privatisation of British Rail.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have received a small number of representations from interested organisations and from individuals.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the Chairman of British Rail; and what was discussed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend last met the chairman of British Rail on 17 May to discuss a variety of railway matters.

PRIME MINISTER

Strategic Nuclear Deterrent

Q33. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy to publish an indicative list of the circumstances in which Her Majesty's Government would authorise the use of the strategic nuclear deterrent.

The Prime Minister: No.

Hazardous and Noxious Substances

Q45. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow on 27 April *Official Report*, column *613*, if she will list the contents of Her Majesty's Government's proposals for the implementation of a hazardous and noxious substances convention as well as the alternative plans being presented; and how those proposals would prevent accidents such as occurred with the foundering of the MV Perentis in March.

The Prime Minister: The new hazardous and noxious substances convention being developed by the International Maritime Organisation's legal committee seeks to establish a liability and compensation regime in respect of incidents arising from the maritime carriage of HNS cargoes. Of the four alternatives being prepared for the legal committee, one places liability solely on the shipowner, another places liability on an international fund financed by cargo interests. The two other alternatives share liability between the shipowner and an international fund. The United Kingdom is preparing proposals on one of these shared alternatives, under which the international fund would purchase insurance cover to meet any compensation claims made against it.

The marking, stowage and carriage of HNS cargoes are already subject to existing international conventions, developed and continually updated by the International Maritime Organisation.

Westland plc

Q113. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister whether Sir Leon Brittan has cleared with No. 10 Downing street his response to the inquiry by the Select Committee on Defence about the explanation of his remarks on Channel 4 television, alleging that Mr. Bernard Ingham and Mr. Charles Powell had approved the disclosure of a Law Officer's letter during the Westland affair.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the many answers given in statements and in reply to questions on this subject.

Rain Forests

Q178. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Prime Minister what plans she has to give further assistance to countries with tropical rain forests to prevent their destruction.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 4 May, at column *211*.

European Community

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister whether she has any plans to consider legislation to return powers ceded to the European Community to the United Kingdom Parliament.

The Prime Minister: No.

Global Warming (Research)

Sir Ian Lloyd: To ask the Prime Minister what has been the contribution by Her Majesty's Government to research and development connected with global warming in the current financial year; how much is planned for future years; and if she will break the figures down by departmental budget.

The Prime Minister: Research on climate change and the possible consequences of global warming is being undertaken on an international scale.

The Government are currently spending over £15 million on research and development directly relevant to the understanding of climate change and global warming and this figure is likely to increase. Details of expenditure by departmental and research council budget are given in the table for 1989-90.

In addition, a number of Departments are undertaking research and development work which will be relevant to the mitigation of and adaption to the consequence of climate change and global warming.

Planned expenditure on climate change research and development in 1989-90

	£ million
NERC	11·2
SERC	2·0
Met. Office	0·75
DOE	0·59
MAFF	1·0
Total	15·54

A major assessment of the scientific position on climate change by United Nations Environment Programme/ World Meteorological Office is under way in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change under United Kingdom chairmanship, and the Government are providing £760,000 over two years in support of this work.

Endangered Species

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make it the policy of Her Majesty's Government to ban immediately the import and export of all ivory products and seek a similar ban within the European Economic Community; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Effective action to control the trade in ivory can only be taken on the basis of international co-operation. The Government fully share the concern that has been expressed about the decline in African elephant populations and will be calling for concerted European support for banning trade in new ivory, at the next council meeting of Environment Ministers on 8 June. The first opportunity to secure listing the African elephant in appendix I of the convention on international trade in endangered species, will be at the next conference of CITES parties in October.

Public Bodies

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list the public bodies *(a)* abolished and *(b)* established since 1979.

The Prime Minister: Between 1979 and 1988, 937 non-departmental public bodies were abolished and 417 were established. A list of the individual bodies involved could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Engagements

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 25 May.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 25 May.

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 25 May.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 25 May.

Mrs. Rosie Barnes: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 25 May.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 25 May.

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 25 May.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Government Achievements

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Prime Minister if she will update her answer of 6 May 1988, *Official Report*, columns *628-44*, on the major achievements of Her Majesty's Government since May 1979.

The Prime Minister: The United Kingdom is well into its eighth successive year of sustained economic growth, at an annual average rate of over 3 per cent. The seven years to 1988 have seen a combination of strong and steady growth not seen since world war 2. The United Kingdom economy has grown faster than all other major European Community countries during the 1980s. Retail price inflation has averaged 5 per cent. since 1983, compared to an average of over 15 per cent. from March 1974 to April 1979.

Business investment in 1988 was the highest ever recorded as a percentage of GDP and in the 1980s as a whole it has grown faster than in all other major European countries; only Japan among the Group of Seven major industrialised nations has had faster business investment growth. Over the past seven years, total investment has grown more than twice as fast as consumption. The level of the United Kingdom's net overseas assets is the largest of all the major nations as a percentage of GDP and in 1986 and 1987 our invisibles surplus was the largest in the world.

Manufacturing productivity has risen at an average annual rate of over 5 per cent. since 1980—faster than in any other major industrialised country, after being at the bottom of the league in the previous two decades. Output per hour worked in the whole economy has also grown steadily so that by 1986 (the latest figure available), it was approaching the average for the Group of Seven and was 50 per cent. higher than that of Japan and only 5 per cent. below that of West Germany. Since 1981, the net rate of return on capital employed by British industry has nearly doubled. Excluding the North sea, the rise in profitability has been even greater. In 1987, non-North sea company profitability rose to over 10 per cent. its highest level since 1969, having risen every year since 1981.

Real take-home pay has risen substantially. For a married man on average earnings with two children, it has increased by about 30 per cent. between 1978-79 and 1988-89. Real personal disposable income is at a record level; in 1988 it was 5 per cent. higher than a year earlier. Pensioners have also shared in this growing prosperity. Their average real incomes rose by 23 per cent. between 1979 and 1986.

The Government have continued to maintain sound public finances. In 1988-89, the Government made a net repayment of public sector debt for the second consecutive year—the first time this has been achieved for forty years —saving over £1½ billion a year in interest payments. Including the £14 billion repayment budgeted for 1989-90, the Government will have repaid roughly a sixth of the total accumulated public debt in three years.

The Government have increased spending on priority programmes while reducing public expenditure as a proportion of GDP. In 1988-89, it was less than 40 per cent. of GDP for the first time in over 20 years. This has been made possible by continued improvements in efficiency in Government services, together with a rigorous reassessment of expenditure priorities.

The Government have made great advances since the introduction of the financial management initiative in 1982 towards the goal of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the Civil Service. All Departments now have arrangements for delegating clear budgets and responsibilities down the management chain, and the flexible pay arrangements now in force in the Civil Service will enable Departments to make further improvements in the use of their human resources. The central instructions on personnel management in the Civil Service are being reviewed with a view to removing unnecessary controls on the discretion of managers in Departments wherever possible.

In 1988, the next steps initiative was launched. This involves setting up, to the greatest extent practicable, discrete management units to perform the executive functions of Government. These agencies will have clearer objectives, greater responsibility and the right tools for the job. The aim is greater value for money for the taxpayer, increased job satisfaction for staff and a better quality of service for the public. So far, five agencies have been established, and well over 30 candidates identified, covering about a third of the Civil Service and including virtually all the operational tasks of the Department of Social Security.

The Government have pursued a substantial programme of tax reform. The aim has been to create a climate in which businesses can thrive and individual initiative and risk-taking are rewarded. The basic rate of income tax has been reduced from 33 to 25 per cent., and the main personal allowances are fully 25 per cent higher in real terms than in 1978-79. Nine higher rates of income

tax on earned income running up to 83 per cent. have been replaced by a single higher rate of 40 per cent. A new system of independent taxation for husbands and wives will apply in 1990.

Business taxation has been radically restructured, leaving the main United Kingdom corporation tax rate at 35 per cent., one of the lowest in the industrialised world. Seventeen rates of capital transfer tax running up to 75 per cent. have been replaced by a single rate of 40 per cent. on inheritance; the rates of tax on capital gains have been aligned with those on income and the taxation of purely inflationary capital gains has been ended. The taxation of life assurance will be reformed from 1990. Five major taxes and a number of unjustified tax breaks have been abolished.

Since 1979, the Government have privatised 19 major companies and a number of other enterprises. As a result of this policy and of tax reliefs designed to encourage shareholding, the number of individual shareholders in the United Kingdom, at one in five of the adult population, has trebled since 1979. Nearly 45 per cent. of the state-owned industrial sector which the Government inherited in 1979 has been returned to private enterprise. The privatisation programme is set to continue; legislation is proceeding for the privatisation of the electricity supply industry and the water industry in England and Wales, and the Government have already announced their intention to privatise British Coal in the next Parliament.

The Government have introduced a large number of measures to improve the operation of markets. Pay, price and dividend controls have been abolished, together with controls on foreign exchange, bank lending, hire purchase and new issues, and restrictions on industrial and office development. Incentives have been increased by reductions in tax rates and by the reform of national insurance contributions. The state retirement pensioners' earnings rule will be abolished from October 1989.

Employment in the United Kingdom has risen by almost 3 million since March 1983, to the highest level ever. Unemployment throughout the United Kingdom has fallen over 33 consecutive months by over 1·25 million from its July 1986 peak, which is the longest and largest continuous fall since the second world war. The unemployment rate is now well below the European Community average. It has fallen in all regions of the country, with the biggest falls having occurred in the west midlands and Wales. The number of long-term unemployed (ie, those unemployed for more than a year) in the United Kingdom fell by a record half a million in the two years to January 1989. Unemployment among the under-25s has also been falling very sharply, and is now much lower than in most other European Community countries.

Changes in employment legislation and measures to assist labour mobility have improved the operation of the labour market. Many restrictions on the employment of women have been lifted.

The Government's policies have helped the small firms sector to grow rapidly and to make a substantial contribution to employment and wealth creation. Between 1982 and 1984, about 1 million jobs were created by self employment and by firms employing fewer than 20 employees. Between 1980 and 1986, the number of small firms grew by around 500 per week. In 1987, this figure increased to nearly 900 per week. Self-employment has increased by more than 50 per cent. since 1979 to 3 million as of June 1988. The number of self-employed women has more than doubled in the same period.

The Government's small firms service continues to provide professional advice and support to small firms. The enterprise allowance scheme has helped some 430,000 people in Great Britain to set up in business on their own. In addition, the Government have helped to create a network of 400 local enterprise agencies throughout the United Kingdom to encourage the development of small firms.

The employment service has continued to build on the opportunities for delivering practical and positive help to get unemployed people back to work. In the year to March 1989, the employment service placed 1·9 million people into jobs, of whom 1·5 million had been unemployed. In the same period, some 2·2 million personal interviews were carried out under restart, almost 90 per cent. of them resulting in an offer of positive help from the range of opportunities available, including job clubs and employment training. New client advisers have been introduced into all full-time unemployment benefit offices and offer positive help to the newly unemployed to get them back into jobs as quickly as possible. The employment service has continued to treat as a priority the need to ensure that benefits are properly paid to those who are entitled to them and not to others.

The Government have revolutionised vocational education and training for young people through the technical and vocational education initiative and two-year youth training scheme. TVEI is now a national scheme covering all education authorities. Over 2 million young people have had vocational training under YTS, and a wide range of courses leading towards a vocational qualification is available to all 16 and 17-year-old school leavers. All young people not going into a job or staying in full time education are guaranteed a place on YTS until their 18th birthday.

The Government have successfully introduced employment training, the major new programme for longer-term unemployed people. Over 180,000 people are already training on the programme after just eight months of the programme's operation. The Government have guaranteed the offer of a place on employment training or on the enterprise allowance scheme or in a job club to all those aged between 18 and 24 who have been unemployed for between six and 12 months and also aim to provide a place on employment training for those over 24 who have been unemployed for two years or more.

The Government launched a new service—known as business growth training—last month which will help companies to use training more effectively to improve their performance and their profits. The Government are setting up a network of training and enterprise councils. TECs will contract with Government to plan and deliver training and promote and support the development of small businesses and self-employment within their areas. A national training task force has been set up to assist the Secretary of State for Employment to develop the TECs and to promote greater investment by employers in the skills of the workforce.

Legislation has been passed to protect members against abuses of trade union power, to extend their rights to influence the affairs of their unions, and to restore the balance in industrial relations between managements and unions. In particular, secondary action and secondary

picketing have been made unlawful, all statutory support for the closed shop has been removed, and unions have been required to hold ballots before strike action.

The European Community's objective of completing the single market by the end of 1992 has the Government's strong support. Good progress has been made with around 275 single market measures agreed since 1985. To ensure that all businesses in every part of the country are fully prepared to take advantage of the opportunities the single market will bring, the Government launched a major campaign in 1988. As a result, over 90 per cent. of business men are now aware of the significance of 1992 and around 50 per cent. of British business is already taking action or considering steps to prepare for the single market.

The Government have launched the enterprise initiative, with the objective of helping business to acquire the skills and information they need to compete effectively. Since the launch of the initiative in January 1988, over 25,000 applications have been received by DTI for consultancy assistance, with demand spread throughout Britain.

The Government have also launched the export initiative which is aimed at improving the quality and delivery of export services through closer partnership with the private sector, with particular emphasis on helping small and medium-sized firms to obtain expert professional advice on exporting.

The balance of regional policy has been changed so that the Government's enterprise policies are properly reflected in the regions. The Government have encouraged greater competition throughout the economy.

The emphasis of the Government's financial support for industry has shifted to industrial innovation. Support has been concentrated on collaborative research programmes, including the LINK scheme which brings together academic and industrial researchers, and the EUREKA initiative for collaborative research in Europe. Thirteen LINK programmes have been announced.

The Financial Services Act established a statutory framework for self-regulation of the financial services industry in the interests of investor protection, under the Securities and Investments Board and a number of self-regulatory organisations. The operation of the Act has been kept under review and the Government are taking steps to make further improvements in the self-regulatory regime following recent consultations.

The Government have been active to strengthen safeguards against fraud and to ensure that the probity of our financial institutions is maintained without undermining their competitiveness. The Companies Acts 1980 and 1981 strengthened the powers of investigation and the court's powers to disqualify directors for misconduct; and made insider dealing a criminal offence.

The Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, which will come into force later this year, provides a major and comprehensive reform of intellectual property rights. It takes into account the immense technological changes since the 1956 Copyright Act which it will supersede. It will introduce important new rights, such as design right, and provide the appropriate balance between the protection of intellectual property and the needs of those who use the products of creativity.

The Government have responded positively to new developments in radio technology by licensing companies to provide major new services such as cellular radio, which has accumulated over half a million subscribers in the last four years. More recently, the Government have agreed to licence consortia to operate the telepoint public cordless telephone services.

The Government have continued to work to lift the burdens placed on business by regulations and bureaucracy. A third White Paper on deregulation, "Releasing Enterprise" which was published last year recorded some 120 further achievements in 1987-88 and made some 80 proposals for further action, which are being followed up.

The Government strongly supported the launch of the Uruguay round of multilateral trade negotiations, which took place in 1986 during the United Kingdom presidency. This year it contributed to the successful completion of the round's mid-term review.

The Government have stepped up their attack on urban decay and have given priority to ensuring that inner city residents benefit from growing national prosperity.

We have established 10 urban development corporations in England and one in Wales, which are succeeding in enlisting massive private sector resources in urban regeneration.

The "Action for Cities" initiative, launched in March 1988, brought together a wide range of Government programmes to improve the business environment, encourage further private sector involvement, and improve the quality of life in the inner cities.

The total Government commitment to the "Action for Cities" programmes, which in 1988-89 was around £3 billion, will reach nearly £3·5 billion in 1989-90. Developments since March 1988 include: meetings have been held for local business men and women in cities around the country to encourage them to become involved in regenerating their areas; 30 school-employer compacts are being set up and a further 10 are planned; 20 city technology colleges are being established; three new inner-city task forces have been announced; city grant has attracted over £100 million of private investment to inner city areas; 14 safer cities projects are being established; a broad range of help is being given to developing better sport, arts and leisure facilities and improving the inner city environment; and major improvements in the infrastructure are taking place.

Government policies on taxation and licensing helped to make 1988 the best year for drilling activities in the North sea since exploration began in 1964. The Government are holding the 11th offshore licensing round; 125 applications have been received, making this the second most successful round ever. The oil industry's response confirms the recovery of confidence in the United Kingdom continental shelf.

The Government's policies have also fostered the growth of the United Kingdom offshore supplies industry. In 1988, the total value of orders reported by operators for oil and gas development work was £2·5 billion, 35 per cent. up on 1987.

Productivity of deep mine coal production is now 85 per cent. higher than it was in 1978-79, and is up by 70 per cent. from 1984 levels. In the week ending 25 March 1989, national output per man shift rose to a new record of 4·62 tonnes.

The Government's renewable energy research programme has made substantial progress. In 1988, details of the research strategy up to the year 2000 were published in energy paper 55, and measures to encourage the development of renewable energy were included in the Bills for privatising the electricity supply and water industries.

Domestic gas now costs less in real terms than in 1970, while the price of electricity for domestic consumers has gone down by 12 per cent. in the last five years.

Since the publication of the White Paper "Privatising Electricity" in February 1988, the Government have introduced legislation to reorganise and privatise the electricity supply industry; it has published the licences by which the industry will be regulated; and it has developed plans for the flotation of the industry in England, Wales and Scotland. Substantial progress has been made in reorganising the industry and the Government intend that the new structure will be ready for vesting in the successor companies once Parliament approves the Electricity Bill.

Since 1979, productivity per person has increased by over 53 per cent. in agriculture and almost 38 per cent. in the food and drink manufacturing industry. Prices of food to consumers have risen more slowly than the general price level. Exports of food, feed and alcoholic beverages have almost doubled since 1979.

Reform of the common agricultural policy, to tackle the problems of burgeoning expenditure and surplus production, was significantly advanced by the agreement at the European Council in February 1988 on the application of budgetary discipline to the CAP, notably through the introduction of a legally binding ceiling on CAP market support expenditure, and the introduction or extension of stabilisers in CAP commodity regimes. Stabilisers, which link full levels of support to predetermined quantities of production, and provide for reductions in support if those quantities are exceeded, are intended to act as a disincentive to surplus production and thus to help bring supply and demand into better balance. In 1988-89, stabilisers were triggered in many sectors and are resulting in significant price cuts. The process of CAP reform was pursued in the price fixing settlements in 1988 and 1989, when common prices were generally frozen and intervention was made less attractive. In January 1989, the beef regime was reformed.

The Government have taken many steps to safeguard the position of United Kingdom farmers. Significant green pound devaluations, which considerably improve the competitiveness of United Kingdom agriculture, and which are agreed steps towards the completion of the internal market, were agreed at each of the last two price settlements. The suckler cow premium and expenditure on hill livestock compensatory allowances have been increased.

The Government have introduced further schemes designed to achieve a better balance between agricultural production and the environment, to aid farm diversification and alternative land use, and to encourage farming practices that are beneficial to the landscape and to the conservation of wildlife.

The set-aside cheme, introduced in 1988, provides incentives for the reduction of surplus arable production, while keeping the land which has been set aside in good heart.

The farm woodland scheme is designed to encourage the planting of trees on land previously in agricultural production.

We have established 19 environmentally sensitive areas in the United Kingdom, where payments are made to encourage environmentally beneficial agricultural practices.

Since 1979, a considerable shift in the focus of capital grants has taken place; they are now concentrated more on investments which prevent pollution by farm operations and which help to conserve the landscape and to protect its flora and fauna. The farm and conservation grant scheme, introduced in February 1989, offers grants of 50 per cent for effluent facilities and also grants for a wide range of conservation activities.

The sale, supply and use of pesticides has been brought under statutory control to ensure use in relation to operators, consumers and the environment.

The Government have continued to take action where necessary under the Food Act to safeguard the nation's food supply on the best scientific advice available.

We operate a comprehensive food monitoring and investigative system under the auspicies of the steering group on food surveillance. We have also set up a committee under the chairmanship of Sir Mark Richmond to make recommendations on the microbiological safety of food.

In order to ensure that our legislation can meet the challenge of modern food technology, the Government have also engaged in extensive consultation with industry, enforcement and consumer interests as part of a review of existing food legislation, with a view to legislating as soon as the parliamentary timetable permits.

The United Kingdom has played a full part in negotiating the directives which form part of the Community's single market programme for harmonising food law. These will remove barriers to trade and benefit both consumers and industry.

In 1979 we set up the Farm Animal Welfare Council which has given us independent and authoritative advice. We have banned veal crates and various mutilations; introduced new legislation on battery hens and on poultry transport and slaughter; and produced on-farm codes for all the major species.

After protracted and difficult negotiations, the Government secured a European Community common fisheries policy settlement in 1983 on terms very favourable to the United Kingdom. Conservation, control and structural measures have all been strengthened as part of that settlement and subsequently. The Salmon Act 1986 strengthened powers to deal with illegal fishing and made improvements in the conservation and management of salmon.

Controls to ensure the protection of the marine environment have been strengthened, and substantial reductions have been achieved in the levels of contaminants in material licensed for disposal at sea.

In the field of transport, the Government have pursued policies designed to ensure that Britain's growing transport needs are met safely, efficiently and with proper respect for the environment.

British Airways and the British Airports Authority have been privatised. The Government have authorised the development of Stansted as London's third airport, encouraged the development of airport facilities in the regions, improved the management of the main local authority airports by transferring them to companies and banned the noisiest aircraft from operating at British airports. The Government have taken steps, domestically and internationally, to intensify aviation security and to increase air traffic control capacity. The Government have strengthened competition on international air routes by negotiating more liberal bilateral arrangements. The Government have secured agreement to packages of

liberalisation measures for aviation, shipping and road haulage within the European Community as a first step towards the completion of the internal transport market.

Local bus services outside London have been deregulated. This has resulted in greater competition between operators, the introduction of new types of bus services, and lower costs and subsidies, as well as an increase in the overall provision of bus mileage. The privatisation of the National Bus Company was completed well ahead of schedule, and about half of its subsidiaries were bought by their own managers or employees.

British Rail has been given objectives for improving the quality of its services and for increasing its efficiency through reduced subsidy. In 1987-88, passenger revenue was at the highest level since nationalisation, and British Rail expanded its ambitious investment programme to secure improved services, whilst achieving their target for reduction of public subsidy. The Government have commissioned studies of the requirement for new railway lines in London and have backed a major programme of investment by London Underground, including £700 million to upgrade the Central line and £266 million to implement new safety measures in the wake of the King's Cross fire.

The Government have involved the private sector in the funding of transport projects, for example the Channel tunnel and the Dartford-Thurrock bridge. A recently published Green Paper seeks views on the Government's proposals to facilitate private sector investment in new roads.

The Government have taken measures to encourage the employment of British seafarers aboard British ships. Numerous measures have also been taken to improve ferry safety following the Zeebrugge disaster. The Government have privatised the British Transport Docks Board and have reformed the marine pilotage system.

In England, capital investment in trunk roads has increased by 60 per cent. in real terms since 1979. Some 900 miles of new and improved motorways and other trunk roads have been completed, including 98 new bypasses. The Government have carried out a major review of Britain's trunk road and motorway requirements and have published a White Paper providing for an increase from £5 billion to £12 billion in expenditure on the roads programme. The Government are supporting 360 major local authority road schemes, most of which are aimed at bypassing local communities or relieving them of traffic. The Government's continuing concentration on road and vehicle safety measures has given the United Kingdom the best overall road accident record in the European Community. In 1988, deaths on Britain's roads were the lowest since 1954, despite a fourfold increase in traffic in the same period. The aim is to reduce casualties by one third by the year 2000.

Government expenditure on social security is now at its highest level ever both in cash and real terms. Spending on social security is up by 33 per cent. in real terms from £16·4 billion in 1978-79 to a planned £51·3 billion, almost £1 billion a week, in 1989-90. Between 1978-79 and 1988-89, spending on long-term sick and disabled people has increased by about £3·5 billion in real terms, a real increase of 90 per cent.; total expenditure on benefits for the elderly has gone up by 24 per cent. in real terms; and the real value of family support has risen by 27 per cent. from £6·7 billion to £8·5 billion.

Social security is a major service industry. The Government have long been concerned to improve the quality of service. The reform of social security benefits has contributed to this process by introducing a structure of benefits which is easier to understand and to administer. Our massive computerisation programme will deliver benefits more accurately and more quickly. The relocation of some "backroom" work from some London offices will relieve the pressure on those offices and improve the speed and quality of service to the public in London. Plans have been announced for the running of social security operations as an executive agency or agencies, and for a definition of service. In addition, work is considerably advanced on other initiatives including improved training for staff, in-house style for our premises and a revised management structure which gives local managers greater authority to respond flexibly to the needs of their own local public.

The Government's restructured system of income-related benefits was implemented in 1988 and has enabled us to pursue our policy of targeting help more effectively on those groups most in need. Many low-income families have gained from the introduction of income support, which has proved to be simpler—both to understand and administer—than its predecessor, supplementary benefit. Since its introduction, the Government have been able to use the social fund to provide effective and flexible help, with over 150,000 community care grants to vulnerable people and nearly 900,000 interest-free loans with a combined total expenditure of £166 million in the first year.

A quarter of a million families are now receiving family credit—the benefit for people in work—with average payments of £25 a week. In the first 12 months alone, spending on family credit was about £400 million, which is twice the amount spent on its predecessor, family income supplement. The simpler housing benefit scheme operates more fairly and treats people alike whether in work or not.

This year the Government added an extra 50p a week to the child allowances in income support, family credit and housing benefit adding a further £70 million to expenditure over and above the prices uprating in April. This ensured that families receiving these benefits saw a substantial increase in real terms which they would not have experienced had this money been channelled into child benefit. Child benefit goes to all families regardless of income and any increase in it does not benefit families on income support and family credit, as it is offset in their income-related benefit. From this April, the Government are therefore directing about £200 million extra to the greater benefit of some 3 million children in low income families. From October this year, employees' national insurance contributions will be reformed, and the main disincentive effects of the current system will be removed.

The Government's economic success has enabled pensioners' average incomes to grow by 23 per cent. in real terms over the period 1979 to 1986, and the Government have met their pledge to maintain the real value of the state retirement pension, which is now being paid to one million more pensioners than in 1979, at a cost of over £20 billion this year. The Government have also announced that, from October this year, just under £200 million extra has been set aside for poorer pensioners, through the income support and housing benefit schemes. In all, about 2·6 million pensioners are expected to benefit from this increased expenditure. The abolition of the earnings rule

for pensioners from 1 October 1989 will give more choice and flexibility for older people who want to carry on working.

An objective of the Government has been to encourage the spread of occupational and personal pensions, and to give people more choice in how to provide for their retirement. In 1985, the Government gave everyone leaving an employment scheme the right to a fair transfer value to a new employer's scheme or to buy a deferred annuity. The Government also gave members rights to all the information they need to take decisions about their pension. 1988 saw significant changes in the arrangements for pensions: from April 1988, contracting-out of SERPs was made easier and July saw the introduction of the new choice of personal pensions. More than 2 million people have already taken advantage of this opportunity to plan for their retirement by applying for a personal pension.

In England spending on the Health Service is up by 40 per cent. in real terms, from £6·5 billion in 1978-79 to £21·1 billion now. There are over 12,400 more doctors and dentists and over 53,000 more nurses and midwives. Capital spending has increased from £373 million to more than £1·2 billion. Some 300 health building schemes, each worth over £1 million have been started and completed and 500 further schemes are at various stages of planning, design and construction with 140 due to be completed in the next three years. Over 1·25 million more in-patient cases are now being dealt with each year, making a total of more tham 6·5 million.

General managers throughout the Health Service are providing energetic and innovative leadership through speedier and more incisive decision making. Health authorities are continuing to improve efficiency and their cost improvement programmes have yielded savings worth over £700 million in the past five years. New cost improvements in 1989-90 are expected to yield around a further £150 million.

The Government have set up an independent review body to recommend on nurses' pay. All six of the review body's reports, including the 1989 report, have been implemented, since 1979, nurses will have received on average a 44 per cent. real term increase in their pay.

A number of initiatives have been taken to improve the health and wellbeing of the population. We are the world leaders in introducing a breast cancer screening service and the first country within the European Community to have a comprehensive cervical cancer screening service based on computerised call and recall. Considerable progress has been made on improving the uptake of childhood immunisation and last October, the mumps, measles and rubella programme was announced which marks the most significant change in immunisation policy in the past 20 years. The Government have developed a comprehensive strategy in response to the threat of AIDS and have taken, and will continue to take, all necessary measures to prevent and contain the spread of the virus.

Waiting lists are now some 8 per cent. lower than in 1979. Districts with waiting list problems have been targeted with Government funding of £86 million in England to tackle waiting list black spots. This funding will allow treatment of some 300,000 more in-patients and day patients and 200,000 out-patients by the end of the current financial year.

In social services, there have been increases in places in training centres and community homes for mentally handicapped people. There are more home help staff, more social work staff, more places in day centres for elderly people, and more places in residential and nursing homes.

The White Paper "Working For Patients" set out proposals for the most far reaching changes in the history of the NHS. The aim is to build on its record of achievement to provide even better service for patients and to raise the performance of all hospitals and GP practices to that of the best. This will be achieved through the introduction of measures designed to delegate responsibility and to promote patient choice.

The Government have secured the agreement of the profession's negotiators on the basis for a contract for GPs. This new contract will introduce health promotion and illness prevention as major objectives of service provision and will relate GPs pay more closely to their performances.

Since 1979, substantial progress has been made in reforming the structure and financial basis of local authorities to make them more accountable and responsive to the needs of their local electorates, and to give better value for money in the provision of local services. The structure of local government in England has been simplified and improved with the abolition of an unnecessary tier of government in Greater London and the metropolitan areas. The Audit Commission for England and Wales was established in 1983 and has already made great progress in identifying opportunities for improving value for money in local government, some of which are beginning to show results. Legislation on competition is ensuring that local authorities in Great Britain subject the provision of an increasing range of their services to the discipline of competitive tendering.

The Widdicombe committee on the conduct of local authority business identified a number of measures needed to improve local authority procedures and avoid abuses, and the Government are now legislating to implement many of the key recommendations. Measures on local government finance have restrained the growth of local authority expenditure in Great Britain, particularly in some of the more extravagant high-spending authorities. The Local Government Finance Act 1988 makes provision for the abolition of domestic rates in England and Wales and their replacement by a fairer and more broadly based community charge from 1 April 1990. The same Act includes provisions to remedy the uneven burden of non-domestic rates on businesses through the establishment of a nationally determined uniform business rate.

In housing, the Government introduced the first statutory charter of rights for public sector tenants including the right to buy. Since then, over 1 million tenants in Great Britain have bought their homes. The stock of owner occupied dwellings in Britain has increased by 3 million; more people own their homes than ever before; and 65 per cent. of all dwellings are owner-occupied. There has been a net increase in the stock as a whole of about 1·8 million, more than enough to keep pace with the growth in the number of households over the period.

The Government's estate action programme has helped local authorities with over 200 schemes on rundown council estates in England. A scheme of assistance has been introduced for owners of defective houses previously in the public sector throughout Great Britain, and good

progress has been made. Measures have been introduced to strengthen the rights of leaseholders living in private blocks of flats.

The Housing Act 1988 aims to broaden the choice open to tenants and to encourage more private investment in housing in England and Wales; it deregulates rents in the independent rented sector; provides the basis for an expansion of the housing association movement; allows for the establishment of housing action trusts in some of the most rundown areas of local authority housing; and provides all secure local authority tenants with the opportunity to transfer to new landlords approved by the Housing Corporation.

The Local Government and Housing Bill now before Parliament maintains this progress: it introduces a new capital finance system permitting allocations to local authorities to be better tailored to need, a new housing subsidy system designed to impose better financial discipline, and provisions for targeting renovation grants on housing most in need of improvement and people most in need of assistance.

The Government have created a unified inspectorate of pollution for England and Wales with a remit to develop an integrated approach to pollution control. Following a successful initiative in Europe to bring to an end the addition of lead to petrol, the maximum lead content of petrol has been cut by 60 per cent., and a reduction in duty has made unleaded petrol some 10p a gallon cheaper than leaded four-star. Unleaded petrol is now available at over 7,700 sites, and use of the fuel doubled last month to 14 per cent. Following the successful London conference on the protection of the ozone layer, the signatories of the Montreal protocol to the Vienna convention have agreed to phase out the production and consumption of the CFCs controlled by the protocol as soon as possible, and not later than 2000.

The Government have taken steps to reduce the pollution of our rivers, estuaries and beaches. The Water Bill now before Parliament will establish a National Rivers Authority, strengthen the legal framework for ensuring water quality standards and establish a system of price regulation and consumer protection for the water industry. In 1987, the United Kingdom chaired the North sea conference, which produced an important package of measures to safeguard and enhance the quality of the North sea. We are applying the measures agreed to all our seas.

The Government have made substantial progress in securing the future of the natural heritage. In Great Britain over 5,000 sites of special scientific interest have been notified or renotified as part of the implementation of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981; this process is now 85 per cent complete. In addition, 33 special protection areas have been designated throughout the United Kingdom under the European birds directive, and 40 wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar convention.

The Government have been active in improving the care and management of our national heritage. We have established two powerful new forces for conservation—the National Heritage Memorial Fund in 1980 and the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission (English Heritage) in 1984. A major resurvey of listed buildings in England is virtually complete.

The Government have taken a wide range of steps to simplify and improve the planning system and to speed up its operation, while protecting and enhancing the environment in town and country. The area of approved green belt in England has more then doubled since 1979; the annual acreage of agricultural land taken for development in England and Wales in the 1980s is less than one third of the levels seen in the 1960s and early 1970s; and nearly one half of land for new housing development in England is either redeveloped land or vacant land within urban areas.

After a period of stagnation, the construction industry has enjoyed a seven year period of sustained growth. In 1988, output—at £40 billion in cash terms—was its highest ever.

The Government have maintained central support for arts activities, and have introduced a number of measures to encourage greater self-reliance among arts institutions. There has been a significant upsurge in business sponsorship—the Government's business sponsorship incentive scheme has brought nearly £25 million of new money into the arts in five years. Major progress has been made with the building of the new British Library at St. Pancras and there have been major expansion schemes at some national museums and galleries, including the Clore gallery at the Tate, the new Tate gallery in Liverpool, the national gallery's Sainsbury wing, the theatre museum at the V and A, and the redevelopment of the imperial war museum.

The Government have continued their policies to improve all aspects of the education system in England and Wales; a new 16-plus examination system, the GCSE, has been introduced, as have the new AS-levels which will broaden studies for 16 to 18-year-olds. The technical and vocational education initiative is augmenting practical elements in the 14 to 18 curriculum. In higher education, record numbers of students were admitted last year and plans are being taken forward to continue the shift towards science and engineering and other key subjects for our continuing economic success. The Education Reform Act 1988 sets a new course for the future. The national curriculum is being introduced from this September; assessment and testing are being taken forward; more open enrolment and new types of school will widen the choice of schools open to parents; local management of schools and colleges is being introduced; the new polytechnic and colleges sector of high education has been established; university funding arrangements have been reformed.

The Government have increased support to the science base in response to the recommendations from the Advisory Board for the Research Councils. There has been a parallel withdrawal of funds from 'near-market" research, which is judged to be properly the responsibility of industry.

Since May 1979, the Government have increased the number of police officers in England and Wales by nearly 14,000 to over 125,000 and the number of civilians supporting the police by about 8,000 to over 42,500. Expenditure has been increased by about 55 per cent. in real terms over the same period, and the Government continue to work closely with the service to ensure that these resources are used to the best possible effect. The powers of the police to deal with public disorder have been strengthened. Over 66,000 neighbourhood watch schemes are now in operation in Great Britain. Fourteen cities are involved in the safer cities programme to reduce crime and the fear of crime. The new national crime prevention programme organisation Crime Concern has been

established and is working with the police, other public agencies and private business to develop and encourage crime prevention activity. An independent Crown prosecution service is now in operation throughout England and Wales. Twenty-four senior and 34 junior attendance centres have been opened.

The largest prison building programme this century is under way. Out of a total of 28 new prisons planned for England and Wales, eight are already open and the remainder are at various stages of planning and construction. A major programme of refurbishment and modernisation is in progress. New staff working practices have been introduced. The number of uniformed prison officers in England and Wales has been increased by 45 per cent. and the ratio of staff to inmates improved.

Measures have been taken to ensure that the terms of imprisonment served by violent offenders fully reflect society's abhorrence of their crimes. Government assistance to the victims' support movement has been greatly expanded: £11 million will be provided over the next three financial years to help local schemes. The Government have continued to develop an overall strategy for countering drug misuse and illicit trafficking. The national drugs intelligence unit has been created and strengthened. Seventeen drugs wings, with an additional 229 officers to man them, have been added to the regional crime squads in England and Wales to target major drug traffickers. The Video Recordings Act has brought "video nasties" under control.

Legislation has also been put through for data protection; to provide more rigorous control of animal experimentation; to provide a framework for the development of broadcasting by satellite and cable television (including the establishment of the Welsh fourth channel); to set out a new framework for police powers, for providing safeguards for the citizen and for handling complaints against the police; to control the possession and sale of alcohol in connection with football matches; to provide for the establishment of the serious fraud office, now in operation, and to make other improvements in the investigation, prosecution and trial of fraud offences; to provide comprehensive new powers to investigate, restrain and confiscate the proceeds of drug trafficking, where the Government are working for international agreements to make such powers more generally effective; to improve controls on the possession of firearms and shotguns; to remove outdated restrictions in liquor licensing law; to enable the United Kingdom to participate more effectively in the international fight against crime, including a major reform of extradition law; to make provision for courts to order the confiscation of the proceeds of profitable crime; to provide for unduly lenient sentences to be reviewed; to create a statutory right for the victims of crime to receive compensation; to tighten the law on possession of knives and to ban the sale of offensive weapons which have no legitimate use; to strengthen the jury system; to reform the law on official secrets by replacing section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911 with provisions protecting just six classes of official information; to make provision for the interception of communications, sent by means of post or by means of public telecommunications systems, with the appointment of a commissioner and provision for complaints to an independent tribunal; and to put the Security Service on a statutory basis with the appointment of a commissioner and provision for complaints to an independent tribunal.

The Government have played a major role in developing international co-operation in the fight against terrorism and have strengthened police powers under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. We continue our policy of fair but firm immigration control. The Immigration Act 1988 corrected a number of weaknesses in the existing legislation.

Proposals for new broadcasting legislation designed to promote greater choice and competition without detriment to programme standards and quality have recently been published in the White Paper "Broadcasting in the 1990s".

The Government have continued the reform of family law; have legislated to remove the legal disadvantages of children born outside marriage; and have brought schemes into effect to combat the evils of child abduction both within the United Kingdom and throughout the world. The Government have introduced the Children Bill which provides a single, coherent code covering the care and upbringing of children. It will enable steps to be taken towards a single integrated jurisdiction over all types of children's cases and will facilitate procedural reforms.

The Government have embarked on a programme of reforms in the administration of civil justice in England and Wales which will improve access to justice for the public by speeding up, simplifying and reducing the cost of civil proceedings.

The Legal Aid Act 1988 established a board to administer the legal aid scheme and to ensure that it operates as efficiently and effectively as possible. The Legal Aid Board assumed these functions on 1 April 1989.

The Government have simplified conveyancing, extended the areas in which titles have to be registered, and have continued the major programme of the simplification and consolidation of our statute law.

A substantial increase in resources has enabled the capability of the armed forces to be strengthened. The Government played their full part in implementing the NATO twin-track decision to modernise intermediate-range nuclear weapons while seeking to achieve an arms control agreement, and this policy has been vindicated by the intermediate-range nuclear forces treaty. Increased efficiency is being pursued by the continuing transfer of resources from the support areas to the front line, and by introducing increased competition in defence contracts and promoting collaboration with our international partners. Major reorganisation of the headquarters structure of the Ministry of Defence has been introduced.

The Government have maintained Britain's firm commitment to national defence and the NATO Alliance. At the same time, the Government have worked determinedly for a more stable security relationship between East and West, seeking verifiable reductions in nuclear and conventional weapons and a global ban on chemical weapons. The Government have been active in building up, and setting priorities for, an East-West dialogue on arms control.

The Government played a leading role in the Stockholm conference on European arms control which was successfully concluded in September 1986, and give full support to our United States allies in their successful negotiations with the USSR over INF. British Ministers and representatives have placed an active part in the preparation and conduct of the two sets of talks recently started in Vienna.

The Government have worked consistently to strengthen the Western European Union as part of their effort to promote closer European defence co-operation. Britain presided over the accession to the organisation last year of Spain and Portugal.

The Government have also consistently sought greater East-West co-operation in the settlement of regional conflicts. They maintained steady pressure for the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan. They are now pursuing an active dialogue with the Soviet Union on other regional issues.

The Government have worked vigorously to ensure that human rights are fully respected in Eastern Europe. The Government played an active part in the successful conclusion to the Vienna meeting of the conference on security and co-operation in Europe, which closed in January with substantive new agreements on human rights. The Government have also encouraged steps towards economic and political reform in the eastern countries.

Within the European Community, the Government reached agreement at Fontainebleu in 1984 that the United Kingdom should pay a fairer share of the EC budget. In the United Kingdom presidency of 1986, and at the Brussels European Council in February 1988, the Government secured major reforms of the common agricultural policy, including a binding ceiling on agricultural spending and an automatic cost-cutting regime for all commodities.

The Government have helped to establish the completion of the single European market by 1992 as the Community's top priority. They have worked consistently to ensure that this market will be as free as possible from internal barriers and regulation and will be open to the outside world, in order to encourage competition, enterprise and efficiency and to increase commercial opportunities for British industry. The Government have championed liberalising measures in Europe, such as freer movement consistent with national security; mutual recognition of professional qualifications; abolition of exchange controls; and cheaper air fares. In the GATT and other international economic forums, the Government have worked to strengthen the open world economic system, including through the current Uruguay round.

The Government supported the entry of Greece, Spain and Portugal into the Community, in order to strengthen their democracy and prosperity, and to reinforce NATO. The Government have actively promoted close EC political co-operation, including the initiative for the provisions in the Single European Act, which put this co-operation on a treaty basis for the first time.

Rhodesia was brought to legal independence as the Republic of Zimbawe in 1980. The Government resolutely upheld and continue to defend the right of the Falkland islanders to live in peace under a Government of their own choosing. An agreement with China about the future of Hong Kong was ratified in 1985 and good progress has since been made with its implementation. The Gibraltar border has been reopened and the Government have established a negotiating framework with Spain aimed at overcoming differences over the rock.

The Government have maintained their commitment to the Commonwealth. With our Commonwealth and European partners, the Government have worked towards ending apartheid in South Africa by peaceful means. We have extended significant assistance to black communities within South Africa. The Government have also worked to strengthen the security and stability of South Africa's neighbours through the provision of substantial development assistance and military training.

At the United Nations and elsewhere, the Government have supported the rule of international law, peaceful settlement of disputes, and respect for human rights. Through the Armilla patrol, Britain has fulfilled its long-standing commitment to protect merchant shipping in the Gulf. As one of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, Britain made a significant contribution to the initiation and adoption of Resolution 598 on the Iran/Iraq conflict and the subsequent ceasefire last year. The Government have been active in developing closer co-operation between the Five on this and other issues, such as Namibia. The Government have supported the successful United States-led negotiations on Namibia's future; and the role of the United Nations in bringing the territory peacefully to independence. The Government have also worked for financial and administrative reform in the United Nations.

The Government have promoted international co-operation to combat terrorism and drug-trafficking. With the World Health Organisation, the Government organised the 1988 London summit of Ministers of Health on programmes for AIDS prevention. The Government have also been in the forefront of international efforts to protect the environment. With the United Nations environment programme, the Government organised the recent London international conference on saving the ozone layer.

The Government have maintained a substantial and effective aid programme, totalling over £12·5 billion in the period 1979-88. While the bulk of our bilateral aid has been focused on the poorest countries, the Government have provided long-term help to nearly 130 developing countries. The Government have responded swiftly and generously to appeals for emergency aid to sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere and have taken the lead in promoting measures to relieve sub-Saharan African countries of their official debts.

The White Paper "Scottish Enterprise" put forward proposals to integrate the functions of the Scottish Development Agency and the Training Agency into a single body, Scottish Enterprise, and to provide training and to promote enterprise through a network of employer-led local agencies responding directly to local needs.

Unemployment in Scotland has fallen in 24 of the past 25 months and by 90,000 since January 1987. Manufacturing productivity in Scotland increased by 5·4 per cent. per annum between 1979 and 1989. Between June 1983 and June 1988 the civilian workforce in employment increased by 106,000; and in 1988 alone the increase was 66,000. The number of self-employed increased by 66,000 between June 1981 and June 1988, compared with virtually no change in the three decades to 1981.

In 1988, there was a net growth of over 3,400 in company registrations in Scotland. Between 1 January 1980 and 1 January 1988, the number of companies registered in Scotland increased by some 20,000, or by over a half. Between 1979 and 1989, the output of the Scottish electronics industry increased by a factor of 3·7.

Inward investment planned by companies since the inception of the Government's Locate in Scotland

programme totals some £3 billion and is associated with the intended creation or safeguarding of 60,000 jobs; the final employment outcome is, on past experience, likely to be about two thirds of the planned level.

Expenditure by the Highlands and Islands Development Board in 1988-89 was £42 million, 5·5 per cent. higher in real terms than in 1979-80. The success of the Highlands and Islands Development Board is indicated by an estimated 1 per cent. increase in the area's population since 1981. The Government have successfully maintained the area's eligibility for support from European Community structured funds and have obtained agreement to a programme of European Community support of £73 million to assist development of the area's infrastructure.

1988-89 saw the largest ever single project in a Scottish new town come on stream, with investment of over £200 million by Kymmene Stromberg in the new Caledonian paper mill in Irvine. Take-up of industrial space in all five towns was at an all-time high and private sector investment in both industry and housing continued to rise to record new levels.

Owner-occupation among Scots has increased significantly, from 35 per cent. to over 44 per cent. A major contribution to this increase has been the 150,000 tenants who have bought their homes from the public sector landlord under the right to buy legislation introduced in 1980, or through voluntary sales. The Housing (Scotland) Act 1988 introduced a statutory right for public sector tenants to transfer to new landlords approved by Scottish Homes.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 1988 has established a new housing development agency, Scottish Homes. The new agency will play a key role in revitalising Scotland's housing and will promote freedom of choice for tenants. The volume of applications for home improvement and repairs grants has increased substantially. The Government have enabled the number of houses let by housing associations in Scotland to increase sixfold since 1979.

The Government have achieved their objective, on the timetable they originally set, of abolishing domestic rates in Scotland with effect from 1 April this year, and replacing them with a new community charge.

Measures have been taken to speed up the town and country planning system in Scotland to allow the establishment of simplified planning zones and to meet the particular planning requirements of high technology industries, small businesses, private house builders and major retail development. The protection of the landscape and wildlife habitats has been strengthened. Major initiatives have been taken to reform and simplify the building control system to reduce restrictions while maintaining public safeguards. Access for disabled persons to public buildings has been greatly improved by reforms to building regulations.

The deregulation of local bus services in Scotland has been achieved with service levels maintained overall and improvements in many areas. The Government have stimulated innovation through competition while cutting subsidies. We have also introduced legislation to privatise the Scottish Bus Group. Since 1979, over £800 million has been invested in motorways and trunk roads in Scotland. Thirty bypasses, relieving communities of through traffic, have been opened.

Major reforms have been introduced to the education system in Scotland. The Education (Scotland) Act 1981 gave parents the right to choose their children's school, and since then over 140,000 placing requests have been made, with over 93 per cent. of them being successful. That Act also introduced the assisted places scheme to widen educational opportunity and parental choice; 2,660 children benefited from the scheme in 1988-89, and it is now being extended to assist up to 3,000 pupils. The School Boards (Scotland) Act 1988 gave parents in Scotland the opportunity for the first time to become involved in running their children's schools. By the end of October this year, each school in Scotland will have its own board, with a majority of parent members.

The school examination system is being modernised, with the introduction of standard grade and the associated revision of the post-16 examinations. The technical and vocational education initiative is being extended throughout Scotland. Measures are being taken to revise the school curriculum for ages 5-14, to improve the assessment of pupils, including nationally standardised testing in key elements of English and mathematics at ages eight and 12, and to better inform parents of their children's progress. The Self-Governing Schools, etc. (Scotland) Bill, now before Parliament, will enable parents in Scotland to seek self-governing status for schools outside local authority control, and so will expand the educational choice available and improve the standards of educational provision for all. The Bill also provides for the establishment of technology academies, with private sector sponsorship.

The participation rates of young people in higher education has reached the highest ever levels. Radical changes in further education have increased the take-up of vocational training at all levels. The grant-aided higher education colleges have been reconstituted to give them greater freedom and incentives to earn external income and to increase student numbers. The Government-backed Scottish wider access programme has been launched to encourage collaboration between educational institutions to widen access to higher education, and provision has been made for a statutory Scottish committee of the Universities Funding Council.

Police manpower in Scotland has increased, and, in order to release police officers for operational duties, the Government are encouraging civilianisation of posts wherever possible. Increased attention has been devoted to crime prevention.

The Government have intensified the campaign against drug misuse in Scotland. Drug wings have been established in the Scottish crime squad and all eight Scottish police forces now have a specialised drug squad or unit. Since 1979, a total of 60 major hospital developments have been completed in Scotland, providing 6,747 beds and 521 day places. A further 31 schemes are in planning, under construction or being commissioned which will provide a further 3,452 beds. In addition to the public education campaigns on AIDS, the Government have this year made over £12 million available to health boards throughout Scotland in recognition of the extra burdens which AIDS places upon them, including funding for three special AIDS units in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee. The Government have supported several projects for research on HIV infection and AIDS and have provided funding

for studies into the incidence of AIDS in Scotland. In addition, the Government encourage and support voluntary sector initiatives in the AIDS field in Scotland.

Since 1987, £13 million has been allocated to health boards in Scotland for special action to reduce the number of people waiting for treatment and the time they have to wait. In the 18 months to September 1988, the number of people on waiting lists in Scotland fell by around 10 per cent.

With the publication in November 1988 of the SHARPEN report (Scottish health authorities review of priorities for the eighties and nineties) and the booklet "The Scottish Health Service", priorities have been set for the Health Service in Scotland which emphasise the care of the elderly with mental disability; community care of the mentally ill, the mentally handicapped and the elderly; preventive medicine and the younger physically disabled.

Competitive tendering of ancillary services in the NHS in Scotland is expected to release £25 million over the next three to four years from the contracts so far awarded. These savings will be reinvested in direct patient care.

The health capital budget in Scotland is up by one third this year alone, and a substantial part of this increase is due to the incentive which allows health boards to keep all the proceeds of the sale of redundant buildings and land. This year, hospital building will benefit by £25 million from these receipts, more than three times the estimate made before the incentive was introduced. This money will be ploughed back into the Health Service to provide buildings and equipment for patient care.

Special assistance is being made available to farmers in the north of Scotland to help restore floodbanks damaged in the exceptional floods earlier this year.

The Government's commitment to the outlying areas of Scotland is demonstrated by the Western Isles integrated development programme which ended its five-year span in 1987 and provided £56 million to improve socioeconomic conditions in the area, and by the five-year agricultural development programme for the other Scottish islands which started in 1988. This programme provides £38 million to increase the efficiency of agricultural businesses without adding to overall agricultural production.

Five environmentally sensitive areas have been designated in Scotland, under which farmers can receive payments for agreeing to farm in a conservation-friendly way. These areas are in different parts of the country and include the Machair ESA in the crofting area of Scotland. The Government remain fully committed to the expansion of forestry and introduced two new grant schemes—the woodland grant scheme and the farm woodland scheme —in 1988.

The Government's commitment to promote art and culture in Scotland has resulted in major new galleries for the Burrell collection in Glasgow and for modern art in Edinburgh. A new home for the Royal Scottish academy of music and drama was opened in 1988 and the first phase of a new building for the national library of Scotland in Edinburgh will be opened later this year; the second phase will be completed in 1994.

The Government have done more than any previous Administration to secure the future of the Gaelic language. A new specific grants scheme for Gaelic education, designed to improve the quality of Gaelic teaching and curriculum in schools, was introduced in 1986. Grants under the scheme amount to £0·85 million in the current year. In addition, substantially increased resources have been allocated to a range of organisations providing support for Gaelic language and culture.

In Northern Ireland, the Government have pursued the policy of combating terrorism, within the rule of law, by the most effective means available. In the implementation of this policy, the security forces have conducted themselves with great courage and skill; many terrorists have been apprehended, much material has been recovered, and a large number of terrorist operations have been frustrated, which would otherwise have added to the tragic toll of death and suffering.

The Government have continued to implement the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and have used its machinery further to improve security co-operation.

The Government's efforts to find an agreed basis on which greater responsibility can be devolved to the elected representatives of the people of Northern Ireland have continued.

A key objective of Government policy is to regenerate the private sector in Northern Ireland and release the region's potential for economic growth. To this end, the industrial development organisations in Northern Ireland have promoted over 75,000 jobs, while the youth training programme has provided opportunities for an estimated 84,300 entrants with some 32,000 man years of work provided by the action for community employment scheme. At any time, some 29,000 persons are benefiting from a wide range of employment and training resources. Legislation has been introduced to secure equality of opportunity in employment.

Belfast city centre has been revitalised both in terms of housing and commerce. Housing conditions have shown improvement, with a considerable reduction in the level of unfitness and a significant increase in the level of owner occupation.

In July 1988, the Government launched the "making Belfast work" programme designed to address the social, economic and environmental issues in the most disadvantaged area of Belfast. In addition to substantial mainstream programmes, a further £65 million has been made available in the period 1988-89 to 1991-92.

Proposals have been developed, with a view to early implementation, for the reform of the educational system to improve educational standards and for the provision of new opportunities and incentives for existing schools seeking to promote integrated education.

Substantial programmes have been maintained in Northern Ireland for agriculture, health and personal social services, environmental services and social security.

Since the establishment of WINvest in 1983, Wales has secured some 290 inward investment projects from overseas companies promising some 36,000 new or safeguarded jobs and involving almost £2 billion of capital investment. Notable successes include Ford's £700 million investment at Bridgend and Swansea and Bosch's £100 million project at Miskin.

Wales, with 5 per cent. of the United Kingdom's population, achieved, in terms of related new jobs, 20 per cent. of all inward investment into the United Kingdom in 1987 and 22 per cent. in 1988. This compares with 6 per cent. in 1979.

Since 1979, the Government have committed nearly £250 million—at today's prices—to the land reclamation programme in Wales, one of the largest and most

sustained programmes in Europe, and the Welsh Development Agency has constructed over 11·5 million sq ft of factory space, with a job potential of about 35,000.

The success of the Development Board for Rural Wales is indicated by an estimated 4·5 per cent. increase in the population of the area covered by the Board between 1979 and 1987.

Three enterprise zones set up by the Government are located in Wales: at Swansea, Delyn and the Milford Haven waterway. Over 8,500 people are currently employed in these zones, of whom 3,600 are in new jobs.

The Government have supported the rapid spread of local enterprise agencies in Wales, of which there are now 24. Such agencies have had £9·7 million of central Government assistance and they estimate that they have helped to create over 20,000 jobs.

Seasonally adjusted unemployment in Wales has fallen in each of the last 34 consecutive months to a total in April 1989 of 105,000—a fall of 66,900 or 5·3 percentage points from 14·1 per cent. to 8·8 per cent.

The number of self-employed in Wales is currently 148,000—a substantial increase on the 1981 figure.

Since their introduction in 1982, urban development grants of around £37 million have been awarded to 75 projects throughout Wales. These will bring forward a total private sector investment of nearly £173 million. The scheme has now been superseded by a simplified grant mechanism, urban investment grant, which was introduced on 1 April 1989. To date, 180 inquiries have been received and grants of just over £1 million have been awarded on two projects.

As part of the Government's policy for inner cities, the Cardiff Bay development corporation was established in 1987 to regenerate the urban areas of south Cardiff. The corporation has produced a comprehensive regeneration strategy for its area; acquired some 300 acres of land; completed site investigations for major land reclamation schemes; and completed several environmental and community projects. In 1989-90, some £22 million will be made available to the corporation.

In June 1988, the Government launched a three-year programme of action designed to improve economic, environmental and social conditions in the south Wales valleys. Expenditure on key activities involving the promotion of investment, the creation of jobs and environmental improvement in the valleys is expected to total some £500 million over the life of the programme, and to help stimulate private sector investment of around £1 billion. In the first seven months of the programme unemployment in the valleys has fallen faster than elsewhere in Wales, by over 5,000 since the programme was launched. Factory lettings by the Welsh Development Agency in the valleys have been at record levels since the valleys programme was announced, running at two new lettings a week in the first nine month of 1988-89.

The WDA has made great progress in its factory building programme—some 492,500 sq ft of factory space was started in 1988-89, against a target of 450,000 sq ft. The WDA's derelict land clearance programme is well under way and will lead to the clearance of some 2,500 acres over the life of the valleys programme. 3Is (Investors in Industry) now expects to provide over £5 million of venture capital for valleys investments in 1988-89 compared with the earlier forecast of £2·5 million. Welsh Office offers of regional selective assistance and regional development grant made up to the middle of January 1989 have covered projects involving 7,500 new jobs and private investment of £180 million. 21 projects have been supported by the Welsh Development Agency under its valleys small loan scheme.

In addition, the valleys enterprise loan scheme has funded 26 projects at a total cost of £315,500, and the community enterprise scheme has funded 11 projects amounting to £70,000.

Urban programme allocations totalling nearly £18 million for 1989-90 have been directed to the valleys area —over 65 per cent. more than in 1987-88, the year before the valleys programme was launched. The Wales tourist board has launched the first phase of a major new marketing campaign designed to attract more visitors to the valleys. Health services in the valleys have received support, with two new health centres at Blaengwynfi and Gwaun-Cae-Gurwen. Ten more valleys health projects will be funded in 1989-90.

Owner-occupation has increased from 59 per cent. of housing stock in 1979 to 69 per cent. Almost 71,000 public sector dwellings have been sold to their tenants under the right to buy and voluntary terms since 1980, and over 57,000 new homes have been built for sale. Since 1979, over 15,000 dwellings have been provided by housing associations for sale or rent to help people in housing need. Housing for Wales (Tai Cymru) was set up under the Housing Act 1988. Between 1979 and 1986, the proportion of Welsh households lacking basic amenities more than halved and this progress has been continued over the last three years. Over 162,000 home improvement grant schemes for private sector dwellings have been completed since July 1979, with a value of £479 million. In the same period, £446 million has been spent on the renovation of local authority housing stock. Since 1982, over 8,300 dwellings have been improved under enveloping schemes.

Expenditure on the health services in Wales has risen by almost 45 per cent. after allowing for general inflation between 1978-79 and 1989-90. Nearly £700 million at current prices will have been invested in the capital estate of the hospital and community health services in the period April 1979 to March 1990: five major hospitals have been completed with a sixth due for completion before the end of this year. The number of staff directly concerned with patient care has increased by over 21 per cent. since 1979, and 28 per cent. more in-patients and 21 per cent. more out-patients were treated in 1987 than in 1979.

Current expenditure on education in Wales, excluding school meals and milk, was provisionally 10·9 per cent. higher in real terms in 1987-89 than in 1978-79. Pupil numbers dropped by 16·1 per cent. in the same period; and expenditure per nursery/primary pupil rose by over 27 per cent. from £792 to £1,004, and per secondary pupil by over 36 per cent., from £1,090 to £1,488, their best ever levels. The number of students on courses of advanced further education in the public sector rose from 9,000 in 1979-80 to 14,500 in 1987-88, an increase of 61 per cent.

Since 1979, almost £900 million has been spent on providing some 140 miles of motorway and trunk roads in Wales. In addition over £240 million has been spent on structural renewal and on general maintenance. The road programmes for the 1990s have been set out in the new edition of "Roads in Wales" published on 10 April 1989. Since 1979-80, overall net resources to the WTB have increased by 185 per cent., including an increase of 135 per cent. in support of projects creating almost 4,000 jobs.

The Government's direct financial support for the Welsh language has increased annually from £0·2 million in 1979-80 to around £4·6 million in 1989-90. Since the Government decision to set up the Welsh fourth television channel in 1982, S4C has been an outstanding success in both artistic and employment terms. In July 1988, the Government established the Welsh Language Board to advise on all matters relating to the use of Welsh in the public and private sector. A major expansion scheme at the national museum of Wales is in progress.

HEALTH

Mental Illness

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how much was spent in each health region in each of the last three years on the care and treatment of patients suffering from *(a)* schizophrenia and *(b)* all mental illness; and what percentage each figure was of total expenditure on health services;

(2) what is the current annual cost per patient to the National Health Service of the care and treatment of patients suffering from *(a)* mental illness and *(b)* schizophrenia psychoses;

(3) how much was spent in the last year on the care and treatment of patients suffering from schizophrenia; and what percentage that figure represented of total expenditure on *(a)* mental and *(b)* all health services.

Mr. Freeman: Information specifically on the total expenditure incurred on and the treatment costs of patients suffering from schizophrenia is not collected centrally. For costing purposes all hospitals are classified into one or other of a series of standard types which reflect the principal use to which their beds are allocated and costing returns in respect of community health services show expenditure relating to the main areas of activity only. Thus, the table shows the available information by region on hospitals categorised as "Mental Illness" for the financial years 1984-85 to 1986-87, but excludes the growing volume of activity in psychiatric units in acute and other hospitals and within community health services which is not identifiable separately.

The average cost in England of maintaining an in-patient in hospitals categorised as "Mental Illness" was £44·05 per day in 1986-87—equivalent to some £16,000 per annum.

We intend to publish a volume in the series "Health Services Costing Returns" covering the financial year 1987-88 this summer.

Revenue Expenditure on Hospitals Categorised as "Mental Illness"

Region	*1984-85*		*1985-86*		*1986-87*	
	Revenue Expenditure £000 (cash)	*Percentage of total revenue expenditure*	*Revenue Expenditure £000 (cash)*	*Percentage of total revenue expenditure*	*Revenue Expenditure £000 (cash)*	*Percentage of total revenue expenditure*
Northern	53,150	9·06	55,341	8·92	57,780	8·69
Yorkshire	60,176	9·15	62,327	8·91	63,883	8·54
Trent	68,557	8·62	74,271	8·81	78,973	8·64
East Anglia	31,488	9·39	34,273	9·57	36,333	9·33
North West Thames	68,511	9·77	73,968	10·15	74,047	9·52
North East Thames	69,895	7·93	71,224	7·79	75,608	7·75
South East Thames	74,529	9·65	65,218	8·08	76,136	8·88
South West Thames	69,969	11·93	72,672	11·95	74,067	11·39
Wessex	49,980	10·36	51,132	10·09	55,041	10·02
Oxford	26,661	6·98	27,553	6·85	29,431	6·78
South Western	56,016	9·81	57,490	9·53	57,891	8·91
West Midlands	82,548	8·98	85,875	8·82	89,801	8·55
Mersey	46,221	9·56	46,977	9·25	47,681	8·78
North Western	31,127	3·82	33,243	3·86	35,215	3·82
All regions Total	788,828	8·80	811,564	8·60	851,887	8·41

Sources:—
"Health Services Costing Returns" and annual accounts of regional and district health authorities—1984-85 to 1986-87.
Notes:
1. The revenue expenditure for the mental illness hospitals includes expenditure on in-patients, out-patients and day patients.
2. The figures used for total revenue expenditure are for hospital and community health services revenue expenditure incurred by regional and district health authorities. HCHS includes hospital, community, ambulance, blood transfusion and other services.

Nurses

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if, pursuant to his written answer of 10 May to the hon. Member for Newham, South concerning a charge made by the nurse central clearing house (NCCH) for pre-registration application of £6, *Official Report*, column *454* he will consider re-imbursing that body for the costs incurred, as part of his responsibilities for encouraging recruitment for the nursing profession.

Mr. Mellor: No. There is no evidence that the charge made by the nurses central clearing house has an adverse effect on recruitment.

Mr. Wolfson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what number of regrading appeals for nurses are still under consideration; and how long on average cases are taking to settle.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold this information centrally.

Mr. Wolfson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the percentage of labour turnover nationally per annum in the nursing profession within the National Health Service; and whether he will provide figures for the best, worst and average regions.

Mr. Mellor: We do not have information of this nature centrally at present. Information on the number of nurses

joining and leaving National Health Service employment is however now being collected, and should be available later this year.

Halton District Health Authority

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the percentage increase in the number of day case admissions in Halton district health authority over the latest available year.

Mr. Freeman: During the financial year 1987-88, 3,331 day cases were treated by Halton district health authority. This is an increase of 29 per cent. over the 1986 figure of 2,575 day cases. Some patients previously classified as a day case may now be classified as a ward attender. There were 688 ward attenders in Halton during 1987-88.

Snapethorpe Hospital, Wakefield

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the secretary of State for Health what discussions *(a)* his Department, *(b)* the Yorkshire regional health authority and *(c)* the Wakefield district health authority have had or plan to have with relatives of the late Mr. Benjamin Sykes, the benefactor of the hospital, regarding the proposed closure of Snapethorpe hospital, Wakefield.

Mr. Freeman: Neither the Department of Health, the Yorkshire regional health authority, nor the Wakefield district health authority has any record of discussions with relatives of the late Benjamin Sykes, and there are no plans for such discussions. The hospital site and buildings were vested in the Secretary of State under the NHS Act 1946 free of any trust.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which treatments previously available to patients at Snapethorpe hospital, Wakefield, are not currently available in alternative hospitals within the Wakefield health authority.

Mr. Freeman: Infectious disease beds were provided at Snapethorpe hospital until 1978, when the service was transferred to Seacroft hospital, Leeds Eastern health authority. Pre-convalescent beds were provided at Snapethorpe hospital until 1979 and are not currently provided within the district. These service changes were consulted upon at the time and endorsed by the local community health council.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer of 22 May, what information he has as to who instructed Wakefield district health authority to withdraw from discussions with the Wakefield district council regarding the possibility of a scheme of joint use of Snapethorpe hospital; and what were the reasons for this instruction.

Mr. Freeman: None. This is a matter for the Wakefield district health authority in consultation with the Yorkshire regional health authority.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to his reply of 22 May, if he will require a report from the Wakefield health authority as to why plans for the building of houses on the site of Snapethorpe hospital, Wakefield, were drawn up by officers of that authority before the members of the authority had resolved to close the hospital.

Mr. Freeman: No. As I indicated in my reply of 22 May, at column *414*, such matters are for the Wakefield health authority in consultation with the regional health authority.

Maternity Services

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to respond to the Select Committee on Social Services recommendations in respect of midwives; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he will be taking over the Select Committee's recommendations regarding midwives re-grading; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member and my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Garrett) and my hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) on 10 May 1988, at columns *450-51*.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what proposals he has, arising from his White Paper "Working for Patients", to improve maternity care;

(2) whether he has any plans to improve access to care for mothers-to-be;

(3) whether he has any plans to ensure maternity care is provided near to home to avoid women having to travel long distances for antenatal and postnatal care;

(4) whether he has any plans to improve postnatal care;

(5) whether he has any plans to provide more antenatal care in the community;

(6) what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on whether maternity services should be based on an integrated pre-planned service or on emergency admission; what steps are being taken in respect of this policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The proposals in "Working for Patients" are designed to improve all NHS services and apply as much to maternity as to any other service. The Government recognise the importance of continuity and accessibility of care throughout pregnancy and the need for close co-operation among professionals and with parents, particularly in planning the management of a pregnancy in accordance with the wishes of the mother-to-be. Under the White Paper's proposals maternity services will, therefore, continue to be provided locally for those wishing to make use of them and in order to cover emergency situations. The proposals are also designed to increase people's choice of where care is obtained, particularly for people living in large towns. It will remain for local decision how best to meet local needs.

From the Department's monitoring of the implementation of the Maternity Services Advisory Committee's recommendations, which include specific advice on improving accessibility to antenatal and postnatal care, it is evident that significant improvements have been made. We believe that the emphasis placed by the White Paper on putting patients first will stimulate further improvements. A questionnaire package, which has been developed by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys at the request of the Department, will shortly be made available to all district health authorities to assist them in seeking to establish women's opinions on the maternity services provided to them.

Medical Audit

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what projects concerning medical audit have been financed by regions for further study; and what criteria he put forward for the regional health authorities to use in drawing up their submissions.

Mr. Mellor: We have set up a central fund to support medical audit projects. We have asked regional health authorities to submit up to five bids each in priority order for consideration by a supervisory panel. Regions will be expected to contribute at least half the cost of each project. The guidance to regions indicted that priority would be given to projects involving large numbers of clinicians, particularly if they covered a whole unit, district or region.

We hope to announce the results shortly. In addition, several regions have set up their own schemes to support medical audit projects.

Condoms

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to make regulations relating to the quality of condoms mandatory.

Mr. Mellor: This issue remains under review. The British Standards Institution published its revised condom standard (BS 3704-1989) on 30 March. It has been approved under the Consumer Protection Act 1987 and the Approval of Safety Standards Regulations 1987, which makes it easier for action to be taken, for example, by trading standards officers, against suppliers of condoms which do not meet the standard.

Census Statistics

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many companies are licensed by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys to analyse and re-supply small area statistics from the 1981 census.

Mr. Freeman: The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys has concluded licence or agency agreements with 13 companies to hold and supply small area statistics from the 1981 census.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what total royalties have been received by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys for each year since 1981 from the companies which are licensed by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys to analyse and re-supply small areas statistics.

Mr. Freeman: The total revenue received each financial year by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys from companies with agreements to hold and supply small area statistics from the 1981 census is shown in the table.

Financial year	*Total revenue (£)*
1982-83	27,980
1983-84	105,583
1984-85	47,889
1985-86	163,297
1986-87	136,759
1987-88	66,015
1988-89	55,924

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many companies which sold small area statistics under licence from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys also hold on computer names and addresses of members of the public collected from the electoral register.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not collected.

Social Workers

Mr. Gorst: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he has any plans to introduce measures for the training of social workers in order to prepare them more adequately for work with mentally ill people;

(2) if he has discussed with the Association of Teachers in Social Work Education ways in which social workers can be trained to deal more adequately with mentally ill people.

Mr. Mellor: The Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work (CCETSW) is the statutory body responsible for social work training. To date some 90 per cent. of local authorities have produced a programme of CCETSW approved training for approved social workers under the Mental Health Act 1983. All qualifying courses for social workers are expected, according to CCETSW's minimum requirements, to include some training in mental illness. CCETSW has also approved a number of post-qualifying courses specialising in mental illness or with options in this area of work. We have had no discussions with ATSWE about training for those social workers dealing with mentally ill people.

Dental Services

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to ensure that all dental assistants and other persons who assist qualified dental surgery assistants have had a full course of vaccinations against hepatitis B and a follow up positive seroconversion; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman : The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation has advised that vaccination against hepatitis B should be considered for all dentists, dental students, dental assistants and others who may come into direct contact with patients, but whether any individual should be vaccinated must depend on the views of their medical adviser.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if, under notice FPN 472, patients have to pay for dentures and bridges provided through hospital and community dental services; if they would have been liable to pay for the same treatment when provided by general dental practitioners; and if the bridge prescriptions proposed by a general dental practitioner or hospital and community dental services will be subject to the same prior approval requirement as are prescriptions proposed by general practitioners.

Mr. Freeman: Hospital and community dental service out-patients who are not exempt are expected to meet the same NHS charge of dentures and bridges as are patients treated by general dental practitioners. Patients who are exempt are people under 18, full-time students under 19, pregnant women and nursing mothers, and people on low incomes. In addition, no charges are payable in the hospital and community dental service by people who have

undergone operative procedures affecting the mandible, the maxilla or the soft tissues of the mouth as part of treatment for invasive tumours. There is no prior approval requirement in the hospital or community dental service.

Abortion

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many abortions took place at the premises 32 Parkfield road, Liverpool 17, in each year since it was licensed;

(2) if he will break down the number of abortions performed at 32 Parkfield road, Liverpool 17, into the categories specified in the Abortion Act 1967; and at what number of weeks' gestation those abortions took place.

Mr. Freeman: Information on abortions performed in any individual approved place is not released for reasons of maintaining confidentiality.

Pain Relief Foundation

Mr. Heffer: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has any policy or plans to provide funding for the Pain Relief Foundation which is situated at Walton hospital, Liverpool.

Mr. Freeman: The Department of Health has recently renewed the grant-aid awarded to the Pain Relief Foundation under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968, and has agreed to provide funding of £8,500 per annum for the three years 1989-90 to 1991-92.

Pharmaceutical Products

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to make a decision on the provision of manufacturers' site identification on labels of pharmaceutical products; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We cannot yet say. The proposal to require site declaration was particularly controversial and account must be taken of comments received in consultation before decisions are reached on MLX 167 proposals as a whole.

Doctors

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the cost of the proposed Crown indemnity for doctors.

Mr. Mellor: The consultation paper issued by the Health Departments on 20 March, a copy of which is in the Library, noted that medical defence subscriptions had trebled between 1986 and 1988 and were continuing to rise. The NHS currently spends an estimated £30 million per year through a scheme whereby two thirds of subscription costs are re-imbursed. At present the cost of providing an NHS indemnity is expected to be comparable.

Mr. Wolfson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the average cost to health authorities of employing an individual hospital doctor supplied by agencies and the salary and emolument costs of a doctor directly employed by the National Health Service.

Mr. Mellor: We do not have the information in the form requested. However, as an example the cost of directly employing a senior house officer in the National Health Service for 72 hours duty in a week is estimated at £470, whereas we have advised health authorities that the maximum they should pay an agency supplying a doctor to do this work is £774. That advice was issued by me on 25 November 1988. It pegged the maximum permissible payments to agencies to 1987-88 levels and those levels remain in force.

Transplants

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about a register of bone marrow donors.

Mr. Freeman: There are two registers of bone marrow donors in the United Kingdom. One is run by the Anthony Nolan Research Centre and is a charitable organisation; the other is the British Bone Marrow and Platelet Donor Panel, which was compiled in collaboration with the National Blood Transfusion Service. The use of donor registries is a matter for the judgment of individual clinicians, responsible for the care of patients who might benefit from a bone marrow transplant.

Perinatal and Infant Mortality

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what discussions he has had on joint action between local authorities and health authorities to seek to reduce the perinatal mortality and infant mortality rates to at least 8 per 1,000 in every regional health authority;

(2) what action he has taken on the recommendation of the Social Services Committee's first report on perinatal, neonatal and infant mortality, in particular the recommendations that the target objectives of regions and districts should be reflected in their resource allocations.

Mr. Freeman: The Government's response to the Social Services Committee's first report on perinatal, neonatal and infant mortality will be published shortly. The response will set out not only the Government's response to the recommendations made by the Committee, but also what other action is in hand to ensure the continued reduction in the perinatal and infant mortality rates in England.

South East Thames Regional Health Authority

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will announce the appointment of the chairman of the South East Thames regional health authority from 1 August.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am pleased to announce that Sir Peter Baldwin has accepted my invitation to serve in this most important position for another two years.

Cash Limits

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether any changes will be made in the cash limits of his Department for 1989-90.

Mr. Mellor: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary and Revised Estimates, the following changes will be made:

The cash limit for class XIV, vote 1 (hospital and community health and other services, England) will be

increased by £113,005,000 from £11,748,942,000 to £11,861,947,000 to help provide, from 1 April 1989, for the pay awards recommended in the 1989 reports of the review bodies for nursing staff, midwives, healthpisitors and professions allied to medicine and on doctors' and dentists' remuneration, as announced by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 16 February 1989.

The cash limit for class XIV, vote 3 (Department of Health administration, miscellaneous health services and personal social services, England) will be reduced by £2,525,000 from £670,695,000 to £668,170,000. A reduction of £3,470,000 is being made to allow for transfers to class XV, vote 7 (Department of Social Security, administration and miscellaneous services) in respect of the independent living fund (£2,700,000), motability (a net £550,000) and to correct the apportionment of resources for departmental administration following the split of the former Department of Health and Social Security (£220,000). A further reduction of £50,000 is being made to offset increased provision on class XIV, vote 2 (Family practitioner and other services, England) in respect of residual transaction expenses arising in connection with the reconstitution of the General Practice Finance Corporation. These reductions are partly offset by an additional £995,000 to meet in full, from 1 April 1989, the review body recommendations mentioned above. The provision for running costs on this vote and the Department's running costs limit is increased by £559,000 from £238,256,000 to £238,815,000.

The increases will be charged to the Reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

NHS Staff

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will now publish the outturn figures for 1987-88 for compensation and early retirement in the manner described in the Government's reply to the first report from the Social Services Committee of Session 1984-85, breaking down the figures to distinguish between competitive tendering and other cases.

Mr. Freeman: The outturn figures for 1987-88 are as follows:

	Number of cases	*Compensation cost* £	*Total cost including superannuation* £
Competitive tendering			
New cases	821	1,834,000	3,990,000
Continuing cases	3,405	3,525,000	3,967,000
Other cases			
New cases	1,546	5,678,000	19,326,000
Continuing cases	9,490	15,047,000	43,676,000

OPCS

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any changes to announce to both the cash and gross running cost limits for the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys for 1989-90.

Mr. Freeman: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Revised Estimate, the cash limit for class XX, vote 15 will be reduced by £114,000 from £30,367,000 to £30,253,000. The OPCS gross running cost limit for class XX, vote 15 will be decreased by £114,000 from £35,491,000 to £35,377,000. The reductions reflect a correction to running costs, which included the overhead costs of methodology and consultancy expenditure by OPCS, by a transfer to the section of the vote for the administrative costs of social survey work exempt from gross running cost control. The costs will be fully offset by increased appropriations in aid from customer departments.

Eye Tests

77. **Mr. Wolfson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements are in hand for monitoring the effects of charges for eye tests on different sectors of the population in relation to the numbers coming forward for such tests; and whether a report will be made publicly available in due course.

Mr. Mellor: We expect to commission a survey into the number of private sight tests in the autumn, although the precise details have yet to be worked out. We expect that, at the least, a summary of the report's findings will be placed in the Library.

NHS Reform

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what change in administrative arrangements he intends to introduce for supra regional hospital units including spinal units, as a consequence of the Government's White Paper "Working for Patients".

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 23 May 1989]:* The NHS review working paper 2 noted the Government's expectation that the centre would continue to fund the fixed costs of units providing supra regional services, both to ensure their viability and to ensure a properly controlled spread of high cost and high technology treatments; it envisaged that the variable costs would be met by GPs and DHAs under contract. Detailed work is currently under way on this proposal. Announcements on the new arrangements, and on the future of individual supra regional services, will be made later in the year.

Private Patients (Bolton)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the revenue generated from private patients at hospitals in Bolton in 1988, and what were the comparable figures for each of the last five years.

Mr. Mellor *[pursuant to his reply 18 May 1989, c, 285]:* The following information is derived from the annual accounts of the Bolton health authority:

Income from private patients (under sections 65 and 66 of the NHS Act 1977)

	In-patients (section 65) £ *(cash)*	*Out-patients (section 66)* £ *(cash)*
1982-83	129,179	7,322
1983-84	99,089	6,267
1984-85	11,329	171
1985-86	14,826	6,253
1986-87	14,847	8,950
1987-88	8,888	10,189

DEFENCE

Low Flying

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date Skyguard fire control radar system will be implemented to register military aircraft flying below the permitted levels of operation; whether the information obtained will show the air forces concerned; where the information will be published; what disciplinary action will be enforced against offending pilots; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: The Skyguard fire control radar system will be deployed in the low flying monitoring role later this year. Apparent infringements of the regulations governing low-flying training by military aircraft using the United Kingdom low-flying system will be followed up as at present and appropriate action taken.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement in respect of military jet aircraft overflying the village of Clayton in the Don Valley constituency, in which a transit area is in force, on 11 May at 1221 hours, 1509 hours and 1530 hours all of which were under 1,000 feet; and to what NATO air force these were attached.

Mr. Neubert: If the hon. Member would care to write to me with further details I should be happy to consider the matter.

Spending Statistics

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much is spent on defence per household, per year by Government,; what is his definition of a household; and how many there are in the United Kingdom currently.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Defence expenditure per household for 1989-90 will be just over £900, based on a defence budget of £20,143 million and the Department of the Environment's latest estimate of the number of households in the United Kingdom during 1989 of 22·1 million. The definition of a household is set out in "Social Trends 1989", published by the Central Statistical Office: "A single person or group of people who have the address as their only or main residence and who either share one meal a day or share the living accommodation."

Noise Insulation (Lakenheath)

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what basis he nominated Alpine Double Glazing to be the recommended contractor for insulation work associated with the noise compensation scheme recently announced for RAF Lakenheath, Mildenhall; and why other local insulation firms were not given an opportunity to seek his nomination and recommendation on a competitive basis.

Mr. Neubert: Alpine (Double Glazing) Company Ltd. was selected as the recommended contractor for installation work associated with the noise insulation grant scheme for RAF Lakenheath and Mildenhall as the result of a competitive tendering exercise. Tenders were invited from six double glazing companies, including one (Easiglaze Windows Ltd.) based locally, on the basis of advice from the Glass and Glazing Federation on those companies that were likely to have the capacity to meet the demand generated by the 5,600 homes in the area covered by the schemes.

Sky Pageant

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement as to why the annual sky pageant will not be held at the RAF base at Upper Heyford, Oxfordshire, in the current year.

Mr. Neubert: I understand that the United States authorities at the base have decided not to hold the sky pageant this year, which is a national event, but instead to hold a Heyford "At Home" day which will be orientated toward the local community.

Nuclear Weapons Convoys

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out the key statistics for accidents involving the road transportation of nuclear weapon convoys over the last 10 years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It has been the practice of successive Governments neither to confirm nor deny the presence of nuclear weapons at particular places and times. I cannot, therefore, give statistics of accidents involving the transport of nuclear weapons. There has never been an accident involving damage to a nuclear weapon in the United Kingdom.

Soviet Navy (Missiles)

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what evidence his Department has that the Soviet Navy is deploying sea-launched cruise missiles.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Government have convincing evidence that the Soviets are on the verge of deploying a variety of sophisticated cruise missile systems. At sea, the Soviets have tested the SS-N-21 sea-launched cruise missile, which could be carried and launched by a variety of Soviet general purpose attack submarines, such as Victor, Akula or Sierra. Yankee class nuclear submarines have also been converted to carry SS-N-21 missiles. Targets in Europe, Asia or North America could be attacked by these accurate missiles, which we assume are fitted with nuclear warheads. The larger SS-N-X24 missile, which could be carried in specialised submarine platforms such as the modified Yankee class, is expected to be operational in the next few years.

NATO Military Establishments

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated total value to the economy for Yorkshire and Humberside of the presence of military establishments of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation armed forces in various locations in the region.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No such estimate has been made for the Yorkshire and Humberside region.

Queen's Own Hussars

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many soldiers in the Queen's Own Hussars went absent without leave in 1988.

Mr. Neubert: Four.

Lance Missiles

Mr. Benn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the position of the Greek, Danish and Norwegian Governments on the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation plans to modernise short-range nuclear Lance missiles in western Europe.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Greece, Denmark and Norway agreed the communique issued at the end of the recent NATO nuclear planning group meeting in Brussels. In doing so, they expressed their determination to ensure that NATO possesses diversified, survivable and operationally feasible nuclear forces across the entire spectrum and agreed that these forces should be kept up-to-date where necessary.

Gurkhas

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the estimated savings envisaged under his proposals for the future of the Brigade of Gurkhas.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Although the future deployment and precise force structure of the Brigade of Gurkhas have not yet been decided, annual expenditure on the planned Gurkha force after 1997 is likely to be greater than current expenditure on the Gurkhas as a result of the loss of the contribution made by the Hong Kong Government.

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the planned strength of *(a)* the Queen's Gurkhas Engineers, *(b)* the Queen's Gurkhas Signals and *(c)* the Queen's Gurkhas Transport Regiment after 1997.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The plans for the future of the Queen's Gurkha Engineers, the Queen's Gurkha Signals and the Gurkha Transport Regiment after 1997 include their retention at a strength that is operationally and organisationally viable. The eventual number of squadrons that will be required will depend on detailed decisions on the Brigade of Gurkhas which have not yet been taken.

Service Accommodation

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of service accommodation is *(a)* grade 1, *(b)* grade 2, *(c)* grade 3 and *(d)* grade 4; and what were those percentages for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Neubert: The percentage of service accommodation in the various grades over the past 10 years cannot be obtained without disproportionate cost. I will write to the hon. Member with the percentages for the current year.

Foulness (Property)

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the properties he has demolished in the parish of Foulness, Essex, since becoming the principal landlord there; if he will give the reasons for demolition; and whether the properties concerned were residental.

Mr. Neubert *[holding answer 15 May 1989]:* The MOD has owned Foulness Island since the first world war. The available records show that, since 1986, seven residential properties have been demolished, three for operational reasons because they were in the range danger area and the remainder because they were structurally unsound and beyond economic repair. A number of farm outbuildings have also been demolished. Property used for defence purposes which has been demolished includes offices and stores buildings.

Propeller Driven Aircraft

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will list those areas of the United Kingdom where heavy propeller driven aircraft are permitted to fly at less than 250 feet minimum separation distance.

Mr. Neubert: Flying below 250 feet by heavy propeller-driven aircraft is permitted, on special authorisation, in the three tactical training areas and for free-drop training on designated drop zones in military danger areas.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will list the numbers of aircraft movements authorised for low-flying at less than 250 feet minimum separation distance in *(a)* the Northern Scotland tactical training area, *(b)* the Central Wales tactical training area, and *(c)* the Borders tactical training area during 1988; and on how many days in 1988 such low flying was authorised in each training area.

Mr. Neubert: The information requested regarding aircraft movements authorised for flying below 250 feet within tactical training areas during 1988 is given in the table. It should be noted that figures for the number of days on which flying took place are likely to have been substantially lower because alternative dates are often requested for use in the event of bad weather. It should also be noted that the movements figures for the borders tactical training area have, since July 1988, been recorded on a different basis following the extension to the Borders training area approved by my predesessor in March 1988 and the number of movements quoted for this area is not therefore directly comparable with previous figures.

Tactical training area	*Operational low flying movements*	*Number of days on which operational low flying was authorised*
Northern Scotland	828	115
Central Wales	60	60
Borders	1,227	121

Naval Accidents

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out the key statistics for military naval accidents over the last 10 years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Our records show that during this period there have been 542 incidents involving groundings or collisions between vessels of the Royal Navy, Royal Fleet Auxiliary or the Royal Maritime Auxiliary Service and either other vessels or static installations. A breakdown of this figure into various categories of incident is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost and effort. The great majority of these incidents, however, are very minor, resulting in little or no damage.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Hedges

13. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what grant aid his Department has given to encourage the planting of hedges in England and Wales in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Ryder: Grants paid by my Department and the Welsh Office in England and Wales for hedge planting and hedge laying amounted to £2·18 million in the 1988 calendar year.

Food Irradiation

17. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the present position regarding the development of a diagnostic test for food irradiation.

Mr. Ryder: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given earlier today to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan).

38. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much research his Department is currently funding into food irradiation.

Mr. MacGregor: Last year the Ministry funded research into food irradiation and its effects on packaging materials to the sum of about £200,000. Research funding in the current financial year is expected to be the same.

50. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the Government's current policy on food irradiation; and if he will make a statement.

44. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received about irradiation of food.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer the hon. Member and my hon. Friend to the answer given earlier to the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie), and to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg).

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to announce his decisions on his proposals for the control of the irradiation of food.

Mr. Ryder: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg) earlier today.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has for the irradiation of food; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg).

National Institute of Agricultural Botany

18. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what cumulative savings were achieved over five years in grants to the National Institute of Agricultural Botany by the policy of not fully funding pay awards.

Mr. Ryder: In each of the last five years funding has been sufficient to enable the National Institute of Agricultural Botany to fully implement pay awards.

Country Landowners Association

19. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the president of the Country Landowners Association; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Ryder: My ministerial colleagues and I regularly meet the president of the Country Landowners Association. My right hon. Friend the Minister last met him on 3 May, when a wide range of issues were discussed.

Intervention Stocks

20. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the most up-to-date estimate of the amount and value in pounds sterling of surplus food and drink in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* the EEC as a result of the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Ryder: A note setting out the volume of stocks of agricultural commodities held in intervention and assisted private storage in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* the EC as a whole, is deposited in the Library of the House and is updated monthly. The estimated value of the stocks listed in the most recently deposited note, depreciated as now required following the February 1988 European Council agreement, is £125 million for the United Kingdom, and £1·46 billion for the EC as a whole.

Lamb (Variable Premium)

21. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will state the amount paid during 1988 as variable premium on lamb to British producers.

Mr. Donald Thompson: A sum of £161,953,345 was paid by way of sheep variable premium to British producers in 1988.

22. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the future of the variable premium on lamb.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall).

Slaughterhouses

23. **Mr. Sean Hughes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether any arrangements are currently in hand for the statutory examination by veterinary officials at non-EEC export-approved slaughterhouses.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No.

Suckler Cow Premium

24. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if his decision to pay the suckler cow premium in full will enhance United Kingdom beef production.

Mr. Donald Thompson: In the 1989-90 scheme year the rate of suckler cow premium will be £47·43 per cow, an

increase of 42 per cent. over last year. This will give further support and encouragement to producers who are currently rebuilding their suckler herds and help to offset the reduction in calf supplies from the dairy herd. Consumers will benefit as the proportion of United Kingdom production from beef cows increases.

55. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the percentage increase in the suckler cow premium over the previous year; and how much this will add to the incomes of beef farmers.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The rate to be paid in the 1989-90 scheme year will be £47·43 per cow, the maximum permitted under Community rules. This is 42 per cent. higher than last year. We estimate that the total payment to United Kingdom producers will be £57 million, some £20 million higher than last year.

65. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how his decision to pay the suckler cow premium at its maximum level will affect farm incomes, particularly in the less-favoured areas.

Mr. Donald Thompson: We estimate that total payments of suckler cow premium to United Kingdom producers in 1989-90 will be £57 million, some £20 million more than last year. About 70 per cent. of the specialist beef herd is in the less-favoured areas and so it is likely that the major part of this increase will benefit producers farming in the most difficult parts of the country.

Untreated Milk

25. **Mr. Waller:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received following the issue of his consultation paper on untreated milk.

32. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has had about the sale of green top milk; and if he will make a statement.

41. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many representations his Department has received calling for *(a)* the retention and *(b)* the banning of green top milk.

57. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he proposes to announce the result of his consultations on green top milk.

60. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to announce his decision with regard to green top milk.

73. **Mr. Temple-Morris:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give details of the consultations he has been having on the question of banning untreated milk in England and Wales; and when he expects to be able to announce his conclusions.

Mr. Cran: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received regarding the banning of green top milk; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: We have received a large number of representations. The majority are from consumers who wish to remain free to choose untreated milk and from producers who wish to continue supplying it. On the other hand, a number of bodies concerned about public health, including various enforcement authorities, have supported the proposal to ban sales. The period allowed for comment has now expired and we are considering, in the light of all comments received, what our policy should be. My right hon. Friend hopes to make a further announcement shortly.

Mr. Temple-Morris: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information has become available in the course of his consultation into the question of banning the sale of untreated milk in England and Wales on *(a)* how many people can indisputably be said to have become ill from the consumption of such milk and *(b)* how many illnesses could be deemed serious.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health provided data on confirmed reports of food poisoning associated with consumption of raw milk in England and Wales in response to a written question from my hon. Friend the Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) on 9 February at column *808*. No new information has become available during the consultation exercise, nor is it possible to distinguish between serious and trivial cases. However, the very fact that a case is reported means that an individual has been sufficiently ill to consult his doctor.

Beef Premium

26. **Mr. John P. Smith:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects the new beef premium to be fully operational.

69. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the initial introduction of the beef payment scheme for British farmers.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer the hon. Gentlemen to the reply I gave earlier to the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke).

Sheep Regime

27. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the latest information he has about current negotiations over the revision of the EEC sheep regime.

42. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the progress of his discussions about the future of the sheepmeat regime.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer the hon. Member and my hon. Friend to the reply given earlier today to the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells).

Fishing Industry

28. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what level of European Community grant-aid is being received by British fishermen for the modernisation of their fleets.

Mr. Donald Thompson: In the April round of Community awards the European Commission granted £1·30 million (1.99 mecus) in respect of 83 United Kingdom vessel modernisation projects.

Potato Marketing Board

29. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the future of the Potato Marketing Board.

66. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he is yet able to make a statement on the outcome of the inquiry into the working of the Potato Marketing Board.

Mr. MacGregor: I do not yet have anything to add to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) on 19 April, at column 175.

National Dock Labour Scheme

30. **Mr. Janman:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from the fishing industry in response to the Government's proposal to abolish the national dock labour scheme.

Mr. Donald Thompson: None, but prior to the Government's proposal being made, the fishing industry had made many representations for removal of the national dock labour scheme in relation to fish landings.

Landscape

31. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he proposes to introduce any new measures to enhance the quality of the British landscape.

Mr. Ryder: The introduction of the environmentally sensitive areas scheme in 1987 and the farm woodland scheme in 1988 is making an important contribution to the quality of the British landscape. In addition, the farm and conservation grant scheme, introduced in February, offers, for the first time, grants for repairs to traditional farm buildings and for the regeneration of heather moors and native woodlands as well as continuing assistance for hedge and shelter belt planting and the construction of stone walls.

Farmers entering the set-aside scheme are encouraged to consider ways in which set-aside of their land may benefit the landscape. Moreover, the Countryside Commission will shortly be announcing details of a scheme to encourage farmers to manage set-aside land to benefit conservation and recreation.

Until the effectiveness of these major new schemes becomes clear it would be premature to introduce any additional measures.

Extensification Scheme

33. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to ensure that proper conservation measures are included in his new extensification scheme.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he proposes to introduce his extensification scheme.

Mr. Ryder: I shall shortly be opening consultation on the implementation in the United Kingdom of the Community extensification scheme, including on appropriate environmental measures.

Nitrate Pollution

34. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is proposing to take to prevent the pollution of water courses by nitrate fertiliser.

Mr. Ryder: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given earlier to the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes).

72. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received recently from representatives of farmers concerning pollution caused by nitrate fertilisers and farm waste; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: Farmers' representatives have in broad terms welcomed the Government's general approach to tackling the nitrate problem as set out in the consultation document recently issued by the Agriculture Departments of England and Wales. They also broadly support the measures being taken to combat the farm waste pollution problem.

Organic Foods

35. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he envisages a further expansion of the production of organic foods following the introduction and processing standards by the United Kingdom register of organic food standards.

Mr. Ryder: I believe that publication of the UKROFS standards and certification schemes will give consumers greater confidence to buy organic food and I hope that producers will respond to the resulting increase in demand.

51. **Sir Hal Miller:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is encouraging the development of nationally, and internationally, recognised standards of organic food production.

Mr. Ryder: Yes. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food encouraged Food From Britain in establishing the United Kingdom register of organic food standards (UKROFS) in July 1987. The result of this initiative is that the board of UKROFS, under the chairmanship of Professor Colin Spedding, announced standards for the production and processing of organic food on 2 May. In addition, the European Commission has announced that it will be proposing standards for the whole Community to which, I am sure, the UKROFS standards will make an important decision.

52. **Mr. Kirkhope:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if the United Kingdom register of organic food standards is developing certification and inspection services to ensure that its requirements are properly enforced.

Mr. Ryder: Yes. UKROFS is offering a certification system for producer organisations whose members produce or process food to UKROFS standards and who are subject to inspection by those organisations. This provides for independent monitoring inspections to be carried out on behalf of UKROFS. UKROFS also offers a certification scheme to independent producers who will be regularly inspected. I am placing a copy of the details of the certification arrangements and standards in the Library of the House.

Experimental Station, Rosewarne

36. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has any plans to make an official visit to the experimental horticultural station at Rosewarne, Camborne; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: No. Ministers and officials in my Department are in touch with representatives of local growers and other interests about possible alternatives to the proposed closure as announced by my right hon. Friend in my reply to the hon. Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) of 21 March.

Veterinary Officers

37. **Mr. Terry Lewis:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many veterinary officers are currently employed by his Department.

Mr. Donald Thompson: On 1 May 1989 there were 439 permanent veterinary officers in all grades employed in the Department.

Farm Incomes

39. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how the recent European Community price-fixing settlement will benefit farm incomes in the course of a full year.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) on 2 May, at column 85.

Festival of Food and Farming

40. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will estimate the return on the investment made by the food and agriculture industry in the Hyde park festival.

Mr. MacGregor: The festival was designed to show how much the British food and farming industry contributes to all our lives. The four-day event was a great success and the public response far exceeded expectations. It is not possible to quantify any returns, but I am sure that all those who contributed or exhibited must feel their money was very well spent.

63. **Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if there are any plans to repeat the Hyde park festival of food and farming.

Mr. MacGregor: The festival, which marked the 150th anniversary of the Royal Agricultural Society of England, was a great success and gave tremendous pleasure to hundreds of thousands of visitors. However, it clearly would not be possible to stage such an event very often and I know of no immediate plans for a repeat.

Eggs

43. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on any differences between the health standards required for eggs produced in Britain and those required in other European Community countries.

Mr. Ryder: Eggs marketed in the United Kingdom and in all other member states of the Community must meet the standards prescribed in Council regulation (EEC) 2772/75 and Commission regulation (EEC) 95/69. These standards include matters relevant to health such as the cleanliness of authorised egg packing centres and of the eggs themselves.

Women Farmers Union

45. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the president of the Women Farmers Union; and what matters they discussed.

Mr. MacGregor: I last met the chairman of the Women's Farming Union on 24 February at a forum on 1992 issues held by its Norfolk branch. As might be expected, the topic which dominated discussion concerned the impact of the single European market.

Northumberland

46. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will visit Northumberland to meet representatives of the farming industry and to assess the state of agriculture in the area.

Mr Ryder: I frequently make visits around the country to keep abreast of agricultural developments.

Potatoes

47. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to meet the Potato Processors Association to discuss pricing by Dutch competitors in the industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: I have no such plans.

National Farmers Union

48. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the president of the National Farmers Union and what matters were discussed.

Mr. MacGregor: I meet the president of the National Farmers Union frequently to discuss agricultural matters.

59. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he is next due to meet the president of the National Farmers Union to discuss the dairy sector.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have no present plans to do so.

Bovine Somatotropin

49. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether any consumer groups have written to him urging him to give a product licence for bovine somatotropin.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No. It would be inappropriate for any group to urge me to pre-empt the rigorous scientific evaluation of BST required by the Medicines Act.

Farm Diversification

53. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received about farm diversification.

Mr. Ryder: On 15 March the president of the NFU wrote to me, on behalf of the NFU, NFU of Scotland, the Tenant Farmers Association and the Farmers Union of Wales, about various tenancy matters, including a request for tenant farmers to have a right of appeal against any landlords refusal to allow diversification. I am pleased to say that there are signs that tenants are participating in the farm diversification grant scheme and I do not think that any change in tenancy law is appropriate on this point.

My Department here also received representations from some organisations seeking recognition for their members to undertake grant-aided enterprise feasibility studies.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

54. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much money his Department has paid out in compensation in respect of bovine spongiform encephalopathy in infected cattle.

Mr. Donald Thompson: From 8 August last year, when the compulsory slaughter policy was introduced, until the end of April this year, £1,272,558 had been paid in compensation.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on what date his veterinary service first received tissues of cows suspected of being infected with bovine spongiform encephalopathy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The samples from which bovine spongiform encephalopathy was first identified as a new disease were received at the Ministry's central veterinary laboratory on 3 November 1986, which was the same day that the animal was slaughtered.

Food Quality

56. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has any new proposals to improve the wholesomeness of food available to the British consumer.

Mr. Ryder: It is already an offence under food legislation to sell food that is unfit for human consumption or food that is not of the nature, substance or quality demanded by the purchaser. Regulations also already cover matters concerned with the hygiene and handling of food and discussions with interested parties are currently proceeding on how these need to be updated.

Forestry Commission

58. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the chairman of the Forestry Commission; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. MacGregor: I last met the chairman of the Forestry Commission on 9 March, when we discussed a range of forestry matters.

Milk Quotas

61. **Mr. Charles Wardle:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the future of the milk quota regime.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The European Council agreed in February 1988 to extend the present milk quota regime until March 1992 and invited the Commission to submit a report on its operation before the end of 1990-91 marketing year. I have been pressing for the future of the regime to be addressed by the Council of Agriculture Ministers as soon as possible.

Co-responsibility Levies

62. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if it is his policy to continue pressing for the complete abolition of co-responsibility levies.

Mr. MacGregor: I am opposed to co-responsibility levies and shall continue to press for their abolition while respecting budgetary discipline. I am very pleased that, in the recent price settlement, following our pressure the Council has taken a step in this direction, agreeing significant cuts in the milk co-responsibility levy and its removal in less-favoured areas.

Animal Health

64. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the implications for animal health of freer European markets for agricultural products.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Although the Commission has made a number of proposals on animal health issues in anticipation of the realisation of the single market, it has not yet made proposals on the regime to apply after its completion. The Government's position is quite clear. We aim to secure the right balance between minimising barriers to trade and maintaining effective veterinary controls as long as they are necessary to prevent the spread of disease.

Farmed Salmon

67. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the farmed salmon industry.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The salmon farming industry, concentrated mainly off the west coast and islands of Scotland, continues to make an important contribution to our economy, to employment and to export earnings. In 1988, United Kingdom production reached 18,000 tonnes, with a first sale value of some £72 million.

Agricultural Support (Primary Producers)

68. **Sir Michael Shaw:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if the principle of payment to the primary producer, established in the new suckler cow premium, will be extracted to other forms of agricultural support.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Under the common agricultural policy, a wide range of instruments are used to target support in the most appropriate manner, taking account of the different characteristics of the various commodities. Payments to primary producers are used in a number of sectors, but there is no Community policy to generalise their application.

Channel Cod

70. **Mr. Robert Hicks:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the operation of the European Community common fisheries policy as it relates to Channel cod.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Channel cod, like all other significant fish stocks, is subject to a total allowable catch based as far as possible on scientific advice and agreed annually by the Council of Fisheries Ministers. The current TAC of 23,900 tonnes is 70 per cent. higher than it was in 1983, reflecting the exceptional recruitment of the year classes 1985 to 1987. In the last two years we have secured mid-year revisions to the TAC. The quota allocation of the TAC between member states was settled on the basis of historic catches as part of the 1983 common fisheries policy settlement. Overall the shareout was very favourable to the United Kingdom, and for Channel cod we secured a slightly higher percentage than our track record.

Alternative Land Use

71. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent steps he has taken to promote alternative land use.

Mr. Ryder: We have introduced a range of measures to encourage farmers to seek alternative users for agricultural land. These include the farm diversification grants scheme, set-aside and the farm woodland scheme. Also, ADAS offers advice to farmers on the options for alternative uses of their land. In January, we made available, (through Her Majesty's Stationery Office), "Planning Permission and the Farmer", which was written especially for farmers seeking to diversify. This introductory guide explains how the planning system works and provides advice on presenting a convincing case to planning authorities.

Farm Slurry

74. **Mr. Wolfson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps are open to him to control or advise farmers on the drainage of farm slurry into streams and rivers.

Mr. Ryder: The Agricultural Development and Advisory Service routinely provides technical advice to farmers on pollution avoidance, and co-operates with water authorities over farm pollution problems in particular localities. 50 per cent. grant-aid is available on a wide range of facilities. My Department is also assisting the Department of the Environment prepare new regulations to set minimum constructional standards for slurry installations.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will bring up to date the information in his answer of 14 May 1986, *Official Report*, column *482*, concerning the common agricultural policy; and if he will add for each year the conversion rate for sterling in terms of the unit of account and of the market rate for the European currency unit.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information requested is set out in the following table:

	CAP expenditure		*[3] Year on year increase in real terms*	*CAP expenditure as per cent. total EC expenditure*	*United Kingdom receipts under the CAP*	*Conversion rates*
	mecu	*£ million*	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*	*£ million*	*1 ecu equals*
1973	3,805	1,912	—	82	63	0·502321
1974	3,230	1,647	−25	75	112	0·509803
1975	4,708	2,637	+26	78	347	0·560026
1976	5,796	3,603	+10	77	213	0·621578
1977	7,123	4,656	+10	74	174	0·653701
1978	9,000	5,974	+16	79	318	0·663759
1979	10,880	7,064	+ 8	76	384	0·649236
1980	11,943	7,232	− 3	73	569	0·605540
1981	11,581	6,449	−13	65	666	0·556891
1982	13,077	7,294	+ 2	64	756	0·557801
1983	16,637	9,759	+17	69	1,085	0·586581
1984	19,093	11,150	+ 7	73	1,310	0·583969
1985	20,544	12,081	+ 1	73	1,187	0·588051
1986	23,028	14,919	+10	67	1,343	0·647851
1987[1]	23,963	17,237	− 3	67	1,321	0·719320
1988[2]	29,158	19,310	+17	67	1,381	0·662252

Sources:
1973-1986 EC Commission EAGGF Financial Reports.
1987 Outturn figures.
1988 Provisional outturn.
[1] 1987 budget year carried 10 months' expenditure.
[2] 1988 budget year carried 11½ months' expenditure.
[3] Recalculated since 1986 PQ.

Pesticides

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether, in the light of the statement by the head of his Department's pesticide safety division and evaluation unit that it would be 10 years before all the pre-1965 pesticides are reviewed, and that this was due to staff shortages and lack of data, he will increase the resources available for this work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: The scientific complement of the pesticides data evaluation unit involved in the evaluation and review

of agricultural pesticides has been increased from 52 at the end of the 1988-89 financial year, to 60. Staffing levels will be kept under review.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the evidence the advisory committee on pesticides considered in deciding about the use of Alar; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: I assume that the hon. Gentleman is referring to the evidence considered by the Advisory Committee at its meeting on 20 April 1989. For this meeting the committee received over 30 reports on daminozide and its breakdown product, unsymmetrical dimethylhydrazine (UDMH), reporting studies on mammalian metabolism, residues in apples, *in vitro* mutagenicity, subacute toxicity in rats and mice and carcinogenicity in rats and mice.

Veterinary Service

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his reply of 22 May, by how many posts of veterinary officer grade the state veterinary service was reduced in 1986.

Mr. Donald Thompson: During 1986 the number of veterinary officer posts was reduced by 12.

Peat (Alternatives)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he is conducting a research into alternatives to peat for horticultural use; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: A number of projects for finding alternatives to, or decreasing the use of, peat in the horticulture industry (for instance work on rockwool, hydroponics and using compost additives like bark) have been undertaken by my Department in recent years. Some of this work has already been taken up by growers and it could provide a firm basis for further reductions in usage if this is necessary.

Game

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if the provisions in chapter 1 of annexe 11 of the draft regulation (PVET/2508) which prohibits the killing of wild game in an unacceptable manner or a manner which will cause unnecessary suffering, fall to be considered by majority vote or by unanimity; and what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government on these proposals;

(2) if the provisions in EEC draft regulations which require game carcasses to be transported in refrigerated trucks to official game processing houses fall to be considered by majority vote or by unanimity; what is the voting procedure for the proposal that game should be inspected within 24 hours of death; and what are the categories of game covered by these particular proposals;

(3) what assessment he has made of the consequences of field sports in the United Kingdom of the EEC Council draft regulation on game meat and rabbit meat; what is the position of Her Majesty's Government on the draft with particular reference to the post-mortem examinations by official veterinarians of deceased game and rabbits; what stage has been reached in the discussion of these proposals; and whether they fall to be considered by majority vote or by unanimity;

(4) what estimate he has made of the number of game covered by the EEC directive which are shot each year; what is the EEC description or definition of game; and what he estimates would be the additional provision of veterinary surgeons required to implement the proposals.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The document referred to is a working draft for a proposed Council regulation on game and rabbit meat for human consumption. The regulation would be made under article 43 of the Treaty of Rome which provides for decisions to be taken by qualified majority vote.

The draft provision on refrigerated transport would apply to all wild game but only where considered necessary by national authorities. The provision for inspection within 24 hours of shooting would also apply to all wild game although longer periods for eviscerated game may be permitted. Exemptions from these provisions and from other requirements of the measure are proposed for game sold in small quantities by the sportsman to the consumer or through sales points which are inspected regularly.

The proposed regulation would apply to all game animals and birds killed for sale for human consumption and which are not already subject to Community legislation.

Official statistics of the numbers of wild game animals and birds shot each year in the United Kingdom are not collected but estimates made by the game industry are as follows:

	Number
deer	80,000
pheasants	12,000,000
duck	1,000,000
pigeon	10,000,000
partridge	500,000
grouse	500,000

These figures include large quantities of game consumed or given away by sportsmen which would not be affected by the draft proposal.

Discussions are still at an early stage and it is too early to make an estimate of the veterinary or other resources which might be required. The Commission is well aware of our view that the present proposals do not take adequate account of the circumstances under which wild game meat is produced. We have already secured some important improvements and will seek to ensure that measures which may be adopted to remove obstacles to trade within the single market do not place unnecessary burdens on game interests in this country.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met representatives of the British Veterinary Association to discuss animal welfare.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have not met members of the British Veterinary Association recently but my officials are in frequent contact with them.

Trees

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much coniferous and deciduous

planting has taken place on farmland in England and Wales since the last Budget; and, of this, how much was subject to the new tax arrangements introduced in that Budget.

Mr. Ryder: In the year to 31 March 1989, the Forestry Commission grant aided 1,728 hectares of new planting (752 hectares conifers and 976 hectares of broadleaves) in England and 923 hectares of new planting (710 hectares of conifers and 213 hectares of broadleaves) in Wales on land that was formerly in agricultural use. A total of 2,371 hectares of this planting could have attracted tax reliefs under the transitional arrangements announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his 1988 Budget.

The Commission itself carried out 191 hectares of new planting on former agricultural land in England and Wales (159 hectares of conifers and 32 hectares of broadleaves).

Nitrate

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many additional agriculture development and advisory service officers he intends to recruit to visit farms to advise on nitrates in water as outlined in his document "Nitrate Sensitive Areas Scheme."

Mr. Ryder: No decision has been taken on the number of farms which will be visited or the consequential staffing implications, pending adoption of the necessary legislation by Parliament and the outcome of the consultations undertaken on 9 May.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 26 May 1989

SOCIAL SECURITY

Members' Correspondence

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will take steps to ensure that the time taken to deal with hon. Members' correspondence is reduced to 21 days within the next six months;

(2) if he will set targets for dealing with hon. Members' correspondence more expeditiously;

(3) if he will issue guidance to hon. Members as to the manner in which they can assist inquiries to his Department to be dealt with more quickly.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Guidance is issued regularly to those of our staff who are involved in preparing draft replies to right hon. and hon. Members' correspondence. This guidance indicates the high priority to be given to this work. The volume of correspondence is, however, large. In the last year we received 41,500 letters concerning social security. We recognise the importance which, rightly, hon. Members attach to the quality and speed of the service provided to them and we, therefore, monitor and seek to improve it. In many of the instances in which there is a significant delay before we are able to give a substantive reply this is because it is necessary to contact one of our local or central offices, or a local authority, for further information on individual constituents. For this reason, it was suggested to all hon. Members in September 1987 that they take up directly with local offices complaints and queries relating to the circumstances of individual constituents. That advice emphasised that it was not intended to diminish ministerial responsibility; in particular, it was accepted that hon. Members would want to raise with Ministers any cases where they felt dissatisfied with the results of their inquiries at local level or which raised general issues of policy or perhaps serious complaints about local administration or conduct. I am pleased to endorse that advice.

Leaflets

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the cost of *(a)* preparing, *(b)* printing and *(c)* distributing his brochure entitled, "Our Business is Service"; how many copies of the brochure were produced; and what steps his Department took to ascertain the need for such a publication.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The brochure "Our Business is Service" is an essential tool for the future management of social security. It sets out a clear definition of our intentions for the service. In drawing up the definition, we took account of survey evidence of the views of both staff and customers. With the definition now in place, our customers can know what service we aim to provide and our staff know clearly what is expected of them.

The cost of printing the brochure was £31,000 and of distributing it £11,000. A total of 150,000 copies were produced. Preparation of material for the brochure was part of the normal duties of the staff concerned and has not been costed separately.

Dental Staff

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what arrangements exist for the provision of invalidity benefits to all categories of dental staff affected by occupational disease; what is the level of benefits; and how they are calculated.

Mr. Scott: When they are sick and incapable of work, dental staff qualify for invalidity benefit under the same rules that apply to all employed and self-employed people. Invalidity pension becomes payable when sickness benefit and/or statutory sick pay has been paid for 28 weeks and incapacity is still continuing. It consists of a basic flat rate amount, currently £43·60 per week, plus an earnings-related element based on the claimant's earnings on which he has paid national insurance contributions since April 1978. Increases for an adult or child dependants are payable as appropriate. In addition, an invalidity allowance based on the claimant's age when his incapacity began may also be payable. Where there is title to both the invalidity allowance and the additional earnings-related pension, an amount equal to the higher of the two amounts is payable. The cause of incapacity for work does not affect either the title to or level of invalidity benefit.

Pensioners

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the net income of pensioners in the United Kingdom in each of the following percentiles of pensioner income: *(a)* 10th, *(b)* 25th, *(c)* 50th, *(d)* 75th, *(e)* 90th.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The average total net income of pensioner tax units[1] in each section of the pensioner income distribution[2] is as follows:

	Weekly net income £ (at 1986 prices)
Lowest	
10 per cent.	51·35
25 per cent.	57·65
50 per cent.	63·05
75 per cent.	68·40
90 per cent.	76·25

Source: Family Expenditure Survey 1986.

[1] A pensioner tax unit is a single person of state pension age or a couple where the man is of state pension age.

[2] The pensioner income distribution is divided into sections using equivalised net income.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of United Kingdom pensioners have no other income other than their state retirement pensions, and what information he has as to the comparable figures for other European Community countries.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Just under 20 per cent. of retirement pensioners have no other source of income than state benefits. I regret that comparable information for other European Community countries is not available.

Source: Family Expenditure Survey 1986.
Note 1: the data cannot be broken down further to provide the proportion of pensioners' income derived from the basic state pension.

Vaccine Damage Payments

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many payments have been made under the Vaccine Damage Payments Acts for each year since 1979.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is in the table:

Vaccine damage payments scheme
Awards made in each year 1979-89

Year	Awards made
1979	349
1980	255
1981	74
1982	43
1983	42
1984	29
1985	26
1986	15
1987	10
1988	4
[1]1989	—

[1] To 30 April 1989.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many vaccine damage payments were made in 1984 and in each subsequent year; and if he will categorise these according to the age of the child, when vaccination took place, the year of vaccination, and the nature of the vaccination.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the right hon. Member to my replies to him on 23 March at column *772*, on 18 April at column *132*, on 25 April at column *496*, and on 19 May at columns *327-28*. Twenty-nine payments were awarded in 1984 under the provisions of the Vaccine Damage Payments Act 1979. Details are in the table.

Vaccine damage payments scheme
Awards made in 1984 by age of child at date of vaccination; year of vaccination and type of vaccination

	Type of vaccination cited on the claim form	Age at date of vaccination (months)	Year vaccine was given
1.	Pertussis	3 to 6	1969
2.	Pertussis	3 to 6	1969
3.	Pertussis	3 to 6	1982
4.	Polio	9 to 12	1959
5.	Pertussis	3 to 6	1980
6.	Triple/Polio	3 to 6	1971
7.	Pertussis	3 to 6	1981
8.	Triple/Pertussis/Polio	3 to 6	1982
9.	Pertussis	3 to 6	1980
10.	Measles	12 to 15	1981
11.	Tetanus/Diphtheria/Polio	3 to 6	1978
12.	Triple/Polio	15 to 18	1973
13.	Pertussis	6 to 9	1975
14.	Pertussis Diphtheria/Tetanus/	3 to 6	1981
15.	Pertussis	6 to 9	1982
16.	Pertussis	6 to 9	1980
17.	Pertussis	3 to 6	1953
18.	Tetanus	3 to 6	1982
19.	Triple	6 to 9	1974
20.	Polio	3 to 6	1981
21.	Pertussis	3 to 6	1982
22.	Pertussis	6 to 9	1965
23.	Triple	6 to 12	1976
24.	Pertussis	3 to 6	1971
25.	Triple	3 to 6	1981
26.	Pertussis	3 to 6	1981
27.	Triple/Polio/Pertussis	0 to 3	1982
28.	Pertussis	3 to 6	1960
29.	Diphtheria/Tetanus/Polio	2 years	1982

Publicity

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will place in the Library details of each major publicity campaign mounted by his Department in 1985-86 and each successive year, including in each case the objectives of the campaign, the intended audience and the outcome of the monitoring of the achievement of the intended objectives, and national research conducted for him by the Central Office of Information together with a note of the intended objectives in the campaigns in 1989-90.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 2 May 1989]:* There has been only one major publicity campaign mounted by the Department since its separation from the Department of Health in July 1988. The objective of the campaign was to encourage take-up of family credit by working families with children. Initial research conducted at the outset is available in the Library. The campaign is still in progress until the end of June.

Prior to July 1988 campaigns were the responsibility of the Department of Health and Social Security. Major campaigns relating to social security subjects and their audience objectives in the period were:

Reform of Social Security advertising and publicity campaign January 1987—the £1,530,450 cost includes press advertising and the production and distribution of information packs. The objective was principally to reach professional advisers and carers to apply for information packs. The intended audience were professional advisers, carers and those concerned with general welfare schemes.

Family credit advertising campaign April 1988 to June 1988—the cost of £3,117,000 includes press and television. The objective was to promote take-up of the new family credit benefit.

The intended audience were working families who may now qualify for family credit, but who currently are not receiving family income supplement, and those who are already receiving family income supplement and are to be reassured that they will be automatically transferred to family credit after April 5 1988.

Information on the outcome of monitoring and the achievement of objectives is not available in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Intended objectives of other campaigns in 1989-90 are as follows:

Enhanced Pensioner Premiums—July to September 1989. The objective is to create awareness of the increases in payment, to reassure those who receive the payment automatically and to motivate those entitled who would not otherwise receive payment to request an application form.

Announcement of New National Insurance Rates—September 1989. The objective is to make employers and employees aware of the changes in structure of national

insurance contributions which come into effect on 5 October and to make married women paying reduced rate contributions aware of the implications.

Housing Benefit

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures showing the anticipated effects of the Housing Act 1988 and the community charge on the housing benefit caseload in 1990-91, distinguishing between the number of *(a)* families and *(b)* persons affected.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 4 May 1989]:* The effects of the 1988 Housing Act will unfold gradually over time and it is not possible to project the likely effect in any particular year. We estimate that one in four of those liable for community charge in Great Britain will benefit from the effective help given by the rebate scheme.

Social Fund

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list for the Department of Social Security local offices of Eston, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Stockton what statistical information he has as to the different reasons given to applicants by social fund officers for nil awards in respect of applications for community care grants.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 17 May 1989]:* Provisional information is provided in the table, which gives the number of times that a reason for decision is used by social fund officers for determining a nil award for community care grants.

An application can be refused for more than one reason. The total number of decisions used will be equal to or greater than the number of applications refused. Information on the numbers of applications processed and awards is available in the Library.

Reason for decision	*Local office*				
	Eston	*Hartlepool*	*Middlesbrough*	*Redcar*	*Stockton*
Savings over £500 meet the full cost	3	3	7	5	3
Not in receipt of IS and unlikely to qualify	30	72	88	56	136
Item(s) excluded by Direction	11	26	42	30	49
Applicant excluded by Direction[1]	11	10	67	0	260
Applied for less than £30	9	18	23	14	24
Adjusted amount less than £30	0	2	2	2	4
Previous application and decision for the item	10	22	40	8	65
Help available from another source	6	9	8	5	13
Priority too low to meet from the budget	8	25	124	162	17
Alternative available to the whole application	1	4	11	1	2
Others not covered above	248	350	829	182	588

[1] When the general criteria for awarding a Community Care Grant (Direction 4) is not satisfied, the decision has usually been entered as "Others". In the case of Stockton, some of these have been included here.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Passports

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications are currently waiting to be processed at each passport office; what action is being taken to eliminate the backlog; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: It is estimated that some 500,000 applications for passport services are at the various stages of processing within the six United Kingdom passport offices. Applications are being processed at a rate of around 75,000 a week, according to the applicant's travel requirements, with priority being given to urgent cases.

A sharp increase in demand early this year has led to a general increase in processing times. Staff at Glasgow and Liverpool are adapting to a new computerised system of passport issuing, and accommodation changes at other offices have also affected output. Additional staff have been employed to help deal with the backlog, and a system of free two-year extensions to the life of expired passports submitted for replacement has been introduced at Liverpool to help relieve the immediate problem there.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many passports sent to the Liverpool office for renewal have now been extended for two years as announced in his oral answer to the hon. Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) of 11 May, *Official Report*, column 978; and what effect this has had on turnaround times.

Mr. Renton: Some 3,000 passports have been extended under these arrangements since the measure was put into effect on 19 May. The work load on the main passport-issuing system has been reduced by a corresponding amount, but it is too early to measure the impact of the new procedure on overall turnround times. The demand for passports is now at its peak, and priority is being given to urgent applications, and those showing an early date of travel.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many passports were issued by the Glasgow passport office in each of the five years prior to full computerisation of the passport issuing computer system; and how many passports he estimates will be issued in its first full year of operation.

Mr. Renton *[holding answer 25 May 1989]:* The Glasgow passport office began computerised operation in August 1988. The number of passports issued during the preceding five calendar years is as follows:

New passports

Year	*Number*
1983	182,386
1984	146,123
1985	137,098
1986	159,954
1987	159,723

It is estimated that some 189,000 new passports will be issued from Glasgow during the first full year of computerised operation up to the end of July 1989. This

includes postal applications transferred from the London passport office under the dispersal programme. The demand for passports is currently at its peak, and priority is being given to urgent applications, and those showing an early date of travel.

Prisons (Suicide Prevention)

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison department establishments are unable to implement procedures in section C of the circular instruction 3/1987 on suicide prevention and have been authorised to make alternative arrangements; and if he will name these establishments.

Mr. Hurd: Until 11 May a standing authorisation was in force for any establishment unable to comply in full with the screening procedures set out in section C of circular instruction 3/1987 to take alternative measures to identify inmates at risk of suicide. The number of establishments concerned varied over time. These arrangements, together with circular instruction 3/1987 itself, have now been superseded by the new procedures for the prevention of inmate suicides which I announced on 11 May at column *539*, with which all establishments are expected to comply.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, in light of recent suicides by women in Risley, what steps he intends to take to improve the conditions and care for women in the Risley remand centre.

Mr. Hurd: Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons found the conditions and the standard of care in the women's wing at Risley satisfactory, and considered the wing to be a credit to all its staff. I have no reasons to believe that shortcomings in conditions or care were the cause of the two recent cases of apparent suicide in that wing.

Hull Prison

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what reviews are being carried out in respect of young offenders who are being held on remand at Her Majesty's prison, Hull; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: The governor is providing the regional director with periodic progress reports and regional office staff are visiting Hull every eight to 10 weeks to review progress. The deputy director general of the prison service visited the prison on 21 April and I visited it on 28 April. Improvements have been made to the regime and conditions on B wing and plans for further improvements are in hand.

Police Operational Procedures

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to discuss police surveillance techniques with the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend meets the commissioner regularly but has no particular plans to discuss this subject.

Asylum

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he intends to establish an independent review of his Department's policy to asylum seekers.

Mr. Renton: No. I am satisfied that the Department's policies and procedures fully accord with our obligations under the 1951 United Nations convention and the 1967 protocol on refugees.

Lorrain Esme Osman

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make available to the legal advisers of Lorrain Esme Osman the request for extradition, received from Hong Kong, which led to the issue of authority to proceed dated 24 January 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: As my hon. Friend the Minister of State, the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten) indicated to the hon. and learned Member on 18 May at column *255*, it is not the practice to divulge communications about extradition cases which go beyond what the courts require for the consideration of the case.

Official Secrets Act

Mr. Aitken: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, in the light of legal submissions made before the House of Lords in *The Scotsman* case on 16 May, he has any plans to amend section 5 of the Official Secrets Act 1989 in order to make it an offence for a newspaper editor to publish information disclosed from a former Crown servant acting without authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I have no plans to amend the Official Secrets Act 1989. Under section 5(1)(a)(iii) of the 1989 Act, the offence of publishing information resulting from an unauthorised disclosure already applies where the information was disclosed by a person to whom it was entrusted on terms requiring it to be held in confidence or in circumstances in which it could reasonably be expected to be so held, if the person who entrusted the information was a Crown servant or Government contractor, whether or not the person to whom it was entrusted was himself a Crown servant at the time.

Electronic Surveillance

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) on how many occasions in each of the last five years electronic surveillance visual devices have been authorised for use in the Metropolitan police and in each of the provincial police forces;

(2) on how many occasions since the introduction of the guidelines on the use of equipment in police surveillance operations authorisation to use electronic surveillance listening and visual devices in the Metropolitan police has been given by officers other than the chief officer;

(3) on how many occasions in each of the last five years electronic surveillance listening devices have been authorised for use in the Metropolitan police and in each of the provincial police forces.

Mr. Hurd: The use of surveillance equipment is a matter for the operational judgment of police forces acting in

accordance with the guidelines issued on 19 December 1984. The guidelines cover, inter alia, the principles governing the authorisation of such equipment. In particular the use of listening devices requires the personal authority of the chief constable, or of an assistant chief constable in a case where there is a degree of consent by one of the parties subject to the surveillance. The guidelines also make clear the arrangements for records of the authorisation of surveillance equipment to be kept by individual police forces. No statistics are kept centrally.

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what control he exercises over the provincial police forces' use of electronic surveillance listening and visual devices other than that exercised by Her Majesty's inspectors of constabulary.

Mr. Hurd: The guidelines issued on 19 December 1984, governing the use of equipment in police surveillance operations, apply to the Metropolitan police and to other police forces in England and Wales.

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he intends to review the guidelines on the use of equipment in police surveillance operations in view of the technological advances that have taken place in electronic surveillance listening and visual devices since 1984.

Mr. Hurd: I have no plans at present to issue guidelines replacing those issued on 19 December 1984.

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he receives regular reports from *(a)* Her Majesty's inspectors of constabulary and *(b)* the force inspectorate on the use by police forces of electronic surveillance listening and visual devices.

Mr. Hurd: As part of their regular programme of inspection visits, Her Majesty's inspectors of constabulary satisfy themselves that the use of equipment in police surveillance operations follows the guidelines issued on 19 December 1984. I receive annual inspection reports covering this and other matters.

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which Home Office organisations or agencies use electronic surveillance listening and visual devices other than the Metropolitan and provincial police forces.

Mr. Hurd: It is not the practice to comment on these matters.

Dogs

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he has any plans to control the sale to the general public of dogs trained to attack and bite human beings with or without command;

(2) if he will establish a review committee to bring forward recommendations on the stricter control of dogs.

Mr. Hurd: We are looking closely at the suggestions which have been made for further legislation about dangerous dogs. I do not think there is a need for a review committee.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has had discussions with chief officers of police concerning the increasing use of dogs to protect premises subject to police raids; and if he has any plans to introduce measures to assist police in overcoming this problem.

Mr. Hurd: I have had no discussions with chief officers of police about this matter. Section 1 of the Guard Dogs Act 1975 makes it an offence to use a guard dog at any premises unless a handler, who is capable of controlling the dog, is present on the premises and the dog is under his control at all times, except while another handler has control over the dog or while the dog is secured so that it is not at liberty to go freely about the premises.

I have no plans to introduce further measures to control guard dogs.

Mentally Disturbed Offenders

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which proposals of the interdepartmental working group of Home Office and DHSS officials on mentally disturbed offenders in the prison system in England and Wales have been implemented; and what is the timetable for implementation of the remaining proposals.

Mr. Hurd: The Government welcomed the report of this working group, which laid a valuable base from which the two Departments are able to develop an improved response to the needs of mentally disorded people who come into conflict with the law.

All 16 recommendations were accepted by the Goverment. Work on the first recommendation has been completed with the revision of chapter 12 of the Home Office booklet for the courts on the treatment of offenders —"The Sentence of the Court"—a new edition of which is in the course of preparation. Information for the courts on the provision of places for the mentally disordered in a range of hospitals is being assembled and it is hoped thereby to implement recommendation 2 in the coming months. Recommendation 14 will be implemented in part shortly with the finalising and issue of revised prison department instructions which will include encouragement to medical officers to invite their counterparts in the community to visit and make personal assessments in suitable cases as to the continuing care of the mentally disturbed following release from prison. The subjects of recommendations 13, 15 and 16 call for continuing attention over time which it is firmly intended they shall receive on, respectively, the development of comprehensive secure provision in the community; stimulation of professional awareness of the range of requirements; and the improvement of co-ordination and communication between policy makers and service providers. The remaining recommendations have been implemented.

PRIME MINISTER

Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister if, during her meeting with the Prime Minister of Italy on 28 April, she discussed the forthcoming fourth review conference of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to him on 11 May 1989 at column *491*.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister if, during her meeting with the Prime Minister of the Netherlands on 29 April she discussed *(a)* the first preparatory committee for the 1990 non-proliferation treaty review conference, *(b)* ways of strengthening the treaty membership and *(c)* present problems with compliance with non-proliferation treaty article VI on nuclear and conventional disarmament.

The Prime Minister: No. But matters relating to the non-proliferation treaty are regularly discussed with the Netherlands at official level.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister if, during her visit to Luxembourg in April, she raised the matter of the forthcoming fourth review conference of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, and ways in which further states can be encouraged to accede to the treaty, with Ministers of the Grand Duchy.

The Prime Minister: No. But matters relating to the non-proliferation treaty are regularly discussed with Luxembourg at official level.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister if, pursuant to her reply on representations recently made to her on the nuclear deterrent, *Official Report,* 11 May, column *489,* she will list those *(a)* in favour and *(b)* against nuclear weapons set out in the representations; and if she will set out the reasons given by those representations opposed to United Kingdom retention of nuclear weapons.

The Prime Minister: A detailed breakdown of such representations could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The British electorate has consistently endorsed NATO's policy of deterrence based on a mix of nuclear and conventional weapons, and the maintenance of an independent British strategic deterrent.

WALES

Cervical Cancer

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects an adequate database to have been constructed and able to provide information on take-up rates for cervical screening call and recall services.

Mr. Grist: Data are now being accumulated and sufficient information to enable meaningful analyses to be made should be available in the first part of the financial year 1990-91.

Sewage

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of domestic sewage in Wales enters the sea untreated; and what information he has as to comparable figures for other European countries.

Mr. Grist: Information is not available on the volumes of domestic untreated sewage entering the sea.

Medical Practices Committee

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will discuss with medical practitioners in Wales and with their representative bodies the case for establishing a medical practices committee for Wales, similar to that which exists in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Under current legislation, the medical practices committee's remit covers Wales and England. There are at present no plans to establish a separate organisation for Wales.

North Wales Valleys Initiative

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will now set up a north Wales industrial valleys initiative with adequate additional financial resources to meet the employment, social and cultural requirements of such areas.

Mr. Peter Walker: A formal valleys initiative for north Wales is unnecessary as existing financing, planning and management mechanisms are adequate to allow continued improvement in the area. The development of the A55 presents major opportunities for growth and development. I shall continue to do everything I can to encourage a positive approach among local authorities, public agencies and others to ensure those opportunities are grasped.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on how many occasions he has attended European Community Council of Ministers meetings since June 1987.

Mr. Peter Walker: It has not been the normal practice of Welsh Office Ministers to attend meetings of the European Council of Ministers since or before June 1987. I have of course met members of the European Commission since that date to discuss issues of importance to Wales.

Low-cost Starter Homes

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on existing powers available to local authorities to enable low-cost starter homes to be constructed in their area; and whether he has any plans to provide local authorities with further powers to enable such properties to be constructed.

Mr. Grist: Within their general housing powers local authorities have adequate powers to carry out a wide range of low-cost home ownership schemes. We have no plans to extend these powers, but Welsh Office officials are to have discussions with local authorities and others during the forthcoming months about options for the provision of such accommodation.

General Practitioners

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many general practitioners in Wales are *(a)* female and *(b)* male; how many females are principals of practices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: As at 1 October 1987 (the latest date for which information is available) there were 1,450 male and 320 female general medical practitioners in Wales (including unrestricted and restricted principals, trainees and assistants). Of these 252 were female unrestricted principals.

South Wales National Union of Mineworkers

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many meetings he has had with south Wales National Union of Mineworkers since June 1987.

Mr. Peter Walker: I met representatives of the south Wales NUM in November 1987 and other members of the south Wales NUM on 13 January 1989.

NFU, Wales

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many meetings he has had with the National Farmers Union, Wales since June 1987.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have met representatives of the National Farmers Union, Wales on nine occasions since June 1987.

NHS Reform

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he proposes to appoint leaders of industry to help shape National Health Service policy in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: As stated in the Government White Paper "Working for Patients" (Cm 555), the NHS in Wales works under the strategic direction of the Health Policy Board, which is chaired by the Secretary of State. These arrangements, which were introduced following the NHS management inquiry of 1983 have proved their worth and will continue.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet the health unions in Wales to discuss the proposed National Health Service changes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend and I met representatives of the health union in Wales at a meeting with the joint staff consultative council for the Welsh Health Service on 15 May to discuss the NHS review White Paper.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet the leaders of the British Medical Association in Wales to discuss proposed changes in the National Health Service.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend and I met the secretary of the BMA Welsh Council at a meeting with the joint staff consultative council for the Welsh Health Service on 15 May to discuss the NHS review White Paper.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet the Royal College of Nursing Wales to discuss the proposed changes in the National Health Service.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend and I met a representative of the Royal College of Nursing Wales at a meeting with the joint staff consultative council for the Welsh Health Service on 15 May to discuss the NHS review White Paper.

"New Roads by New Means"

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will meet the Welsh Counties Association to discuss the Green Paper, "New Roads by New Means"; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what plans he has to meet the South Wales standing conference on regional policy to discuss the implications for Wales of the Green Paper, "New Roads by New Means"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 25 May.

Toll Roads

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to build new toll roads in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: None.

Cottage Hospital, Caernarfon

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will now ask the chairman of the Gwynedd health authority to convene a full meeting of the authority to consider on the basis of the most recent information available to it, whether or not it still wishes to proceed with proposals to close the cottage hospital, Caernarfon.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend will consider all appeals made to him, including those providing updated information, before reaching his decision on Gwynedd health authority's proposals for the cottage hospital, Caernarfon. Appeals will be copied as appropriate to officers of the health authority for their comments so that they can be taken into account by the Secretary of State. The decision whether to convene a full meeting in the light of any appeal relating to recent information would be for the health authority.

Wales Tourism Year 1990

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will seek to ensure that funds available to the Wales tourist board from the European Community for the purposes of developing projects associated with the European tourism year 1990, are not restricted by the Government's non-additionality rule, but will represent a genuine additional level of funding which can facilitate new projects which could not otherwise take place.

Mr. Peter Walker: In taking public expenditure decisions the Government take into account the expected level of European Community receipts. Resource provision for the Wales tourist board will be considered as part of the public expenditure survey in the normal way.

Wales Epilepsy Association

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assistance is being given during 1989-90 by his Department to the Wales Epilepsy Association; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: It was not possible to offer financial support to the association for 1989-90. The claims for financial support from voluntary organisations greatly exceeded the resources available and other claims were considered stronger.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has any plans for the privatisation of all or part of the Welsh Development Agency's functions in the county of Dyfed.

Mr. Peter Walker: No.

Primary School Children

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, for primary schools in Dyfed, what are the latest figures for *(a)* the number of children on school rolls, *(b)* the number of temporary and permanent school places, *(c)* the number of surplus places, *(d)* the target number of primary school places in 1992 and *(e)* the number of primary schools which would need to be closed to achieve the 1992 targets for surplus places.

Mr. Peter Walker: Dyfed education authority figures as at January 1989 are:

(a) 31,332;
(b) 4,742 temporary and 36,268 permanent places;
(c) 9,678.

These figures will be the subject of further discussions with the authority. But the 1992 targets implied by Welsh Office circular 20/88 would involve a reduction in the number of surplus places to about 5,500. It is for the authority to decide how to effect reductions.

Welsh Water Authority

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many acres of land are in the ownership of the Welsh water authority, and of those *(a)* how many have planning permission and *(b)* for how many the Welsh water authority is currently seeking planning permission.

Mr. Grist: This is a matter for the Welsh water authority. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the value of the land now in the ownership of the Welsh water authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The net assets value of the land and buildings is shown in the published annual accounts. A separate figure for land is not available.

Water Pollution

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list these rivers and watercourses in Wales which are polluted; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Grist: A summary of information concerning the quality of rivers and canals in Wales is contained within the 1985 river quality survey, a copy of which was placed in the Library of the House.

I will ask the chairman of Welsh Water to write to the hon. Gentleman with a list of rivers and canals which are polluted to the extent that they fall within classes 3 and 4.

Water Privatisation

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the amount of cash being spent by the Welsh water authority in its promotional campaign concerning privatisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: This is a matter for the Welsh water authority. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman writes to the chairman of the authority direct.

Holiday Homes

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to tackle the issue of holiday homes in rural Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: It will always be to the advantage of rural Wales that the interests of all who wish to have homes there should be recognised. I have made it clear that appropriate ways of assisting those in housing need in these areas should be developed wherever practicable, and there will be discussions soon with the relevant local authorities.

Northop Bypass

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to open the Northop bypass; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: Construction of Northop bypass is nearing completion ahead of the August contract date and it is hoped that remaining work can be finished to allow for opening to traffic towards the end of June.

PRC Houses

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many of each type of *(a)* owner occupier and *(b)* local council owned PRC houses have been repaired in each of the financial years since the Housing Defects Act came into operation; at what cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The information is not held centrally in the form requested, however, based on returns made to the Department by local authorities the details of completed reinstatement grants made to eligible home owners is given in the following table:

	Number of dwellings	*Value of grant £000s*
1985-86	2	22
1986-87	35	436
1987-88	213	2,686
1988-89[1]	164	2,409

[1] Provisional.

Immunological Deficiencies

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how, where and by whom, patients with immunological deficiencies, other than HIV positive, are treated in Wales; if home therapy is available for these patients; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 25 July 1988 at column *13*.

Bracken

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy on the safeguarding of animal and human health in relation to bracken, in the light of current research into its carcinogenic properties.

Mr. Peter Walker *[holding answer 18 May 1989]:* Carcinogenic dangers for animals in relation to bracken are kept under review by the state veterinary service and appropriate advice is available where required. An advisory leaflet is available from ADAS.

The possibility of a link between bracken and cancer in humans has been considered by the Department of Health's committee on the carcinogenicity of chemicals in food, consumer products and the environment. Their conclusion was that while the possibility of a health hazard exists, available evidence does not permit the risk to be defined with any precision. In view of COC's recommendation for long-term research, investigations have recently begun into the possible entry of toxins from bracken into the food chain. The results will not be available for some time. The COC has advised the Health and Safety Executive to issue safety advice to operators regularly cutting bracken, in view of their occupational exposure, as a precautionary measure.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

Membership

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission if he will list the members of the Public Accounts Commission showing the dates when they were appointed.

Sir Peter Hordern: The current membership of the Public Accounts Commission is:

Mr. Roy Beggs	(appointed[1] 5 November 1987)
Sir Peter Blaker	(appointed 4 November 1987)
Sir Barney Hayhoe	(appointed 4 November 1987)
Mr. Terence L. Higgins	(appointed 22 December 1983)
Sir Peter Hordern	(appointed 22 December 1983)
Mr. Robert Sheldon	(*ex officio*, as Chairman of the Committee of Public Accounts)
Mr. Peter Shore	(appointed 4 November 1987)
Mr. John Wakeham	(*ex officio*, as Leader of the House)
Mr. David Young	(appointed 22 December 1983)

[1](First appointed 22 December 1983, but ceased to be a Member on acceptance of the Chiltern Hundreds in December 1985).

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Short Money

Mr. Coleman: To ask the Lord President of the Council how much Short money was paid to each political party in each of the calendar years 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Wakeham: The following is the information requested:

	1987 £	*1988* £
Labour Party	436,669·42	883,135·75
The Liberal Party	75,238·45	30,786·94
Plaid Cymru	6,101·22	6,034·40
Scottish Nationalist Party	8,756·20	21,812·30
Ulster Democratic Unionist Party	5,872·27	6,796·20
Social Democratic Labour Party	3,178·00	2,270·00
Ulster Unionist Party	17,432·00	39,887·89
Social Democratic Party	44,493·71	72,633·62
Social and Liberal Democratic Party[1]	—	139,965·87
	597,741·27	1,203,322·97

Note: Under the terms of the Resolution of the House of 21 June 1988, the amounts of financial assistance payable were increased with effect from 11 June 1987. The amounts paid in 1988 include arrears due in 1987.

[1]Amalgamation of the Liberal Party and a section of the Social Democratic Party with effect from 1 January 1988.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

31 Hardie Avenue, Rugeley

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Attorney-General when a deposit number will be issued at Her Majesty's Land Registry, Hull in respect of 31 Hardie avenue, Rugeley, in the names of London and Suffolk Properties Ltd. and Mr. and Mrs. F. W. Goring; and when the registration procedures will be completed on official reference No. C.31. SF 260448 TP 242.

The Attorney-General: A deposit number in respect of the charge certificate of title number SF232076 (which included 31 Hardie avenue, Rugeley) was issued on 22 May 1989. The registration of title number SF260448 was also completed on that day.

DEFENCE

Teachers

Mr. Ken Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table setting out the pay of locally entered teachers employed on British bases in Germany and United Kingdom-based main scale teachers pay for each year from 1982 to the latest available date.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 22 May 1989]:* I will write to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Ken Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many locally entered teachers employed on British bases in Germany were *(a)* scale 1, *(b)* scale 2, *(c)* scale 3, and *(d)* scale 4 teachers each year since 1982 to the latest available date.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 22 May 1989]:*
1. The numbers were as follows:

	Scale 1			*Scale 2*			*Scale 3*			*Scale 4*
Effective date	[1]*F/T*	[2]*P/T*	*Total*	[1]*F/T*	[2]*P/T*	*Total*	[1]*F/T*	[2]*P/T*	*Total*	
1 September 1982	278	40	318	45	1	46	6	Nil	6	Nil
1 September 1983	261	64	325	48	Nil	48	7	Nil	7	Nil
1 September 1984	225	48	273	54	Nil	54	4	Nil	4	Nil
1 September 1985	200	53	253	40	Nil	40	7	Nil	7	Nil
1 September 1986	209	71	280	48	Nil	48	6	Nil	6	Nil
1 September 1987	219	67	286	54	Nil	54	2	Nil	2	Nil

2. Numbers employed following the 1988 restructuring of scales 1 to 3 into a single main scale were:

	[1]F/T	[2]P/T	
1 September 1988[3]	275	58	333
1 April 1989[3,4]	286	91	377

[1] Full-time.
[2] Part-time.
[3] Includes teachers in receipt of incentive allowances.
[4] Latest available date.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the numbers of full-time workers in the coal, steel, shipbuilding, engineering and building industries in 1979 and at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Lee: Comparable estimates of full-time employment are not available for all of the industries and dates specified. The available information is as follows:

Great Britain employees in employment

Thousands

December 1979

	All	All males	All females	Of which full time females
Coal extraction and solid fuels (111)[2]	299·2	287·8	11·4	8·7
Iron and steel (2210)	186·1	170·1	15·9	13·3
Shipbuilding and repairing (3610)	129·2	120·0	9·2	6·5
Engineering (32, 33, 34, 37)	1,990·6	1485·7	504·9	401·8
Construction (5)	1,207·9	1101·5	106·5	63·5

December 1988[1]

	All	All males	Of which full time males	All females	Of which full time females
Coal extraction and solid fuels (111)[2]	127·3	123·8	123·7	3·5	2·4
Iron and steel (2210)	72·2	66·4	n/a	5·8	5·1
Shipbuilding and repairing (3610)	66·8	60·6	n/a	6·2	4·6
Engineering (32, 33, 34, 37)	1,485·4	1,123·4	1,115·4	362·0	307·8
Construction (5)	1,019·5	898·8	884·6	120·7	67·5

[1] The latest date for which comparable figures are available.
[2] Figures in brackets denote divisions, groups, classes, and activity headings of the Standard Industrial Classification 1980.
n/a Not available.
The estimates are unadjusted for the effects of seasonal variations. Estimates for iron and steel and shipbuilding and repairing are subject to severe potential estimation error due to the relatively small number of employees in the industries.

Employment Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total number of people employed who were receiving training in the appropriate survey period from the labour force survey and as a percentage of all employees, by age group, for each of the standard regions and Wales, in each of the years 1983 to 1988.

Mr. Lee *[holding answer 19 May 1989]:* Available estimates from labour force surveys are as shown in the table:

Employees of working age[1] receiving job-related training by age and region

Spring estimates, Thousands and per cent.

	1984		1985		[illegible]		1987		[3]1988	
	Employees receiving job related training[2] (000's)	As percentage of all employees (per cent.)	Employees receiving job related training[2] (000's)	As percentage of all employees (per cent.)	Employees receiving job related training[2] (000's)	As percentage of all employees (per cent.)	Employees receiving job related training[2] (000's)	As percentage of all employees (per cent.)	Employees receiving job related training[2] (000's)	As percentage of all employees (per cent.)
Northern region										
16 to 19	20	24·6	23	31·1	21	27·5	24	30·3	22	28·1
20 to 24	16	11·5	21	14·3	25	17·6	29	19·9	28	17·6
25 to 34	26	10·1	26	10·3	32	12·4	32	12·1	29	10·9
35 to 49	27	7·5	20	5·6	33	8·6	43	10·8	42	10·7
50 to 64	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	14	6·9
Yorkshire and Humberside region										
16 to 19	34	23·9	37	26·3	34	24·5	29	21·8	34	24·5
20 to 24	27	11·2	32	13·4	42	17·1	38	16·4	36	15·3
25 to 34	46	11·4	35	8·8	43	10·2	53	12·4	65	14·4
35 to 49	36	6·0	46	7·3	46	7·5	58	9·3	71	10·9
50 to 64	10	2·8	15	4·3	13	3·9	16	4·8	18	5·6
East Midlands region										
16 to 19	22	18·4	28	23·9	32	26·1	26	22·0	26	22·0

	1984		1985		1986		1987		[3]1988	
	Employees receiving job related training[2] (000's)	As percentage of all employees (per cent.)	Employees receiving job related training[2] (000's)	As percentage of all employees (per cent.)	Employees receiving job related training[2] (000's)	As percentage of all employees (per cent.)	Employees receiving job related training[2] (000's)	As percentage of all employees (per cent.)	Employees receiving job related training[2] (000's)	As percentage of all employees (per cent.)
20 [illegible]4	30	14·6	31	15·2	28	13·4	31	14·7	41	18·8
25 [illegible]4	39	11·6	38	11·5	50	14·2	46	12·7	47	12·6
35 to 49	36	7·0	45	8·3	48	8·9	42	8·0	62	11·3
50 to 64	12	3·8	11	3·9	12	4·3	11	4·3	[4]—	[4]—
East Anglia region										
16 to 19	14	23·6	15	23·8	12	18·6	11	17·5	17	23·1
20 to 24	[4]—	[4]—	19	17·1	20	19·2	16	14·3	23	19·5
25 to 34	17	10·4	24	14·5	30	17·0	25	14·3	28	14·9
35 to 49	16	6·5	21	8·8	27	10·3	29	11·1	32	12·1
50 to 64	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—
South East region										
16 to 19	118	20·8	132	22·6	126	21·4	129	21·2	140	22·3
20 to 24	149	16·2	179	18·2	172	17·7	195	19·8	212	21·8
25 to 34	192	12·6	225	14·5	228	14·4	261	15·8	293	17·2
35 to 49	185	8·4	201	9·0	212	9·6	239	10·9	288	12·6
50 to 64	54	3·9	57	4·2	61	4·6	64	5·0	89	6·6
—of which Greater London										
16 to 19	41	22·1	46	23·7	38	19·5	38	18·6	46	32·0
20 to 24	63	16·9	76	18·9	69	18·3	85	21·9	86	22·5
25 to 34	86	13·5	101	15·6	93	14·8	115	17·2	122	13·2
35 to 49	75	9·1	72	8·6	73	8·8	77	9·6	101	11·9
50 to 64	25	4·4	18	3·3	24	4·5	23	4·7	28	5·6
South West region										
16 to 19	36	25·5	37	25·0	31	22·3	31	20·5	29	19·9
20 to 24	29	14·1	42	18·1	28	12·6	43	18·3	43	18·3
25 to 34	40	11·5	49	13·7	53	14·4	57	14·8	62	15·1
35 to 49	43	8·4	46	8·6	47	8·5	60	10·5	75	13·1
50 to 64	12	3·8	17	5·1	12	4·0	13	4·2	19	6·1
West Midlands region										
16 to 19	26	18·7	29	21·8	31	23·0	29	21·1	34	22·2
20 to 24	32	13·3	35	13·8	46	17·3	42	15·6	48	17·1
25 to 34	40	9·2	45	10·5	47	10·6	67	15·0	74	15·3
35 to 49	37	5·7	49	7·4	60	8·7	69	10·1	73	10·6
50 to 64	12	3·1	12	3·1	17	4·4	17	4·4	18	4·7
North West region										
16 to 19	33	19·0	45	26·7	34	20·2	35	22·0	43	24·8
20 to 24	37	12·2	50	15·9	47	15·4	46	14·5	62	19·4
25 to 35	40	8·0	51	9·6	59	11·1	83	14·8	88	15·0
35 to 49	51	6·7	63	8·1	63	8·0	84	10·5	104	12·5
50 to 64	12	2·7	15	3·2	13	2·9	21	4·9	23	5·6
Wales										
16 to 19	12	18·3	16	24·9	15	23·4	12	21·1	18	25·7
20 to 24	16	12·7	16	12·1	22	17·4	19	14·6	18	13·6
25 to 34	16	7·6	18	8·3	24	11·6	23	10·8	30	12·5
35 to 49	18	6·0	21	6·5	24	7·5	26	7·9	40	12·0
50 to 64	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—

[1] Men aged 16 to 64, women aged 16 to 59. Only employees in this age group receiving job-related training are identified.
[2] Those who, in the four weeks prior to interview, had taken part in any education or training connected with their job, or a job they may be able to do in the future.
[3] Preliminary results (1988 only).
[4] Sample size too small for a reliable estimate.

Source: Labour Force Surveys.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Gibraltar (Airport)

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the time scale for implementation of the agreement on Gibraltar airport.

Mrs. Chalker: There is no set time scale for the implementation of the 1987 airport agreement. The agreement cannot come into effect without the concurrence of the Gibraltar House of Assembly. For our part, we continue to believe the agreement is a good one for Gibraltar.

Lorrain Esme Osman

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, in the exchange of notes with the Liberian Government, through its embassy in London, concerning the appointment of Lorrain Esme Osman as counsellor and ambassador at large to countries within the European Community, the Liberian Government gave notification of the appointment of Mr. Osman as a member of the permanent mission of the Liberian Republic to London.

Mr. Waldegrave: As indicated in the answer given to the hon. and learned Gentleman's question of 18 May by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, it is for the courts to decide whether Mr. Osman has any diplomatic immunity. Since proceedings on this matter are still continuing, it would not be appropriate for me to comment further on any aspect of this matter.

Gurkhas

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the implications of proposals for the future of the brigade of Gurkhas for the economy of Nepal.

Mr. Waldegrave: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence said on 22 May, it is not possible to be definitive at this stage, but we expect that the benefits to the Nepalese economy of the Gurkha connection will remain substantial.

Tibet

Mr. Wolfson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what consideration has been given by him to initiating any moves to enable United Nations observers to visit Tibet; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what further action is open to him to demonstrate Her Majesty's Government's concern for the people of Tibet;

(3) what further approaches he is considering making to the Chinese Government to reflect widespread continuing concern over the treatment of the people and culture of Tibet by China.

Mr. Waldegrave: We deplore abuses of human rights wherever they occur and we have made clear to the Chinese authorities on many occasions the real concern in this country about human rights in Tibet. The Chinese Government are well aware of our dismay at recent events in Tibet and our hope that martial law will be lifted soon. We shall continue to seek suitable opportunities to make our views known. Under the terms of martial law in Tibet, foreigners including diplomats are excluded from entering Lhasa. If, however, a serious consular case should arise, we would of course request permission to enter Tibet. We shall keep the position under review.

Montserrat (Banks)

Mr. Arbuthnot: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on alleged fraudulent activity by banks registered in Montserrat.

Mr. Eggar: We are aware of allegations concerning serious irregularities in the banking system of Montserrat. The responsibility for the banking system of Montserrat rests with the Government of Montserrat who are taking urgent steps to investigate these reports and have obtained assistance from the United Kingdom in carrying out their inquiries. Whilst we have no direct responsibility for the business of banks in Montserrat, individuals are advised to exercise caution in any dealings with banks registered there.

Council of Ministers

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of forthcoming business in the European Community Council of Ministers.

Mrs. Chalker: The usual forecast was deposited in the House earlier today. At present 13 meetings of the Council of Ministers are planned for June.

The Consumers Affairs Council on 1 June will discuss the consumer credit directive which will harmonise the method of calculating annual percentage rate (APR) of charges on credit. The Council will also discuss a proposed Council resolution setting out future priorities for consumer policy; a Commission report on progress of the Council regulation of 9 June 1986 on consumer education in primary and secondary schools; and a Commission proposal for a Council directive on the approximation of laws, regulations and administrative provisions of the member states concerning general product safety. There will be a formal mid-term review of the five-year European home and leisure accident surveillance system (EHLASS) pilot scheme.

The annual EC/ACP Council of Ministers meeting will be held in Brussels on 2 June. This will be followed on 3 to 5 June by the next EC/ACP ministerial negotiating meeting in the current renegotiation of the Lomé convention.

The Transport Council on 5 and 6 June is expected to continue its discussions on negotiations on shipping with west and central Africa; possible arrangements for introducing road haulage cabotage; the weights of two, three, four, five and six-axled commercial vehicles; the progress of negotiations with Austria, Switzerland and Yugoslavia on the transit of Community traffic through those countries; the maximum permitted blood alcohol concentration for vehicle drivers; the compulsory use of seat belts in vehicles of less than 3·5 tonnes; the tread depth of tyres of certain categories of motor vehicles and their trailers; statistical returns in respect of the carriage of

goods by road; a possible code of conduct for computerised reservation systems in air transport; and air traffic systems capacity problems. It may also discuss positive measures of support for the Community shipping fleet; vocational training for certain drivers of vehicles carrying dangerous goods by road; and the inter-regional air services directive.

The Environment Council meets on 8 and 9 June. The Government are hoping for agreement on a resolution on climate change which will acknowledge the importance of the problem and call on the Community to develop suitable policies in response to it. The Council will also discuss a proposed directive establishing a safety regime for work using genetically modified organisms and a draft directive on the deliberate release of such organisms into the environment. Other subjects for discussion are the Commission's amended proposal for small car emission standards; a proposal to amend directive 80/779/EEC to provide for stringent limit values of sulphur dioxide; a proposal to limit emissions from existing municipal waste incineration plants; a proposal to add four new substances to the framework directive on substances in water; a draft directive on harmonising member states' programmes for reducing and eliminating pollution caused by waste from the titanium dioxide industry; and Commission reports on proposed directives concerning protection of habitats and nitrate pollution in water.

The Social Affairs Council, meeting on 12 and 13 June, is expected to give preliminary consideration to a Commission communication on a draft charter of social rights and consider with a view to adoption the health and safety framework directive. The Council will also consider the Hanover study of working conditions; proposals for a directive on equal treatment in social security; proposals for a decision on measures to foster the economic and social integration of the least-favoured groups; and draft presidency conclusions on employment of the disabled and the sharing of work and family responsibilities. It may also discuss proposals for a regulation on measures to help redundant shipworkers and amendments to the family benefit provisions of the migrant workers regulations.

The Foreign Affairs Council on 12 and 13 June will discuss further the draft mandate for negotiations with the USSR on a trade, commercial and economic co-operation agreement. The Council may also discuss further the Community's trade relations with the United States including the dispute over hormones in meat, soya, and developments in the implementation of section "Super 301" of the 1988 US Trade Act. There may be discussion of progress in the GATT Uruguay round negotiations and progress on the Lomé renegotiation in the light of the EC/ACP ministerial negotiating meeting in Brussels on 3 to 5 June.

The Internal Market Council on 14 and 15 June will discuss a number of measures relevant to the completion of the single market.

The Economic and Finance Council will meet on 19 June to discuss the Commission's proposed reform of the financial regulation and to have a follow-up discussion to the March Council on combating fraud against the Community budget. The Council is also expected to discuss draft directives on solvency ratios for credit institutions; the second banking co-ordination directive; taxation of savings; a report on tax approximation from the Committee of Permanent Representatives; the draft 18th VAT directive concerning the ending of various derogations available to the member states under the terms of the 6th VAT directive; and three company tax measures designed to encourage co-operation between enterprises in different member states. The discussions on insider trading will focus on a draft directive co-ordinating regulations across the Community, thereby imposing minimum standards and providing for collaboration in the exchange of information. The Presidency hopes to reach a common position at the meeting.

The Agriculture Council will meet on 19 and 20 June to discuss internal market items and certain amendments to quality and sparkling wine regulations. It may also discuss New Zealand sheep and butter and the reviews of the cereals co-responsibility levy and of the sheep regime.

The Research Council will meet on 20 June. The agenda anticipates the adoption of eight R and D programme proposals: EUROTRA (machine translation); FLAIR (food science and technology); VALUE (dissemination and utilisation of results from scientific research); MAST (marine science and technology); MONITOR (forecasting and assessment of R and D); DOSES (statistical expert systems); Radiation protection; and TELEMAN (remote handling in nuclear hazardous environments). It is expected that common positions will be agreed on the following programme proposals: STEP-EPOCH (environment and climatology); BRIDGE (biotechnology) and raw materials. There will also be discussions of a proposed resolution on COST (European Co-operation in S and T) and the mid-term review of the framework programme.

The Fisheries Council meets on 21 June to discuss Community aid for surveillance costs. It may also discuss fisheries relations between the Community and the USSR, Community acceptance of an additional Greenland quota and the proposed reduction of fishing quotas in NAFO waters.

The European Council will meet on 26 and 27 June in Madrid. The Council is expected to concentrate on discussion of the Delors report on economic and monetary union, the single market, social and other issues. Further details of the agenda will be decided at the Foreign Affairs Council on 12 and 13 June.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Population Activities

Sir Charles Morrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was total expenditure on population activities for each of the years 1987 and 1988; and what percentage this represented of the total gross public expenditure on overseas aid for each of the years 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Chris Patten: In 1987 total expenditure on population-related activities was £15·9 million which represented 1·3 per cent. of gross public expenditure on overseas aid. Of this figure, £13·2 million was spent through multilateral population programmes.

Final disbursement figures for bilateral government assistance in the population sector are not yet available for 1988. Contributions to multilateral population programmes in 1988 totalled £14·066 million.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Exports and Imports (Turkey)

Sir John Farr: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the obstacles by way of tariff, duty, and so on placed on *(a)* the export of British textiles to Turkey and *(b)* the import of Turkish textiles to the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Government are very concerned about the high level of taxation imposed on textiles entering Turkey. The table shows the position for a range of textiles and garment categories; in each case the EC duty on imports from Turkey is zero. The Turkish industry voluntarily restrains its exports of certain textile and clothing products to the Community.

The continuing high level of Turkish import taxation is counter to the terms of the EC/Turkey association agreement.

	Basic tariff per cent.	*Municipal tax (of Customs Duty)* per cent.	*Stamp tax* per cent.	*Stamp duty* per cent.	*Import premium* per cent.	*Wharf dues (per cent. of total)*	*Housing fund*	*Total per cent. approx.*
Synthetic filament yarn	10	15	2	10	10	5	$50/tonne	41
Wool cloth	20	15	2	10	10	5	$10/kg	80
Cotton cloth (finished)	30	15	2	10	10	5	$2/kg	79
Synthetic staple fibre	8	15	2	10	10	5	$15/tonne	38
Spun synthetic yarn	30	15	2	10	10	5	$15/tonne	64
Knitted outwear	40	15	2	10	10	5	$20/kg	124
Men's suits 87-08	40	15	2	10	10	5	10 per cent./kg CIF value	89

Post Offices

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has on the future of Crown post office provision in *(a)* East Sussex and *(b)* Brighton.

Mr. Forth: Detailed decisions about the nature and extent of the post office network are an operational matter for the Post Office. However, I understand that it plans to convert to agency status one Crown office in Kemptown, Brighton and two further Crown offices at Polegate and Hove in East Sussex. They will continue to handle the full range of transactions currently carried out by Crown offices. It has no plans to reduce the number of outlets in Brighton or East Sussex.

Scottish and Newcastle Brewery (Takeover)

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on what statutory basis he recently refused to permit a takeover of Scottish and Newcastle Brewers; and if he will be required to seek to amend or repeal that legislation to conform to European Community obligations.

Mr. Maude: Action by my right hon. and noble Friend in relation to the proposed takeover of Scottish and Newcastle Breweries by Elders IXL was taken under the Fair Trading Act 1973. No action is required in respect of that legislation to conform to European Community obligations.

Manufacturing Undertakings (Change of Control)

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has powers to extend section 13 of the Industry Act 1975 to cover economic activities other than manufacturing.

Mr. Maude: The Secretary of State has no power to extend section 13 to activities other than those of manufacturing industry as defined in the Act.

VAT

Mr Butterfill: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the total number of new companies *(a)* registering and *(b)* deregistering for value added tax purposes for each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: Estimates for the United Kingdom are as follows:

Registrations (a) Deregistrations (b) For VAT (thousands)

	(a)	*(b)*
1983	180	145
1984	182	152
1985	182	163
1986	191	164
1987	205	160

Source: Department of Employment.

This represents a net increase of 11·5 per cent. in the stock of businesses registered for VAT between the end of 1982 and the end of 1987, the latest date for which reliable estimates are available.

Induction Loops

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether his Department has any proposals to change present regulations on the licensing and fees for induction loops in public buildings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Since the implementation of an exemption order on 1 May 1989, licences under the Wireless Telegraphy Act 1949 are no longer required for a wide range of low power devices including all induction loop systems complying with the Department's performance specification MPT1337 or any of its predecessors BR13, BR19 and BR34.

A new specification, MPT1370, for higher power induction loops, necessary for some larger buildings, is currently being drafted. It is expected that these will also be made exempt from licensing.

Ferguson's Shipbuilders Ltd

Dr. Godman: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether any progress has been made on the disposal of Ferguson's Shipbuilders Ltd, Port Glasgow.

Mr. Newton: I have today invited the chairman of British Shipbuilders to open negotiations with the HLD Group Ltd of Greenock as preferred bidder for the assets of the corporation's shipbuilding subsidiary Ferguson Shipbuilders Ltd at Port Glasgow. HLD's bid depends on its reaching an early and satisfactory agreement with the work force. I should make it clear that, should this not prove possible, I could not be optimistic that there would be any other realistic prospect of achieving a successful sale.

Industry Act 1972

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has any plans to modify the administration of assistance provided under section 10 of the Industry Act 1972; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Assistance under section 10 of the Industry Act 1972, known as the home credit shipbuilding guarantee scheme, will in future be subject to an explicit test of need before offers are made. This will bring the administration of the scheme into line with that of other departmental schemes.

Net Book Agreement

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if, pursuant to his answer of 24 January, *Official Report*, column *470*, he has any plans to reconsider the net book agreement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 25 May 1989]:* I have no such plans. Under the relevant legislation, the review of arrangements such as the net book agreement is a matter for the Restrictive Practices Court, on application by the Director General of Fair Trading. The director general has recently announced that he is considering whether to ask the court to look again at the agreement. He has invited representations by the end of May, and hopes to be in a position to take a final decision by the end of July.

Estate Agents

Mr. Summerson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he will make a statement on the possible introduction of a code of practice and other regulatory measures covering estate agents as recommended in the report prepared by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and submitted to the Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs on 27 January.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 25 May 1989]:* I am in the process of concluding a review of estate agency. In the course of this review I have taken account of proposals from a number of interested parties, including the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.

I hope to make an announcement shortly.

HEALTH

Consultants

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list for the Trent regional health authority the average number of National Health Service operations done by consultants in each specialty in each of the past five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Freeman: The available information on the numbers of in-patient cases, day cases and medical staff is shown in the tables. It is not possible to derive meaningful averages because operations performed on out-patients are excluded and some operations are performed by registrars.

Estimated number of operations performed, by specialty, in National Health Service non-psychiatric hospitals, Trent regional health authority

	Estimated visits to theatre in-patients 1985[2] [3]	*Cases operated on in operating theatre departments 1987-88*[1]
General medicine	12,650	4,872
Cardiology	2,220	76
General surgery	80,690	77,991
Ear, nose and throat	25,810	26,708
Traumatic and orthopaedic	39,810	43,885
Ophthalmology	13,100	14,774
Radiotherapy	960	1,114
Urology	15,050	16,633
Plastic surgery	5,350	7,674
Thoracic surgery[5]	3,450	3,833
Dental (oral) surgery	7,430	9,914
Neurosurgery	1,620	1,903
Gynaecology	55,870	41,049
All general practitioner units	160	256
Other specialties	[4]6,910	14,266
TOTAL	[4]271,080	264,948

[1] *Source:* KHQB.
[2] Ordinary admissions and day cases.
[3] *Source:* Hospital in-patient enquiry (HIPE).
[4] Excludes obstetrics.
[5] Cardiothoracic surgery for 1987-88.

NHS Hospital Medical and Dental Consultants Trent Regional Health Authority at 30 September each year.

Whole-time equivalent

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
All Medical and Dental Specialities	995·8	1,026·7	1,043·5	1.094·5	1,145·1
All Medical Specialties	965·5	995·2	1,010·5	1,059·7	1,109·3
General Medicine	73·0	75·4	76·5	81·0	82·0
Cardiology	8·0	5·0	6·0	8·0	8·0
Diabetes and Endocrinology	1·0	1·0	1·0	0·8	0·5
Gastroenterology	0·0	1·0	1·0	1·0	1·0
Nephrology	4·0	4·0	4·0	5·0	8·0
Thoracic Medicine	9·6	10·6	8·0	8·0	8·1
Geriatric Medicine	34·7	34·7	37·9	42·5	43·1

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Audiological Medicine	0·5	0·5	0·5	0·5	1·5
Clinical Genetics	2·4	2·4	2·4	2·4	2·4
Clinical Neuro. Phys	3·7	3·7	4·0	4·0	4·0
Clinical Pharm. & Thera.	3·4	3·9	8·4	2·8	3·3
Clinical Physiology	0·7	0·7	0·7	0·7	0·7
Dermatology	15·5	15·5	15·5	16·1	17·7
Genito-Urinary Medicine	10·5	12·5	12·5	13·5	16·0
Medical Oncology	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Infectious Diseases	2·4	2·4	2·4	2·4	2·5
Neurology	8·0	8·0	10·0	10·0	11·0
Occupational Health	0·0	0·0	1·0	2·0	3·0
Rheumatology	14·1	15·1	15·6	15·6	18·8
Other	1·4	1·4	0·8	0·5	0·3
Paediatrics	41·9	44·4	45·2	47·2	52·3
Paediatric Neurology	1·0	1·0	2·0	2·0	1·0
Accident and Emergency	15·0	15·0	14·8	14·8	18·7
General Surgery	81·4	66·7	88·5	67·8	67·6
Cardio-Thoracic Surgery	9·0	8·0	8·0	8·0	9·3
Otolaryngology	29·8	29·3	28·5	30·9	31·0
Neurosurgery	8·0	8·0	5·0	6·0	6·0
Opthalmology	30·8	31·1	31·7	31·7	32·7
Paediatric Surgery	4·0	4·0	4·0	4·0	5·0
Plastic Surgery	7·8	6·8	7·0	8·0	8·0
Traumatic and Ortho. Surgery	53·7	53·5	56·2	57·0	59·1
Urology	11·0	11·1	13·1	14·1	15·1
Obstetrics and Gynaecology	55·2	56·8	57·1	57·5	58·8
Anaesthetics	152·3	159·0	159·8	168·7	174·7
Radiology	65·0	64·8	70·5	75·5	80·2
Nuclear Medicine	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Radiotherapy	14·5	15·8	13·2	15·4	15·5
General Pathology	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Blood Transfusion	3·0	3·0	4·0	4·0	4·0
Chemical Pathology	16·0	15·0	16·0	16·0	16·0
Haematology	22·7	23·9	23·4	23·4	24·6
Histopathology	36·9	36·9	35·4	37·4	43·6
Immuno-Pathology	3·3	3·3	3·3	3·3	3·3
Medical Microbiology	14·8	14·3	18·3	18·3	20·3
Neuropathology	2·0	2·0	1·0	1·5	1·5
Mental Illness	81·1	85·1	83·1	90·2	96·9
Child and Adol. Psychiatry	19·0	20·0	18·1	18·7	23·6
Forensic Psychiatry	1·0	1·0	2·0	2·0	1·0
Mental Handicap	12·8	12·8	13·1	13·7	14·1
Psychotherapy	3·0	3·0	4·0	5·0	5·0
All Dental Specialties	30·1	31·5	33·0	34·8	35·8
Oral surgery	18·2	17·2	17·2	18·3	17·4
Orthodontics	9·4	9·3	9·6	10·3	11·8
Restorative dentistry	4·5	5·0	6·6	8·2	11·8
Paediatric dentistry	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0

(SM13A)

Source: Hospital medical and dental staff regional tables R1

Notes:

1. Includes all permanent paid and honorary staff.
2. From 1987 Senior Hospital Medical/Dental officers (with allowance) are included with "Other Staff".

Transplants

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about the effects on transplant services of the White Paper on the National Health Service.

Mr. Freeman: Organ transplant services are normally provided on a supra-district, regional or supra-regional basis. The NHS review White Paper states that most of these services will in future be bought by districts for their resident populations from their basic allocations. The White Paper does, however, recognise that some central funding will be necessary for the development of supra-regional services, and that regional health authorities may decide on a similar approach to the funding of some regional or supra-district services. The NHS management executive will discuss with RHAs the detailed application to these services of the new funding arrangements proposed.

For further details of the proposed arrangements for supra-regional services, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) on 25 May.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about dialysis and transplant rates in each of the EEC countries.

Mr. Freeman: According to information provided by the European Dialysis and Transplant Association, the number of patients alive on all forms of renal replacement therapy, including dialysis and transplant, on 31 December 1987 was:

Country	*Total*	*Rate per million population*
Belgium	3,905	396
Denmark	1,191	233
Federal Republic of Germany	26,402	434
France	18,482	333
Greece	2,568	257
Ireland	782	218
Italy	18,697	327
Luxembourg	151	413
Netherlands	5,136	353
Portugal	3,086	300
Spain	12,941	333
United Kingdom	15,119	267

In recent years, the acceptance of new patients on to therapy has been increasing rapidly in the United Kingdom. The percentage change in each EC country from 1984 to 1987 is shown below.

Country	*Percentage change*
Belgium	+12
Denmark	+24
Federal Republic of Germany	+37
France	+24
Greece	+23
Ireland	−15
Italy	+15
Luxembourg	+102
Netherlands	−11
Portugal	−2
Spain	−7
United Kingdom	+41

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many United Kingdom citizens entitled to National Health Service treatment underwent transplants in private hospitals in the United Kingdom in 1988.

Mr. Freeman: Precise information is not available centrally, but the number is thought to be very small.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people are on the waiting list for *(a)* heart, *(b)* heart-lung and *(c)* lung transplants for each of the last five years.

Mr. Freeman: According to information provided by the United Kingdom transplant service, the number of National Health Service patients waiting for a heart, heart-lung, or lung transplant since January 1986 was:

	Number
6 January 1986	269
31 December 1986	362
31 December 1987	337
31 December 1988	419
22 May 1989	474

The rising waiting list reflects rising referrals to the transplant centres as the success of the technique has become increasingly apparent. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State announced on 13 December 1988 at column *539* his intention to designate and fund a fifth supra-regional heart transplant centre from 1 April 1990.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the median waiting time for patients on the kidney transplant waiting list;

(2) how many people are waiting for a kidney transplant; and how many were waiting in each of the last five years.

Mr. Freeman: According to information provided by the United Kingdom transplant service, the number of National Health Service patients awaiting a kidney transplant in the United Kingdom for the last five years was as follows:

	Number
1 January 1985	[1]2,985
6 January 1986	[1]3,443
31 December 1986	[1]3,468
31 December 1987	3,306
31 December 1988	3,493
22 May 1989	3,549

[1] This figure includes patients waiting in Eire.

Information on waiting times for kidney transplants is given in my reply to the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) on 22 February 1989 at columns *674-75*.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about the effect on the United Kingdom transplant waiting list of demand from other EEC countries.

Mr. Freeman: It appears unlikely that the treatment of EC patients under any of the NHS transplant programmes has a material effect on United Kingdom waiting lists. EC patients would not generally wish their names to be added to the waiting list for donor kidneys. In the case of liver transplants, more organs are available at present than are required to meet United Kingdom needs. The relatively small number of heart transplants performed on EC patients is roughly equivalent to the number of organs donated to United Kingdom patients from EC sources.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many conferences or seminars on transplantation have been sponsored or organised by the Department of Health in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Freeman: Most conferences on transplantation are organised by health authorities and professional and voluntary bodies. The Department provides encouragement and, on occasions, participates in such conferences. Accurate statistics on departmental involvement over the last 10 years could be assembled only at disproportionate cost.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many applications for funding for publicity on organ

transplants have been made to the Department of Health in each of the last five years; and how many have been granted.

Mr. Freeman: Formal applications for assistance with publicity expenditure are rarely received, although ideas for publicity initiatives are often put forward in correspondence or discussion. It would be possible to assemble a comprehensive list of these ideas only at a disproportionate cost. However, the Department is currently considering suggestions for publicity projects put forward by a number of organisations associated with transplantation, including the National Federation of Kidney Patients' Association, the British Transplant Games, and the United Kingdom Transplant Co-ordinators Association.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) in how many languages the donor card is available;

(2) if he will make a statement about transplantation in the minority ethnic groups.

Mr. Freeman: Patients from minority ethnic groups often experience relatively long waiting times for transplants because of the difficulty of obtaining a well-matched organ. This is due largely to low rates of organ donation in these communities, which appear to be associated with culture and tradition. Transplant units in areas with substantial ethnic minority populations carry out local projects aimed at increasing awareness of transplantation among these groups. One unit has provided leaflets and other publicity material in the majority ethnic language explaining organ donation and the use of the donor card. The Department's organ donor card is in English, but I understand that in one area a card has been produced in Gujurati.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list those departmental health authorities which hold a Transplant Day to draw attention to the potential of organ donation.

Mr. Freeman: We do not collect this information centrally. I suggest that the hon. Member contacts health authorities for the details she requires.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has as to whether a central library of educational material about organ donation and transplantation has been collected.

Mr. Freeman: I understand that a number of organisations associated with transplantation are considering ways in which such a library could be established.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made in developing publicity about organ donation and transplant among doctors, nurses and the public.

Mr. Freeman: We have recently produced a new leaflet to accompany the donor card. Display material and a video on transplantation and organ donation for professional staff are in the final stages of preparation.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what support is given to the public relations offices of the United Kingdom transport service; and what is the offices' total departmental budget.

Mr. Freeman: The Department funds an officer at the United Kingdom transplant service to deal with inquiries about the work of the organisation. We do not provide UKTS with a budget for publicity on organ donation. The funds for this are handled by the Department's information division.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list for each hospital over 250 beds in the Trent regional health authority *(a)* the land and building capital evaluation and *(b)* equipment capital evaluation; what reviews he is carrying out in respect of hospitals paying capital interest charges; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The current value of the NHS estate does not provide site values in terms of bed numbers. Land and building will be valued later this year by district valuers for the purpose of introducing capital charges. Equipment will be valued by local health authorities.

Census Statistics

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether it is still the intention of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys to release small area statistics in a form which would make it possible to match these small area statistics with other personal databases precisely through the post code;

(2) what plans the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys has to guarantee confidentiality of small area statistics from the 1991 census in the light of the fact that the use of the post code will make it possible for small area statistics to be matched with other personal databases.

Mr. Freeman: The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys does not intend to release small area statistics from the 1991 census in any form which would make it possible to match characteristics of identifiable individual people or households with those held on other databases.

Steps are being proposed, as for the 1981 census, to prevent the inadvertent disclosure of information on identifiable people or households, by modifying figures at random by $+1, 0$ or -1, and by not releasing any statistics for areas containing fewer than a specified number of people or households.

Dental Services

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how the fees for the provision of dentures and bridges through the hospital and community services, under notice FPN 472, will be calculated; and how they will be funded.

Mr. Freeman: Hospital out-patients and patients treated by the community dental service are required to pay an NHS charge for dentures and bridges supplied as part of their treatment, unless they are in an exempt category. From 1 April 1989 the amount paid by patients is calculated as a fixed proportion, currently 75 per cent., of the fee which a general dental practitioner would receive if the denture or bridge were supplied through the general dental service. Costs of the hospital dental service are met by health authorities and the allocation of resources to them takes account of this service.

Complaints Procedure

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements exist for the hearing of patients' complaints and disciplinary hearings following dental, hospital or community clinic prescriptions; and what penalties may arise from such hearings.

Mr. Freeman: Arrangements for dealing with complaints about hospital treatment or about community health services are covered by the Department's guidance (circular HC(88)37) issued in June 1988.

Family practitioner committees deal with complaints against general dental practitioners who can be warned to comply with terms of service more closely, have an amount withheld from remuneration, be required to submit estimates for prior approval by the Dental Estimates Board or be referred to the NHS tribunal which can remove a dentist from the family practitioner committee's dental lists. Action may be taken against hospital practitioners under local disciplinary procedures or the provisions of HM(61)112 which allows for a formal hearing of disciplinary cases. Any complaint found proved may lead to a formal warning, suspension or dismissal. Complaints of a serious nature may be referred to the General Dental Council which is empowered, after a hearing, to order a dentist's suspension or removal from the dental register.

Adoption

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the rights of access to centrally and locally held information of a person who was adopted; what is the statutory basis upon which an adopted person can seek and obtain information about birth and natural parentage; and if he intends to hold any reviews of this procedure.

Mr. Freeman: Section 51 of the Adoption Act 1976 gives adopted adults the right of access to information on their original birth record. Those adopted before 12 November 1975 must receive counselling before being given this information. There is no statutory right of access to records held by adoption agencies. However, adoption agencies as part of their services will help a person whose adoption the agency has arranged with information about his origins and the circumstances leading to the adoption.

A review of adoption law is planned and the question of access to information will be considered in that review.

Nurses

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of the nursing staff have accepted their gradings in each of *(a)* St. Thomas's and *(b)* the South Western; what is the number of staff whose regrading is still subject to an appeal procedure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We do not collect the information centrally.

Regional Health Authorities

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to be able to release the information contained in the regional health authority outturn reports of 1988-89.

Mr. Mellor: Regional health authorities are due to submit their outturn reports for 1988-89 to the NHS management executive by 31 July 1989. Decisions have not yet been taken on any arrangements for publishing the information they contain.

Calibre of Aylesbury

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health why the former grant of £8,000 a year paid to Calibre of Aylesbury, which produces talking books for the blind, was reduced two years ago to £500 a year; why it has now been withdrawn; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Calibre was set up as a charitable trust in 1974 and began receiving funding from the Department in 1976 under our section 64 general scheme of grants to voluntary organisations. The grant was reviewed in 1984 when it was decided that Calibre was in a healthy financial situation which no longer justified section 64 support. Accordingly, a three-year tapering grant was awarded with the final payment of £2,000 being made in the financial year 1986-87. Although we are no longer able to award Calibre priority over the other organisations seeking section 64 grants, I should like to emphasise the high regard which the Department has for the services which Calibre provides to blind people.

Health For All 2000

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he instructed the Health Education Authority to cease work on the community participation aspect of Health For All 2000; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to my replies to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) on 24 April at column *382*.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice he has given, or he intends to give, to local authorities on achieving the targets set in the Health For All 2000 programme.

Mr. Mellor: The Health For All targets have attracted considerable publicity, but we consider it is for health authorities, local authorities and other public bodies to determine how far the targets should be reflected in their plans and priorities.

NHS Reform

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether it is the aim of Her Majesty's Government that all general practices should end up, individually or in combination, as budget holders.

Mr. Mellor: The system of GP practice budgets as set out in NHS review working paper 3 is completely voluntary. From April 1991 onwards, larger practices with 11,000 or more patients on their lists and groupings of smaller practices will be able to apply to have a budget. Any extension to the scheme, such as a relaxation in the criterion of the size of practice, would need to be considered in the light of experience gained from the operation of the scheme.

Mr Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what details he can give of his intentions for each band of supplementary compensation payable to general practices in areas of dispersed population.

Mr. Mellor: At our meeting on 4 May the general medical services committee negotiators and I agreed that the present system of rural practice payments needed to be updated. Work on revising the scheme has now been taken out of the present consultations and will be considered by the central advisory committee on rural practice payments. Detailed considerations will be a matter for this committee.

Ambulance Crews

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what plans he has to publish the findings of the Ambulance Council working party entitled "The Problems of Long-Service Ambulancemen";

(2) what steps his Department is taking to reduce deaths in service and diseases of the circulatory system among ambulance personnel.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to my reply on 3 March to the hon. Member for Barnsley, East (Mr. Patchett) at column *368*.

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received concerning the report from the Ambulance Council working party. "The Problems of Long-Service Ambulancemen".

Mr. Freeman: We have received representations from the trades union side of the Ambulance Council and from five hon. and right hon. Members.

Ambulance Council

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met the Ambulance Council; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Freeman: We last met representatives of the trade union side of the Ambulance Council on 13 March when we discussed pay determination and representation.

Nurses (Pay)

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the increase in nurses' remuneration between 1 April 1974 and 1 October 1979 and between 1 October 1979 and 1 April 1989; and if he will also present the increase in remuneration during both periods after deduction of charges for accommodation and board.

Mr. Mellor: The value of nurses real terms pay has changed as follows:

Pay Round Years (1 August to 31 July)	*Percentage Movement in Real Terms Pay (a)*
1974-75 to 1978-79	−21
1979-80 to 1988-89	+44

Basic pay, after deductions for lodging charges, for the main grades of nursing staff fell in real terms in the five years to 1979, that is:—

Pay Round Years 1974-75—1978-79

Grades (Maximum of Scale)	*Percentage Movement in Real Terms Pay, after deductions for Lodging charges (a)*
Sister	−23
Staff Nurse	−19
Enrolled Nurse	−17
Nursing Auxiliary	−10
Student	−5

Note: Percentage movements in real terms reflect the percentage cash increase/decrease for the pay round year deflated by the increase in the retail prices index throughout the pay round year.

Lodging charges ceased however to be linked with salaries in 1981. Since that date the council responsible for negotiating nurses terms and conditions of service has agreed varying charges for defined categories of accommodation, based on the cost of providing that accommodation. Learner nurses and staff under 22 pay lower rates. Direct comparison with pay levels cannot therefore now be made.

Contaminated Food

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many consignments of imported food have been rejected because of bacteriological contamination in May; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Records of rejected unfit imported food consignments are not held centrally.

Immunopathologists

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish a table showing the number, and rate per 100,000 population, of immunopathologsts, in each constituent part of the United Kingdom; if he has any plans to increase the number in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is set out in the table.

Hospital Consultants in Immunopathology at 30 September 1987

	Number	*Per 100,000 population*	*Whole time equivalent*	*Per 100,000 population*
United Kingdom	44	0·1	30·2	0·1
England	40	0·1	27·5	0·1
Wales	0	0	0	0
Scotland	2	0	1·6	0
Northern Ireland	2	0·1	1·1	0·1

Figures include permanent paid and honorary and are rounded to the first decimal point.

For further information about the position in Wales I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him on 20 March at column *718* by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Welsh Office.

NHS Ancillary Staff

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the latest figures available for the number of ancillary staff employed in the National Health Service by scale and point, of standard payroll system code, under the terms and conditions of the ancillary staffs' Whitley council agreement.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 22 May 1989]:* The latest available information to this level of detail relates to staff in post at 30 September 1987. At this date the estimated numbers of whole-time equivalent ancillary staff employed by the NHS in England by pay scale and incremental point were as shown in the table.

Ancillary staff—estimated incremental distributions by payscale in England[1] at 30 September 1987

Whole time equivalents[2]

Payscale	*Total*	*Points on incremental scales*				
		1st	*2nd*	*3rd*	*4th*	*5th*
Non-supervisors and chargehands						
Scale A	69,114	19,138	22,566	27,410	—	—
Scale B	24,541	3,798	5,401	13,175	2,168	—
Scale C	10,236	1,601	1,752	5,236	1,648	—
Scale D	794	95	171	493	35	—
Supervisors						
Scale I	3,890	663	624	2,166	467	—
Scale II	2,349	218	593	1,199	340	—
Scale III	1,753	135	306	844	468	—
Scale IV	1,010	63	158	481	226	82

Orthopaedic appliance makers and fitters

	Number
Trainee grades	4
	13
	4
O A maker II	56
O A maker I	69
O A fitters	3
Trainee cooks	34
Upholsterers	131
Other grades[3]	578
Totally directly employed staff[1]	114,579

Source: Department of Health (SM13) Annual census of NHS non-medical manpower.

[1] Includes Dental Estimates Board and Prescription Pricing Authority. Excludes some staff of other Statutory Authorities (484 whole-time equivalents).

[2] All figures are independently rounded to the nearest whole-time equivalent.

[3] Includes juvenile grades, other staff paid on ad hoc payscales, and staff of some authorities not on computerised payrolls.

Male School Leavers (Nursing)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to attract male school leavers into the nursing profession.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 23 May 1989]:* As part of our national nurse recruitment advertising in England we are currently developing a campaign designed to attract more men into the profession. The campaign will be aimed at older men as well as at school leavers and those who influence them such as parents, career advisers and school teachers.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Assaults (Compensation)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table to show how many persons, in total and of these how many were councillors, and of what political parties, have been paid compensation after allegations of assault by *(a)* members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, *(b)* the Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve, *(c)* the Ulster Defence Regiment, and *(d)* the Army in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years; what were the sums paid, the total costs including legal and other fees, in each case and the total costs to public funds including police costs for investigations and legal and other costs or as much of such information as is available to him.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The information is not available in the form requested, but I have listed below details of total damages paid over the last five years to persons alleging assault by members of the Army and the UDR.

Financial year	*Number of persons*	*Total damages paid £*
1984-1985	12	11,775
1985-1986	61	118,527
1986-1987	26	71,561
1987-1988	32	64,351
1988-1989	29	51,469

Notes:

1. In six of the cases (three in 1985-86; two in 1986-87 and one in 1987-88) the claims involved allegations of assault, wrongful arrest and false imprisonment.
2. In three cases (one in 1986-87 and two in 1987-88) the claims were made jointly against the MOD and the Chief Constable.
3. The figures do not include legal fees or police costs.
4. Information in respect of the RUC and RUC(R) cannot be made available except at disporportionate cost.

Firearms

Mr. McCusker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many times authorisation has been given by the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary to police officers from the Irish Republic to carry firearms in Northern Ireland during each of the past six years.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I understand from the Chief Constable that no such authorisation has been given.

Mr. McCusker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether authorisation for members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary to carry firearms in the Republic of Ireland has been sought from the appropriate authority in the Irish Republic when members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary have been visiting the Republic for the purpose of discussing anti-terrorist co-operation with their counterparts in the Irish police; and on how many occasions this has been refused.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I am not aware that any such authorisations have been sought.

Election (Proof of Identity)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will now make it his policy, in the light of reports that persons were refused ballot papers at the local government elections in Northern Ireland on 17 May because they could not produce one of the specified documents to prove their identity, to make arrangements to seek the views of *(a)* the Northern Ireland political parties and *(b)* the staff employed by the chief electoral officer on that day as presiding officers and poll clerks, and to have an accurate count taken of persons refused a ballot paper for that reason at the European Economic Community elections on 15 June;

(2) if, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East of 16 May *Official Report*, column *164*, he has sought from the political parties in Northern Ireland, or from the staff employed by the chief electoral officer for Northern Ireland, any evidence as to whether any persons did not possess any of the documents necesary to prove their identity when going to vote at recent elections in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 22 May 1989]:* I should be happy to consider any evidence or views which the Northern Ireland political parties may wish to submit to me. Polling station staff have not been asked to maintain records of persons arriving at polling stations without the required proof of identity, nor is there any statutory authority for them to do so. The chief electoral officer makes every effort to remind electors of the need to have in their possession one of the specified documents when they come to vote. I understand that it is his intention to give further publicity to this requirement during the run-up to the European parliamentary elections.

ENVIRONMENT

Water Companies (Foreign Holdings)

Mr Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing all known foreign holdings in British water companies as a percentage of the share capital in each case, together with the turnover of the companies concerned and the number of households supplied.

Mr. Howard: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 10 April to my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley), at column *400*. My Department does not mention detailed records of foreign shareholdings in statutory water companies.

Housing Act 1988

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps his Department is taking to bring to the attention of local authorities section 129 of the Housing Act 1988 concerning grants to or for the benefit of their tenants to assist them to obtain other accommodation by buying or leasing a home, or by extending an existing property.

Mr. Trippier: The Department wrote to all borough and district councils in England to draw their attention to section 129, which came into operation on 1 April, and give guidance on the framing of cash incentive schemes. Twenty-one schemes have been approved to date and others are under discussion. Cash incentives can play a valuable part in helping tenants move into homes of their own and releasing vacancies for reletting in areas of housing shortage.

Domestic Rating

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table in the form of his answer to the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes of 18 May, *Official Report*, column *262*, showing, in descending order, the domestic rate in the pound set by the London boroughs for *(a)* 1981-82 and *(b)* 1982-83, showing for each borough the political control at each date.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested is as follows:

Domestic rate poundage and political control in London 1981-82

	Poundage (p)	*Control at April 1981*
Haringey	188·7	Labour
Brent	179·1	Labour
Newham	176·0	Labour
Lambeth	172·5	Labour
Southwark	167·7	Labour
Waltham Forest	167·5	Labour
Hackney	165·2	Labour
Camden	161·1	Labour
Lewisham	156·6	Labour
Tower Hamlets	152·5	Labour
Hounslow	147·5	Labour
Islington	143·7	Labour
Harrow	134·0	Conservative
Hammersmith and Fulham	132·9	No Control
Greenwich	132·1	Labour
Barking and Dagenham	129·5	Labour
Bexley	123·0	Conservative
Havering	120·5	Conservative
Hillingdon	112·8	Conservative
Ealing	112·5	Conservative
Kensington and Chelsea	111·5	Conservative
Enfield	109·5	Conservative
Redbridge	105·0	Conservative
Wandsworth	104·0	Conservative
Barnet	101·0	Conservative
Kingston upon Thames	100·5	Conservative
Merton	98·0	Conservative
Sutton	97·0	Conservative
Bromley	96·5	Conservative
Westminster	95·0	Conservative
City of London	87·4	Independent
Richmond upon Thames	84·5	Conservative
Croydon	79·5	Conservative

1982-83

	Poundage (p)	Control at April 1982
Haringey	208·3	Labour
Brent	187·5	Labour
Waltham Forest	186·5	Labour
Newham	183·5	Labour
Southwark	179·0	Labour
Hackney	177·5	Labour
Camden	173·9	Labour
Tower Hamlets	167·5	Labour
Greenwich	161·1	Labour
Lewisham	158·1	Labour
Islington	157·6	Labour
Lambeth	157·5	Labour
Hammersmith and Fulham	156·3	No Control
Harrow	151·0	Conservative
Hounslow	147·5	Labour
Bexley	140·0	Conservative
Hillingdon	134·8	Conservative
Kensington and Chelsea	134·4	Conservative
Havering	132·0	Conservative
Barking and Dagenham	131·5	Labour
Enfield	128·0	Conservative
Ealing	123·5	Conservative
Barnet	122·5	Conservative
Merton	120·5	Conservative
Sutton	119·0	Conservative
Redbridge	116·0	Conservative
Westminster	115·7	Conservative
Bromley	114·5	Conservative
Wandsworth	114·0	Conservative
Kingston upon Thames	111·5	Conservative
Richmond upon Thames	108·1	Conservative
City of London	107·7	Independent
Croydon	93·5	Conservative

Disabled Persons

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on the effects clause 7 of the Local Government and Housing Bill will have on the employment prospects of disabled people registered under section II of the disabled persons' employment register, intending to work, or working in local authority workshops, sheltered placement schemes or homeworker schemes; what action he will be taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has received no representations on this aspect of clause 7. The aim of the clause is to ensure that all local authority staff are appointed on merit. It will, however, be subject to certain existing statutory provisions, including sections 9 and 12 of the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944—quotas and reserved employment. The position of disabled people seeking local authority employment will therefore be protected.

Ivory

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if Her Majesty's Government will undertake an investigation into the misuse of quota numbers for ivory tusks under the convention on international trade in endangered species.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Oversight of the ivory quota system is the responsibility of the secretariat of the convention on international trade in endangered species.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why ivory tusks imported into the United Kingdom from Zaire on 21 October 1988, with quota numbers that had previously been used, and then issued with new quota numbers, were granted import licences by his Department.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 25 May 1989.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he proposes to take in regard to the role of Ms. Lulita Minkshim and the Finance Investment Corporation of Panama in the unlawful trade in ivory or other transactions concerning parts of other endangered species like rhinoceros horn.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department has no evidence that the person and company named have been involved in illegal trade in endangered species. Any such evidence should be passed to the police or to Customs and Excise, who are the enforcement agencies.

Elephants and Ivory

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if Her Majesty's Government will consider seeking to put elephants in appendix one of the convention on international trade in endangered species;

(2) if the Government plan to seek to change the present quota system of the convention on international trade in endangered species regarding the trade of ivory.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the statement made by my noble Friend the Minister for Housing, Environment and Countryside on 23 May 1989 calling for a ban on trade in new ivory. The future of the quota system will depend on the decision taken with regard to listing the African elephant on appendix I of the convention at the next CITES conference in October.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he has any plans to ensure that in those areas where there are joint waste disposal committees there should be concern for all controlled wastes rather than a combining of responsibility only for hazardous waste;

(2) if he proposes to provide financial support to assist in the effective operation of lead local authorities or waste regulation units in the field of hazardous waste disposal;

(3) if he will implement the proposal contained in the Select Committee of the House of Lords concerned with hazardous waste disposal that responsibility within the metropolitan counties should rest with either single statutory authorities or with groups of authorities where power is delegated to a single authority under formal agreements;

(4) if he will require producers of hazardous waste to register with the waste regulation authorities and to disclose the particular nature of the waste produced.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: These matters are being considered in relation to the report of the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology on hazardous waste disposal which was published on 16 May. A full Government response to that report will be published as soon as possible.

Correspondence

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the hon. Member for Walsall, North will receive a reply to the letter he wrote on 13 March enclosing a letter from a constituent concerning toxic waste and related issues.

Mr. Moynihan: I have written today.

Dog Registration

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the extent of public support for the introduction of dog registration and licensing; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received a number of representations on the introduction of a dog registration scheme.

Cash Limits

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any changes to announce to his Department's cash limits for 1989-90.

Mr. Ridley: Yes. I propose the following changes, subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate.

The non-voted cash limit for urban aid (Doe/UA1) will be increased by £91 million, from £559·454 million to £650·454 million, to provide for an increase in the external finance limit of the London Docklands development corporation to allow the corporation to maintain progress with priority transport schemes.

This increase will be offset by reductions elsewhere and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure. The non-voted cash limit for the new towns (DOE/NT1) has been reduced by £50 million, from minus £385·535 million to minus £435·535 million, to take account of receipts from disposal of property which are higher than forecast. There have been other reductions in non-cash limited expenditure.

Community Charge Leaflet

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his current estimate of the legal, administrative and other costs incurred in the recent legal action involving the community charge leaflet by *(a)* the London borough of Greenwich and *(b)* the Department of the Environment.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 22 May 1989]:* Figures are not yet available, but Greenwich will have to foot the bill as well as the costs involved in correcting its own material distributed to 85,000 homes in which it falsely claimed that failure to pay the community charge would affect an individual's right to vote.

Bathing Waters

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the estimated cost for each of *(a)* Herne Bay, *(b)* Joss bay, *(c)* Broadstairs, *(d)* Ramsgate, *(e)* Sandwich bay, *(f)* Deal castle, *(g)* Folkestone, *(h)* Sandgate, *(i)* Hythe, *(j)* Dymchurch, *(k)* St. Mary's bay, *(l)* Littlestone, *(m)* Hastings, *(n)* Seaford, *(o)* Newhaven, *(p)* Brighton, *(q)* Hove, *(r)* Southwick, *(s)* South Lancing, *(t)* Worthing, *(u)* Littlehampton, *(v)* Middleton-on-Sea, *(w)* Pagham, *(x)* Selsey, *(y)* Eastney and *(z)* Southsea of (i) a long sea outfall, (ii) full sewage treatment works with a short sea outfall, and (iii) full sewage treatment works with a long sea outfall to enable them to comply with EEC bathing water directive 76/160/EEC; and when the appropriate solutions will be put in place, giving the estimated date of commencement and completion.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 24 May 1989]:* Southern Water has an ongoing programme to bring its bathing waters up to EC standards. We are currently assessing with the authority the capital expenditure and time scale of the works involved. Consequently, I am unable to provide detailed information of the kind requested.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Education Reform Act 1988

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about the working of sections 106-111 and 117-118 of the Education Reform Act 1988 since their implementation on 1 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend has received several representations on the subject of charges for school activities. He will keep a close watch on the impact of the new arrangements, once schools have had time to adjust to them.

Mr. Franks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science which qualifications he intends to approve under section 5 of the Education Reform Act 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: My Department will be sending to schools and LEAs on 31 May a circular on the provisions of section 5 of the Education Reform Act 1988, together with a list of qualifications and syllabuses approved for use in maintained schools for compulsory school age pupils. Copies will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Research Councils

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) when he expects to take a decision about the future of research councils; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he intends to consult with outside organisations about the recommendations in the Morris committee report about the future of research councils; and if he will make a statement;

(3) whether he will place a copy in the Library of the Morris committee report on the future of research councils.

Mr. Jackson: The review of research councils' responsibilities for biological sciences, undertaken by a group chaired by Mr. J. R. S. Morris, was commissioned by the Advisory Board for the Research Councils. I understand that the board intends to submit detailed advice to my right hon. Friend taking account of the research councils' comments on the review group's

recommendations, which it is currently eliciting. My right hon. Friend will be considering these matters later in the year in the light of the ABRC's advice.

A copy of Mr. Morris's report was placed in the Library last month.

Pupils (Personal Information)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to improve the confidentiality of personal information on pupils' education records.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend has no current plans to introduce measures regarding the confidentiality of personal information pupils' education records. If the hon. Member has in mind a particular problem perhaps he would care to write to me.

Teacher's Pay Award

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to sign the necessary orders to bring the teachers' pay award into operation.

Mr. Kenneth Baker *[pursuant to the reply, 22 May 1989, c. 370]:* I intend to publish the school teachers' pay and conditions document 1989 on Tuesday 30 May and on the same day to make the order which will give effect to the provisions in it. A copy of the 1989 document and its accompanying circular will be sent to each local education authority. Copies of the 1989 document will be placed in the Vote Office.

TRANSPORT

Parliament Square

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made on proposals for the improvement of traffic conditions in Parliament square and the environs of the Palace of Westminster which would ease the flow of traffic, benefit pedestrians and make access easier for hon. Members; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: Westminster city council as the responsible highway authority recently agreed a series of measures. New traffic signals will be installed at the south-east and south-west corners of the square to control traffic and improve access to the central island. There will be improved pedestrian facilities at the north-east and north-west corners, and at the junction of Storey's gate and Broad sanctuary, where the channelling of vehicles will also be improved. Congestion will be reduced at the junction of Storey's gate and Great George street by banning the right turn from Storey's gate and at the junction of Abingdon street and Great Peter street, by discouraging obstruction of traffic turning right from Abingdon street. Cyclists will be allowed to turn right from Bridge street to Parliament street. In addition the city council will ask consultants to re-examine the existing bus lanes, coach queuing in Abingdon street and pedestrian facilities to the Houses of Parliament across Abingdon street.

I welcome Westminster city council's positive proposals for these improvements. I am sure that they will bring appreciable benefits to traffic, pedestrians and to Members of Parliament. I shall be asking them to add a study of lorry controls. The Government are prepared to assist the city council in pursuing its aims. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is already considering, in consultation with it, possible changes to improve the appearance of the square. When all these improvements are in place, Parliament square will be a more efficient route for necessary traffic and a safer and more pleasant place for other users.

Roads

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list at 1987-88 prices capital and current spending on *(a)* the national roads system and *(b)* local roads in each year from 1974-75 to 1987-88 and the estimated outturn for 1988-89.

Mr. Channon: Figures for capital and current expenditure on national and local roads in England, Scotland and Wales over the period sought, at 1987-88 prices, are shown in the table.

	National Roads £M		*Local Roads £M*	
	Current[4]	*Capital*[4]	*Current*[3]	*Capital*
1974-75	315	2,271	1,408	1,156
1975-76	295	1,868	1,357	1,138
1976-77	273	1,409	1,261	1,067
1977-78	229	902	1,246	707
1978-79	235	801	1,350	650
1979-80	203	708	1,242	760
1980-81	96	949	1,247	817
1981-82	132	969	1,342	705
1982-83	104	1,099	1,328	797
1983-84	115	1,037	1,323	810
1984-85	123	1,040	1,296	776
1985-86	119	999	1,293	790
1986-87	135	1,001	1,379	822
[2]1987-88	116	1,094	1,383	753
[1]1988-89	129	1,043	1,350	732

[1] All figures for 1988-89 are estimated outturn.
[2] Local roads figures for 1987-88 are estimated outturn.
[3] Excludes local authority professional and technical support.
[4] Structural maintenance on national roads was re-classified as capital expenditure in 1983. Figures in the series 1979-80—1988-89 reflect this classification while figures in the series 1974-75—1979-80 do not.

Drinking and Driving

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress is being made in reducing the amount of drinking and driving on roads in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are making better progress than almost anywhere else in the world. Latest attitude surveys show an increasing understanding that drinking and driving do not mix. Changing attitudes are particularly marked among young men—our prime target group, although we still need to see faster progress among middle-aged men. The surveys found that over the last 10 years the numbers of men who admit to driving after drinking alcohol have nearly halved. The proportion driving after drinking six plus units of alcohol has fallen by over two thirds.

The number of accidents where drink is a factor also appears to be decreasing. The number of drivers in an accident who failed a breath test reached a peak of 14,000 in 1979, and has since fallen to 13,500 in 1980 and to

11,000 in 1987. The proportion of drivers or riders killed in accidents who were found to have an illegal blood alcohol level fell from 31 per cent. in 1980 to 23 per cent in 1987.

Lowland Airports

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Eastwood on 18 May, *Official Report*, column *279*, if he will place in the Library a detailed note of the views he received from political parties both for and against a review of Scottish lowland airports policy.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Views of members of political parties on the case for a review of Scottish lowland airports policy have been put to Ministers in private correspondence and at private meetings. It would be for those concerned to make their views public, if they wished.

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Eastwood, 18 May, *Official Report*, column *279*, if he will list those organisations who made representations to him against a review of Scottish lowland airports policy.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Representations to my right hon. Friend about Scottish lowland airports policy have taken the form of private correspondence. It would be for those concerned to make their views public, if they wished.

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration he has given to the survey of the views of hon. Members on Scottish lowland airports policy published on Friday 19 May; what conclusions he has reached; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I presume that my hon. Friend is referring to an article of 19 May. My right hon. Friend's conclusions on Scottish lowland airports policy remain as announced.

BAA (Services)

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider introducing amending legislation to facilitate the creation of a statutory consumer body to receive complaints about services run by the BAA plc at Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Prestwick airports.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend is satisfied that the interests of airport users are sufficiently secured by the economic regulation provisions of the Airport Act 1986, by the Fair Trading Act 1973 and the Competition Act 1980.

Wembley Tube Station

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport inspected overcrowding and safety at the Wembley tube station tunnel during his visit to the cup final last Saturday.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No.

Mr. Orme: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had, and what representations have been made to him, to rectify the overcrowding in the Wembley tube station tunnel at Wembley way during football matches and pop concerts.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The tunnel in question is the direct responsibility of Wembley Stadium plc. The Department has been discussing with the London borough of Brent a scheme to replace the tunnel. Wembley Stadium plc along with the Metropolitan and British Transport police, London Underground Ltd. and officers from Brent council liaise closely not only on the day of events by additionally on a six-weekly basis throughout the year.

East London River Crossing

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce the revised proposals for the east London river crossing.

Mr. Channon: I have nothing to add to my reply of 12 April at column *572*.

Airports

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire of 18 May, *Official Report*, column *276*, what methods of assessment and forms of monitoring are being adopted by his Department to assess how far local authorities are co-operating actively and fully in the ownership, development, management and running of airports.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Ministers and officials frequently discuss these and other matters with local authority airport representatives.

Stratford Station (Incident)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what caused the incident at Stratford station in the London borough of Newham on 24 May; how many passengers received hospital treatment; what members of staff of London Underground Ltd. were present at the scene of the incident; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A Central line train was halted at Stratford station at about 08.30 when overheated brake blocks began to emit smoke. The problem was dealt with by the train crew, but the fire brigade was called as a precautionary measure. British Rail manages all train services at this station and its staff correctly detrained passengers from the defective train and from following trains. One passenger was taken to hospital.

London Underground's main concern was to release passengers on the two trains halted in tunnel between Stratford and Leyton. Instructions were passed by radio from the line controller to the drivers of those trains. A London Underground carriage examiner was in attendance at Stratford and was able to declare the previously defective train fit for service at 09.35.

ENERGY

Advanced Gas Reactor Power Stations

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what estimate has been made of the costs of shutting down

advanced gas reactor nuclear power stations in circumstances where the facilities for the storage of spent fuel prove inadequate.

Mr. Parkinson: This is an operational matter for the Central Electricity Generating Board. I have asked the chairman to reply.

Spent Advanced Gas Reactor Fuel

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has as to the results of assessment by BNFL and the Central Electricity Generating Board of the corrosive qualities of spent advanced gas reactor fuel.

Mr. Parkinson: British Nuclear Fuels plc has carried out considerable research into techniques incorporating the use of corrosion inhibitors in its fuel-handling plants. These techniques are being successfully applied to the storage of spent advanced gas-cooled reactor fuel at Sellafield.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether there are any proposals to improve the facilities at BNFL for the wet storage of spent nuclear fuel from advanced gas-cooled reactors; and what length of time it is estimated that the spent fuel can be kept in wet storage without a significant risk of corrosion.

Mr. Parkinson: I understand that the spent fuel from advanced gas-cooled reactors can be kept in wet storage at Sellafield, without significant risk of corrosion, until it is reprocessed in the thermal oxide reprocessing plant. The fuel will be stored in existing facilities and no improvements to them are necessary.

Ample storage capacity exists at Sellafield to handle spent AGR fuel, both before the completion of THORP and well into the future.

THORP Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he now expects the THORP reprocessing plant to be completed; if he proposes to increase BNFL's borrowing limit to speed the progress of construction; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: THORP is expected to begin commercial reprocessing in late 1992. There are no plans to increase the limit beyond that provided for in the Atomic Energy Act 1989.

SCOTLAND

Female Police Officers (Firearms)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many female police officers are currently qualified to carry firearms; what were the figures for five and 10 years ago; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally.

Health Care International (Hospital)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the level of financial support given to date, including the cost of preparing the site, to the Health Care International proposed hospital at Clydebank.

Mr. Lang: Financial support levels are negotiated with individual companies on a commercially confidential basis. Expenditure to date in direct support of this project has been confined to assistance with feasibility studies, funded through the Scottish Development Agency. The cost of site works cannot be regarded as specific to this project, since these would have had to be undertaken in any event, for environmental and safety reasons.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how many Scottish Development Association staff are currently employed in dealing with the Health Care International proposed hospital at Clydebank.

Mr. Lang: No Scottish Development Agency staff are currently or have ever been employed full time in dealing with the Health Care International project. In view of the major investment and employment potential of the project, a number of people in the agency have dealt with aspects of the project as the need arose.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to announce that financial backing has been secured for the proposed Health Care International hospital at Clydebank.

Mr. Lang: No date has yet been set for an announcement. The funding of the project is in any event a matter dealt with by the company's financial advisers.

Lowland Airports Policy

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Eastwood on 19 May, if he will list the other factors he took into account in commenting on the BAA's request for a review of Scottish lowland airports policy.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend took into account all relevant local and national factors.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Paice: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the Government have taken action to protect human and animal health in relation to bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Yes, in a number of ways. It was intelligence-gathering and research by the state veterinary service which identified bovine spongiform encephalopathy as a new disease of cattle in November 1986. Further research at the CVL and neuropathogenesis unit, Edinburgh, has shown that it is one of a group of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies.

The most likely cause of the disease, which is the feeding of ruminant-based rations originating from scrapie-infected sheep, was established through research at the CVL as part of a comprehensive study of herds with affected cattle. As soon as this became clear the Government imposed, from 18 July last year, a feed ban on ruminant based protein.

When the clinical symptoms of the disease and techniques available to confirm it were firmly established through the examination of brain tissue it was, on 21 June 1988, made notifiable.

In April 1988 the Government set up an independent working party under the chairmanship of Sir Richard Southwood, professor of zoology at Oxford university, to look at bovine spongiform encephalopathy and to advise, particularly on any human health implications.

An interim recommendation was made in June 1988 that, although there was no evidence of a risk to humans, as a precautionary measure all cattle suspected of having bovine spongiform encephalopathy should be slaughtered and destroyed to take them out of the food chain. The Government acted promptly on this and the slaughter policy began on 8 August.

A research committee, under the chairmanship of Dr. David Tyrrell, has been established to advise on research in relation to bovine spongiform encephalopathy and the other transmissible spongiform encephalopathies following another interim recommendation.

Further interim recommendations were made in November 1988, first, again as a precautionary measure, to destroy milk from suspect cattle and secondly to extend the feed ban indefinitely. Legislative measures came into force in December to prohibit the use of that milk for human or animal consumption (except the cow's own calf) and to extend the feed ban. It will continue in force unless methods which destroy the bovine spongiform encephalopathy agent can be identified.

Following the publication of the Southwood report on 27 February 1989, which welcomed the Government's action to deal with the disease, including the pre-empity and present implementation of interim recommendations, and which concluded that the risk of transmission to humans was remote, the Government agreed to take further measures as part of a comprehensive response to all the working party's recommendations. These are:

Following expert advice, the establishment shortly of a research project which will continue the study already under way to determine whether cattle to cattle transmission can take place.

The issuing by 15 March of additional guidance to medicine manufacturers using bovine material on good manufacturing practice.

A continuing and thorough research programme into the epidemiological background to the disease, its transmissibility, and genetic and microbiological aspects. The Government will also be taking into account the advice given to them by the Tyrrell committee.

A review by the Health and Safety Executive to determine what guidance may be appropriate in relation to all diseases of animals, including BSE, that may present a hazard during occupational exposure.

Although there is no evidence of a link between Creutzfeldt Jakob Disease and scrapie, the monitoring of the former so that any change in the pattern of the disease is detected.

As a matter of extreme prudence, following a suggestion in the Southwood report, the introduction of legislation to guard against any future use of certain offals in baby food, even though they are not currently used in their manufacture.

The Government's commitment to protecting human and animal health following the emergence of BSE is clearly shown by the action already taken and the further action which will be taken if it is shown to be necessary. In financial terms it will probably mean a resource commitment in excess of £6 million in this financial year.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Caerphilly of 18 May, *Official Report*, columns *291-92*, what methods are used in attempting to transmit spongiform encephalopathies to the various species involved in the experiments.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Three methods of inoculation are used: intracerebral, intraperitoreal and intravenous.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Caerphilly of 18 May, *Official Report*, columns *294-95*, what certification is supplied to Germany and Israel in respect of meat and bone meal and bovine spongiform encephalopathy; what monitoring and analysis of the meat and bone meal is carried out by the United Kingdom authorities; how long this certification has been required; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: At the request of the authorities of the Federal Republic, the certification will confirm that the consignment does not contain material derived from cattle which, when slaughtered, were under official restriction due to suspicion of BSE. No analysis or monitoring in respect of BSE is required. Local veterinary inspectors appointed by the Ministry sign export certificates and are responsible for ensuring that consignments have been produced in accordance with the requirement of the importing country.

No certification is being supplied at present for the exports to Israel. We are entering into discussion with Israel about its requirements. We were first advised by Israel and Germany of new certification requirements in November and December 1988 respectively.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Caerphilly of 22 May, *Official Report*, column *375*, whether he intends to initiate legal action for libel against the BBC Radio 4 "Face the Facts" programme over its allegations concerning the Southwood committee's recommendations on compensation for bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what advice he has received concerning the level of infectiousness of protein derived from bovine spongiform encephalopathy infected cattle which have been slaughtered prior to the onset of clinical symptoms of the disease.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Proposals for research into this area are currently being considered by Dr. Tyrrell's research consultative committee.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been done to ensure that meat and bone meal exported from the United Kingdom are free of the agents causing bovine spongiform encephalopathy or scrapie.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The conditions under which meat and bone meal is exported from this country are a matter for the importing country to determine.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has received any representations or interim reports from the Tyrrell committee on research into transmissible spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No, but I understand that the Tyrrell committee will be making an interim report shortly.

Crayfish

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps his Department is taking to combat the crayfish plague.

Mr. Donald Thompson: We have no specific programme to combat crayfish plague which has been established in our main crayfish river systems for a number of years. To combat this disease effectively would be both difficult and costly.

Carp

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps his Department is taking to combat spring viraemia of carp.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Spring viraemia of carp is one of eight notifiable fish diseases in England and Wales. My Department investigates suspected cases of this disease, designates those sites found to be infected, and imposes appropriate movement restrictions. In February this year we issued an advisory leaflet on the disease including guidance on the steps that could be taken to safeguard against its spread.

Salmon Dealers

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he now expects to implement a scheme for the licensing of salmon dealers.

Mr. Donald Thompson: As my noble Friend the Minister of State at the Scottish Office announced on 4 May, the Government have decided that further consultations should take place on schemes for salmon dealer licensing in England and Wales and in Scotland. We intend to issue consultation papers shortly inviting early comments. The details of the schemes, and their timetables for introduction, will be considered in the light of comments received.

Salmon Stocks

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next expects to receive a report from the advisory committee on salmon stocks.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The salmon advisory committee is continuing to work on aspects of its remit on the factors affecting salmon stocks though I cannot predict when the committee will be ready to submit its next report to Ministers.

Food Irradiation

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) whether he carries out tests on strawberries imported from Holland to establish whether they have been irradiated; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he carries out tests on vegetables imported from Holland to establish whether they have been irradiated; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: Irradiation of fresh fruit and vegetables is not permitted in the Netherlands. A small quantity of dried vegetables is irradiated for quarantine purposes on import to the Netherlands, but these are used within that country.

Hepatitis A

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has carried out tests to establish whether hepatitis A can be killed by irradiation at the 10 kgy level; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: No tests have been carried out on this specific subject. Other treatments are effective in eliminating hepatitis A.

Baby Foods (Offals)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on what date he intends to introduce regulations barring the inclusion of specified offals from baby foods; if he has any proposals to extend the prohibition to other offals or other foods; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: Following the advice in the Southwood report, I indicated that I would be introducing regulations prohibiting the use of specified offals in foods intended for babies. I am aware of the suggestion that such a prohibition should be extended to all meat products even though the Southwood report did not identify any such general need. There is already a prohibition on the use of specified offal in uncooked meat products. I am considering whether further action should be taken to reinforce the present law.

Meat and Bone Meal

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Caerphilly of 18 May, *Official Report*, columns *294-95*, what requirements on heat treatment of meat and bone meal exported from the United Kingdom are sought by *(a)* France, and *(b)* West Germany.

Mr. Donald Thompson: France has requested that the temperature and duration of the heat treatment which has been applied to the consignment should be recorded on the export health certificate. West Germany specifies that consignments must be heated to a minimum temperature of 80 deg C for at least 30 minutes.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what was the total quantity of meat and bone meal exported from the United Kingdom to the United States of America for each of the last three years for which figures are available;

(2) what was the total quantity of meat and bone meal exported from the United Kingdom to Holland for each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Donald Thompson: United Kingdom exports of meat meal and bone meal to the Netherlands in the last three years are given in the following table. There were no exports of meat and bone meal to the United States of America during 1986 and 1987 and only 4 tonnes were recorded in 1988.

	Tonnes		
	1986	*1987*	*1988*
Flours, meals and pellets of meat or offal (including tankage), unfit for human consumption; greaves	139	805	1,826
Bone meal	51	11	[1]670

[1] From 1988, bone meal is combined in the statistics with other bones and their derivatives apart from "ossein and bones treated with acid". Therefore the tonnage of bone meal exported to Nertherlands in 1988 could be slightly lower than 670 tonnes.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Civil Service Trade Unions

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether, in the light of the recent ballot in which members of the Ministry of Defence staff association voted in favour of a merger with the Electrical and Engineering Staff Association, he will make a statement about political affiliation by Civil Service trade unions.

Mr. Brooke: As I made clear in my statement in the House on 7 February 1986, in the Government's view political affiliation by a non-industrial Civil Service trade union would run wholly counter to the need for political neutrality of a Civil Service which has to serve Governments of any political persuasion. The Government remain of this view and would be seriously concerned if such a union, or any section of a union representing non-industrial civil servants, were to seek to affiliate to a political party, either directly or subsequent to merger with another union. In such an event, the Government would need to consider what action would be necessary to prevent political affiliation from taking place. The Government are reassured to note that, in seeking merger with the EESA, the MODSA has already indicated its wish to remain politically non-affiliated subsequent to the merger taking place.

Inflation

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether any further measures are planned to control inflation.

Mr. Lilley: Inflation is a disease of money. The way to cure this disease is through monetary policy of which short-term interest rates are the essential instrument.

Interest Rates

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on interest rates.

Mr. Lilley: Bank base rates are 14 per cent.

Manufacturing Investment

Mr. Jack: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest official projection for the growth of manufacturing investment in 1989.

Mr. Major: The latest DTI investment intentions survey published in December projected manufacturing investment in constant prices to rise by 11 per cent. in 1989 on a year earlier. The latest CBI quarterly trends survey published in April confirms this buoyant outlook.

Premium Bonds

Mr. Steel: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer to the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale, 5 May, *Official Report*, column *255*, what proportion of the actual numbers of all purchases of premium bonds are currently made under the value of £100.

Mr. Lawson: About 80 per cent.

Mr. Jack: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last reviewed the value and number of the prizes awarded in the premium savings bond monthly draw; and whether there are plans to increase the number of values of the prizes during 1989.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 25 May 1989]:* The prize structure and the underlying rate of interest which determines the prize fund for premium bonds are kept under continuous review. The number and value of prizes increase automatically in line with increases in the value of bonds eligible to participate in the prize draw. There are no present plans to alter the existing prize structure or the underlying interest rate.

Mr. Jack: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking to increase the use of national savings gift tokens for the purchase of premium savings bonds.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 25 May 1989]:* As previously announced, National Savings gift tokens will be withdrawn from sale on 30 June.

Mr. Jack: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current cost of translating a sale of premium savings bond worth £10, £50, £100 and £1,000, respectively.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 25 May 1989]:* The transaction cost is nearly £2 irrespective of the value of the sale.

Mr. Jack: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the value of premium savings bond sales to adults buying on behalf of children in 1986, 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 25 May 1989]:* The estimated value of premium savings bond sales to adults buying on behalf of children (under the age 16) in the financial years 1986, 1987 and 1988 is as follows:

Financial year	*Value £ million*
1 April 1986 to 31 March 1987	3·5
1 April 1987 to 31 March 1988	4·6
1 April 1988 to 31 March 1989	8·4

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of the United Kingdom gross domestic product was represented by the financial sector *(a)* in 1980 and *(b)* in the latest available year; and what information he has as to corresponding figures for France and West Germany, respectively.

Mr. Lawson *[holding answer 23 May 1989]:* Figures for the contribution of the financial sector to United Kingdom gross domestic product are given in the 1988 CSO national accounts Blue Book. Figures for France and Germany, and for the United Kingdom on a comparable basis, are given in "OECD National Accounts" volume II 1960-1986 published in 1988. Both publications can be obtained from the Library of the House.

VAT

Sir John Farr: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when Her Majesty's Customs and Excise will produce guidelines on how the sporting value of land will be assessed for VAT.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 24 May 1989]:* Customs and Excise have no plans to issue any guidelines. VAT is a self-assessed tax and it is for vendors and lessors to make a fair and reasonable apportionment of the contract price or rent as between on the one hand the value of the exempt land and on the other the value of the taxable sporting rights. Most vendors and lessors will in any event be professionally advised in determining their asking price and the valuation of the sporting rights could be dealt with in that context. Customs will not, however, insist on a professional valuation and land owners will often have an indication of value by reference to rating assessments or to the income generated from the fishing, shooting and so on. Where, after 1 August 1989, a vendor or lessor had opted to tax his agricultural land transactions, there would be no need for an apportionment.

National Savings

Mr. Jack: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the value of sales per employee in national savings in 1988 for each of their products.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 25 May 1989]:* The value of sales per employee for each of national savings' products in 1988 was as follows:

	Sales 1988 £ million	*Average sales per employee* £ million
Fixed-interest Certificates	1,371	1·1
Index-linked Certificates	683	1·0
Yearly Plan	119	0·8
Save As You Earn (share option schemes)	64	0·3
Income Bonds	2,039	3·6
Investment Account	1,852	1·8
Premium Bonds	323	0·2
Ordinary Account	651	0·4
Deposit Bonds[1]	203	2·3

[1] Withdrawn from sale 19 November 1988.

Endangered Species

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give details of all seizures of live creatures and articles derived from endangered species imported or exported in contravention of the restrictions imposed by national and international regulations in each of the last three year periods for which figures are available.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 25 May 1989]:* The table shows numbers of live creatures and articles derived from endangered species imported or exported in contravention of the restrictions imposed by the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act 1976 or Council regulation (EEC) No. 3626/82. The central records of articles for 1988 have not yet been finalised.

Year to 31 March	*Live creatures*	*Articles*
1986	264	4,500
1987	1,604	6,304
1988	2,284	more than 3,000

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give details of the seizures of live creatures imported or exported in contravention of the restrictions imposed by the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act 1976 or Council regulation (EEC) No. 3626/82 in the year to 31 March; and what information he has concerning related criminal proceedings taken with penalties and costs imposed.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 25 May 1989]:* The information is as follows. Details relating to proceedings indicate the number of persons successfully prosecuted under the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979 for attempted evasion of the restrictions.

Seizures	*Number of persons convicted*	*Penalties/Costs*
Imports		
1 African civet	—	—
2 common marmosets	—	—
1,518 reptiles and amphibians	1 person	£100 penalty £400 costs
380 birds	—	—
Exports		
4 snakes	1 person	£200 penalty £25 costs
10 finches	—	—

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide details of the quantity and country of origin of all raw and worked ivory detained in each of the last three years because of documentation difficulties; and what was the subsequent outcome of each case.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 25 May 1989]:* Records of such detentions are not maintained centrally and the information sought could be obtained only at disproportionate expense.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his policy in respect of the disposal of endangered species of animals, birds and articles seized by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 25 May 1989]:* The disposal of seized specimens, parts and derivatives is in accordance with the Washington convention on international trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora as put into force by the Endangered Species Act and Community regulations. Each case is dealt with on its merits.

The disposal of live creatures is arranged in consultation with the Department of the Environment, the management authority. The preferred option for the most endangered species is return to a natural habitat.

Productivity

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in tabular form the growth of productivity each year for the whole economy since 1980 in the United Kingdom and in each of the other major industrialised countries.

Sir David Price: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in tabular form the growth of productivity each year for the whole economy since 1980 in the United Kingdom and in each of the other major industrialised countries.

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the growth of productivity each year for the whole economy since 1980 in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* each of the other major industrial countries.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in tabular form the growth of productivity each year for the whole economy since 1980 in the United Kingdom and in each of the other industrialised countries.

Mr. Major *[pursuant to his reply, 23 February 1989, c. 778-79]:* The figures given for Canada, and also, as a consequence, the Group of Seven average, were incorrect. The correct figures are as follows:

Growth of whole economy productivity
(percentage change on a year earlier)

	United Kingdom	*United States*	*Japan*	*Germany*	*France*	*Italy*	*Canada*	*G7*[1]
1981	2·2	1·1	3·0	0·9	1·8	0·9	0·9	1·6
1982	4·3	−1·7	1·8	1·1	2·4	0·6	0·1	0·4
1983	4·2	2·6	1·4	3·1	1·0	0·8	2·3	2·3
1984	1·4	2·9	4·4	2·6	2·2	2·8	3·8	3·0
1985	1·6	1·7	4·0	1·3	2·0	2·4	1·7	2·1
1986	2·3	0·7	1·6	1·3	1·9	2·4	0·3	1·3
1987	2·5	0·9	3·3	1·2	2·0	3·3	1·2	1·8
1988[2]	1·1	1·6	3·9	2·9	2·9	3·1	1·0	2·3
Period average	2·5	1·2	2·9	1·8	2·0	2·0	1·4	1·8

[1] Weighted average.

[2] The figures for 1988 for all countries except United Kingdom are based on gross domestic product/gross national product figures from national sources and OECD estimates of employment growth. United Kingdom figures from CSO.

Source: OECD, CSO and national sources.

INDEX TO THE

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 153**

SESSION 1988–89

15th May—26th May 1989

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Mr. Speaker and his deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

Opposition Day Debates, Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R=first reading, 2R=second reading, Money res=money resolution, Com=Committee stage, Rep=Report stage, 3R=third reading, amendt/amendts=amendment/amendments, *=matter taken formally, without debate.

Column numbers followed by the letter W refer to Written Questions. These appear at the end of each daily part or volume with their own sequence of column numbers printed in italics.

721 Signals Unit
Air force 66w

A1
278w
Road traffic 201w
Road works 113-4w, 201-2w, 276w

A9
303w

A19
Road works 201-2w

A47
Road works 503w

A55
555w

A74
303w

A77
303w

Abbey Panels Investments
190w

Abortion
Law reform (22:05:89) 726-8
Liverpool 725w
Medical ethics 151-2w
Prostoglandin 147w

Abortion Act 1967
Questions
151-2w

ABRC
see Advisory Board for the Research Councils

Absent voting
138w

Access courses
195-6w

Access to buildings
Polling stations 254w

Access to countryside
596w

Accident & emergency departments
452-3w
Self-governing hospitals 475w

Accidents
Level crossings 501w

Accommodation agencies
Prosecutions 209w

Accommodation Agencies Act 1953
Questions
209w

Accountants
Bexley Health Authority 417w

Accounting
Urban programme 203w

"Action for Cities"
(23:05:89) 804-58

Action for Community Employment
Housing insulation 660w

Adaptation to premises & equipment scheme
575w

ADAS
see Agricultural Development & Advisory Service

Adjournment debates
Speaker's rulings & statements (23:05:89) 927, (25:05:89) 1230

Adjudication officers
74-8w, 270w

Adley, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
Roads (18:05:89) 488, 489-90
Questions
British Rail, Privatisation 201w

Adley, Mr Robert—continued
Dutch elm disease, Agricultural research 292-3w
New towns, Greenbelt 588w
Road traffic 200-1w
Roads, Lighting 557w
Roads, Sewers 557w
Solicitors, Dept of the Environment 49w
"Working for Patients White Paper", Doctors 475w

Administrative costs
Community charge 184w

Administrative delays
Council house sales 588w
Members' correspondence 220-4w, 749w
Passports 256w, 393-4w, 636-8w, 753w
Prisoners on remand 95w
Social security appeals 436w

Adoption
Disclosure of information 785w

Adoption Act 1976
Questions
785w

Advanced gas-cooled reactors
Electricity generation 9
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 800-1w

Advertising
Community charge rebates 553w
Government departments 14-6
London Underground 99w
National Audit Office 14-5
School Watch 7w
Scottish Office 29w
Social Fund 448-9w
Welsh Water Authority 763w

Advertising controls
Private health services 457w
Tourist attractions 491w

Advisory Board for the Research Councils
796-7w

Advisory Committee on Pesticides
Alar 745w
Daminozide 63w

Advisory Committee on Salmon Conservation
see Salmon Advisory Committee

Aerosols
Chlorofluorocarbons 584-5w

Aerospace industry
Airbuses 299
Defence Estimates 299

Affirmative action
(25:05:89) 1151-226

Afghanistan
Armed conflict 798

AFRC
see Agricultural & Food Research Council

Africa
Elephants 631w, 641w, 676w
Nature conservation 631w
Overseas aid 641w

Age
Armed forces recruitment 64w
Dock labour scheme 170w
Handicap benefits 467-9w
Social security claims 684-5w

Age of consent
Homosexuality 640w

Agency Benefits Unit
NHS charges exemptions 155w

Aggregates
490w
Seabed resources 50w, 185w

Agricultural & Food Research Council
555w

Agricultural Development & Advisory Service
Experimental farms 60-1w
Government laboratories 60-1w
Nitrates 748w
Wales 61w

Agricultural Inspectorate
Civil service manpower 571-4w

Agricultural land
Land use 743-4w
Tree planting 746-8w

Agricultural research
Dutch elm disease 292-3w
Organic farming 300w
Research finance 562-4w
Transmissible encephalopathies 298-9w, 370w, 804w
Wales 642-3w

Agricultural subsidies
Expenditure 565w

Agricultural support systems
742w

Agricultural workers
Wales 452w

Agriculture
Northumberland 740w

AIDS
Drugs 411w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 194w
Health education 288-9w
Immigration controls 638-9w

Aids for handicapped
Handicapped workers 574w

Air accidents
Jaguar aircraft 66-7w
Military aircraft 551w

Air force
721 Signals Unit 66w
Aircrew 462w
Jet aircraft 142w

Air pollution
Air pollution control 380w
Government grants 694w
Power stations 634w

Air pollution control
380w, 596w, 680w
Air pollution 380w
Carbon dioxide 108-9w
Chlorofluorocarbons 262w, 585w
Coal fired power stations 8-9
Combined heat & power 7
Energy conservation 1-2, 7-8, 106w
Nuclear power 9
Ozone layer 1119-20
Power industry 106w
Sulphur dioxide 183w
Treaties 590w

Air routes
Malaysia 25w
Republic of Ireland 275-6w

Air safety
Low flying 65-6w

Air transport
Overseas trade 656-7w
Scotland 279w

Airbus Industrie
Management 117-8w

Airbuses
Aerospace industry 299
British Aerospace 299-300

Aircraft noise
Low flying 65w
Measurement 66w
RAF Upper Heyford (26:05:89) 1308-16
Sound insulation 729-30w

Aircrew
Air force 462w
Military aircraft 462w

Airlines
Landing rights 25w

Airports
Immigration 498-9w
Local authorities 800w
Management 276w
Scotland 200w, 279w, 304-5w, 346w, 799w, 802w
Tinsley Park 596w

Aitken, Mr Jonathan
Debates etc.
European Communities (18:05:89) 510, 532
Exhaust emission controls, EC action (24:05:89) 1077, 1078, 1085
Income tax on investment incomes, EC action (15:05:89) 124-5
Procurement, EC action (16:05:89) 275, 284
Questions
Business statements 1128
EC integration, European monetary union 470
Official secrets, Newspaper press 756w
Unemployment 163-4w

Alar
Advisory Committee on Pesticides 745w

Albany Prison
Segregation of prisoners 394w

Alcoholic drinks
Public order offences 343-4w

Alcoholic drinks duties
Tax yields 441w

Aldergrove Airport
275-6w

Alison, Rt Hon Michael, Second Church Estates Commissioner
Questions
Church Commissioners, Pay 14
Church Commissioners, Women 13

Allason, Mr Rupert
Questions
Estuaries, Pollution monitoring 948

Allen, Mr Graham
Debates etc.
Associated British Ports (No 2) Bill, 3R (23:05:89) 886
Cruelty to children, Sexual offences (15:05:89) 141-5
Transport (15:05:89) 31
Questions
Absent voting 138w
Association of University Teachers 443w
Brewing industry, Landlord & tenant 390w
Community charge, Administrative costs 184w
Community charge, Members 202w
Community charge, Newspaper press 184w
Community charge, Nottingham 489-90w
Community charge, Press releases 183w
Cruelty to children, Departmental circulars 98w
Cruelty to children, Research 797-8
Cruelty to children, Research finance 98-9w
Cruelty to children, Sexual offences 89w
Defective housing, Nottingham 185w
Electoral register, Research 253w
Energy conservation 107w
Football grounds, Government assistance 490w
National Audit Office, Advertising 14-5
National Union of Civil & Public Servants 400w
NHS Review, Family doctors 790
Nuclear weapons policy 693w
Parliamentary sovereignty & European Community 694w
Public Accounts Commission, Public appointments 765w
Public houses, Tenancy agreements 338w
Social security recipients, Nottingham 425-6w
VAT, Games 189w
Water charges, Fire services 46w

Allotments
Planning permission 598w

Alternative energy
Energy research 147w

Alton, Mr David
Questions
Abortion, Liverpool 725w
EC grants & loans, Regional aid 120-2w
Midwives, Career structure 218w
Passports, Administrative delays 393-4w
Prisoners' transfers, Northern Ireland 636w

Alvis
190w

Alyn & Deeside
646-7w

Alyn & Deeside District Council
Caravan sites 645w

Ambulance Council
787w

Ambulance services
Gwynedd 555w
Health service staff 787w
Pay 787w
Scotland 513-4w

Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Debates etc.
European Communities (18:05:89) 521-5
Questions
Business statements 1122

Amess, Mr David
Debates etc.
Basildon District Council, Rate increases (22:05:89) 721-3
Rate support grants, Basildon (26:05:89) 1301-4
Questions
Capital punishment 498w
Coal fired power stations, Carbon dioxide 7
District health authorities, Industrial diseases 485w
Personal Bills 509-10w
Personal Bills, Parliamentary agents 510w
Police, Basildon 497-8w
Private Members' time, House of Commons procedure 509w
Second reading committees 510-2w
US senate, Judiciary 456w
War Crimes Inquiry 497w

Ammonium nitrate
564-5w

Amnesty International
194w, 210w

Amos, Mr Alan
Debates etc.
Roads (18:05:89) 494
Questions
Common sheep meat regime 736w
Family doctors, Rural areas 477w
Passports, Administrative delays 637w
Tobacco duties 441w
Tourism, Northumberland 166w

An Comunn Gaidhealach
see Comunn Na Gaidhlig

Analgesics
Research 217w

Anderson, Mr Donald
Questions
Energy conservation, Air pollution control 7
Foreign patients, NHS charges 46w
Pharmacists 284w

Anglo-Irish Agreement
460-4, 466, 539-43w, (25:05:89) 1133-47
EC internal trade 462

Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference
461, 539-43w
Ministerial statements (25:05:89) 1133-46

Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference—continued
Standing Order No 20 applications (25:05:89) 1146-7

Animal diseases
Animal products 804w

Animal experiments
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 291-2w
Cosmetics industry 393w
Transmissible encephalopathies 803-4w

Animal feed
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 375w, 804w
Cattle 375w, 377w
EC action 295w
Food exports 294-5w, 804w, 806w
Netherlands 806-7w
USA 806w

Animal products
Animal diseases 804w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 804w
Drugs 376w

Animal welfare
British Veterinary Association 746w
Dogs 99w
EC internal trade 742w

Annual reports
Office of Telecommunications 650w

Antidumping duties
EC action 231w

Appeals
Leasehold housing 324w
Special education 3w

Apprentices
Engineering industries 173w

Arbuthnot, Mr James
Debates etc.
City of London (Various Powers) Bill, 2R & Money res (15:05:89) 116, 120
Transport (15:05:89) 32
Questions
Education, Training grants 128w
Job centres 155-6
Montserrat, Banks 772w
North Sea oil, Petroleum exploration 3

Archaeological sites
City of London 678w
Planning permission 598-9w
Property development 602w
Rose theatre 21-5, 268w, 324w

Archaeology
Government grants 598w

Armed conflict
Afghanistan 798

Armed forces civilians
Teachers 766-7w

Armed forces desertion
Queen's Own Hussars 325-6w, 730w

Armed forces discharges
Army 396w

Armed forces housing
731w

Armed forces recruitment
Age 64w

Armed forces reserves
Private Members' motions (19:05:89) 638-50

Armed forces retirement
Army 275-6w

Armed forces strength
Gurkhas 731w

Armed forces training
Iraq 67w
Philippines 352w

Armilla patrol
164-5

Arms control
Nuclear weapons 1119
USSR 632w

Arms exports
Defence contracts 191w
Malaysia 25w, 191w
Nigeria 68w

Arms trade
Northern Ireland 458
South Africa 280-1w

Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Questions
Languages education 471
Overseas trade 230w
School Examinations & Assessment Council, Special education 3-4w
Special education, Appeals 3w
Special education, Curriculum 1-2w
Special education, Departmental circulars 2w
Special education, National Curriculum Council 2w
Special education, School administration 1w
Special education, Teacher training 2w
Women, Equal opportunities 463
Youth employment, Pay 173w

Army
Armed forces discharges 396w
Armed forces retirement 275-6w

Army in Northern Ireland
Damages 789-90w

Arnold, Mr Jacques
Questions
"Dock Labour Scheme White Paper" 171w
EC Foreign Affairs Council 523w
Football, Hooliganism 162-3

Arnold, Mr Tom
Debates etc.
School admission, Stockport Education Authority (24:05:89) 1097-9

Arrests
Football 138w
Osman, Lorrain Esme 248w
RAF Greenham Common 65w

Arts Council
8w, (18:05:89) 576-84

Arts Council grants
8w

Arts Council of Great Britain
see Arts Council

Arts festivals
7-8w

Arts finance
English National Opera 671-2
Museum of Welsh Antiquities 195w
National Theatre (18:05:89) 576-84
Northern Ballet Theatre 400w, 671

Arts grants
399w

Asbestos
Edinburgh 27-8w
Protein Fractionation Centre 177-8w

Asfordby mine
445-7w

Ashby, Mr David
Questions
Irradiated food 1105
Self-employed, East Midlands 158-9w

Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Debates etc.
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference (25:05:89) 1139
Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Bill, Rep & 3R (25:05:89) 1152, 1157, 1163, 1165, 1176, 1187-8, 1205, 1212-4

Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy—continued
Questions
Bombardier 465
European monetary system 796
Inflation 1120
Schools, Northern Ireland 459-60
Water Bill 1988/89 163

Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Debates etc.
"Charities White Paper" (16:05:89) 171
Nuclear weapons tests, Compensation (22:05:89) 702-4
Questions
Cancer, Radiation hazards 84-5w
Domestic violence, Government grants to voluntary organisations 142w
Medical research, Radiation hazards 3-4w
Navy, Medical records 69w
Nuclear weapons tests, Australia 68w
Nuclear weapons tests, Bone marrow disorders 67w
Nuclear weapons tests, Compensation 67-8w
Nuclear weapons tests, Death 326w
Nuclear weapons tests, Radiation hazards 142w, 464w
Pesticide residues, Health hazards 212w
Pesticides, Food labelling 211-2w
Radiation, Cancer 67w
Radiation hazards, Genetics 151w
Submarines, Health surveys 68-9w
Submarines, Industrial health & safety 68w
Vaccine damaged children, Compensation 327-8w, 751-2w
War pensions, Nuclear weapons tests 73w
Wheelchairs, Disablement Services Authority 781

Ashton, Mr Joseph
Debates etc.
Associated British Ports (No 2) Bill, 3R (23:05:89) 865, 870, 883, 890
Publicity, Government departments (16:05:89) 201, 204
Questions
Bassetlaw Hospital 482w
European Regional Development Fund, Regional aid 460w
Football, Identity cards 594w
NHS hospital trusts, Self-governing hospitals 86w
Self-governing hospitals 85w
Wembley Stadium, London Underground 799w

Ashwell Prison
102w

"Assessment of Achievement"
403-4w

Associated British Ports
(23:05:89) 859-93

Associated British Ports (Hull) Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
Rep* (23:05:89) 781

Associated British Ports (No 2) Bill 1987/88
Debates etc.
3R order read (18:05:89) 455
3R (23:05:89) 859-93
Order for resuming adjourned 3R read (25:05:89) 1103

Association of Independent Electricity Producers
110w

Association of University Teachers
443w

Atkins, Mr Robert, Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry
Debates etc.
Manufacturing industries (16:05:89) 259-62
Questions
Airbus Industrie, Management 117-8w
Airbuses, Aerospace industry 299
Airbuses, British Aerospace 299-300
Bradbury Wilkinson, Property transfer 118w

Atkins, Mr Robert—continued
Chemical industries, Balance of payments 236w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Refrigerators 489w
Domestic electrical appliances, Import penetration 236w
EC grants & loans, Regional aid 120-2w
Electromagnetic interference, EC law 650w
European Regional Development Fund, Regional aid 460w
Foreign companies in UK 118w
Foreign investment in UK 235w, 460w
Foreign investment in UK, Motor industry 235w
Induction loops, Public buildings 776w
Industry, Chlorofluorocarbons 237w
Industry, Interest rates 233w
Machine tools industry 239w
Manufacturing industries, Industrial production 234w
Manufacturing industries, Interest rates 233w
Manufacturing industries, Productivity 233-4w, 236w, 301-2
Office of Telecommunications 457-8w
Office of Telecommunications, Annual reports 650w
Office of Telecommunications, Telephone services 656w
Polyester silk plants, Production 458-9w
Radio frequencies 524-5w
Regional aid, Corby 458w
Space technology, Science & technology research 241-2w
Telephone charges, Pensioners 241w
Telephone services 457w
Telephone services, Independent Committee for Supervision of Telephone Services 457w
Textile industry, Industrial production 237w

Atkinson, Mr David
Questions
Air force, Jet aircraft 142w
Crime prevention, Information technology 635w
Deaf 484w
Drugs, Labelling 725w
European Security Conference, Human rights 329w
European Security Conference, Information 329-30w
Lord Chancellor 1116
Pensioner price index 329w
Pensions, Retail price index 681w
Playgrounds, Safety standards 491w

Atomic Energy Bill (HL) 1988/89
Debates etc.
Rep* & 3R (22:05:89) 750-61
Royal assent (25:05:89) 1149

Attendance allowance
Northern Ireland 469w
Social security appeals 433w, 469w, 546w

Attendance Allowance Board
469w
Civil servants 223-4w

Australia
Nuclear weapons tests 68w

AUT
see Association of University Teachers

Autoguide electronic route guidance system
688-9w

Automatic ticketing systems
London Underground 114w

Availability for work
180-1w
Part-time employment 568-9w
Social security appeals 224w
Unemployment 162-4w, 568-9w
Unemployment benefits 179w

Aveley Methane
Ownership 493-4w

Average earnings
North West region 52w

Ayr road route
227-8w

BAA
see British Airports Authority

Babies
Child health 416w

Baby care units
Guy's Hospital 468

Bail
92w

Bail hostels
91-2w

Baker, Rt Hon Kenneth, Secretary of State for Education and Science
Questions
Curriculum, Educational qualifications 796w
Dept of Education & Science, Cash limits 610w
Education, EC action 536-7w
Higher education administration, Public appointments 609-28w
Languages education, Curriculum 311-2w
Science & technology research 537-8w
Teachers, Pay settlements 797w

Baker, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc.
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference (25:05:89) 1144
Questions
Consumer credit, Interest rates 233w
Exhaust emissions, Harmonisation of standards 687w
Paper, Recycling 945-6
Planning permission, Disclosure of information 204w
Retirement pensions, Social security benefits rules 329w
Single people, Disclosure of information 320w
Water authorities, Fords 45w

Balance of payments
390-1w, 529w
Chemical industries 236w
Shipping 114w

Balance of trade
1116
Information technology 234w, 306-7
Manufactured goods 116-7w, 307, 390-1w, 1118
Manufacturing industries 308

Baldry, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference (25:05:89) 1145
Dock Work Bill, Rep & 3R (24:05:89) 1048-50
Inner city areas (23:05:89) 842-5
RAF Upper Heyford, Aircraft noise (26:05:89) 1308-13
Questions
Arts grants 399w
Dept of the Environment, Cash limits 795w
Development plans 593w
Foreign investment in UK 306
Higher education, Student numbers 369w
Higher education administration, Public appointments 609-28w
Labour market 172w
Social security benefits, Residential care 431w
Social security reform 666

Ballot papers
146w, 791w

Banks
Montserrat 772w

Banks, Mr Robert
Questions
Gypsies 182w
Lead free petrol 586w
Rose Theatre, Archaeological sites 24

Banks, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
Basildon District Council, Rate increases (22:05:89) 723
Broadcasting (19:05:89) 621-6, 627, 629, 633, 634
Dock Work Bill, Rep & 3R (24:05:89) 999, 1006, 1007, 1008, 1010-2, 1022, 1033, 1045, 1048, 1052-4, 1055, 1056, 1057
Elephants, Nature conservation (22:05:89) 728-9, (26:05:89) 1292-5, 1298, 1299
Protection of Residents in Retirement Homes Bill, 2R order read (19:05:89) 651
Public Safety Information Bill, 2R order read (19:05:89) 651
Publicity, Government departments (16:05:89) 185, 191-2, 194, 214
Roads (18:05:89) 482, 492, 493-4, 498
Questions
Africa, Elephants 631w, 641w
Africa, Nature conservation 631w
Archaeological sites, City of London 678w
Business statements 477-8, 1131
Central London Rail Study 556w
County Hall, Property development 941-2
Elephants, Africa 676w
Elephants, Nature conservation 641w
Energy conservation 107w
Hong Kong, Ivory 631w
Ivory, EC action 676-7w
Ivory, Hong Kong 652-5w
Ivory, Import controls 676w, 810w
Ivory, Import licensing 676w
Ivory, Imports 651-2w, 677w
Ivory, International trade 694w
Ivory, Nature conservation 677w
Ivory, Overseas trade 677w
Museums & galleries, Building repairs 398w
Nature conservation, Import controls 810w
Nature conservation, Import of live animals 809-10w
Official engagements 246w
Stratford station, London Underground 800w
Whales, Nature conservation 1109

BAOR
VAT 245w

Barking & Dagenham
Local government finance 494w

Barlow Clowes
238w

Barnes, Mr Harry
Debates etc.
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference (25:05:89) 1140
City of London (Various Powers) Bill, 2R & Money res (15:05:89) 105
Community Charge Regulations 1989 (23:05:89) 909
Employment Bill, Rep (17:05:89) 374-6
Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Bill, Rep & 3R (25:05:89) 1223-4
Members' speeches, Parliamentary privilege (24:05:89) 958
Questions
Alternative energy, Energy research 147w
Anglo-Irish Agreement 460
Armed forces discharges, Army 396w
Business statements 478, 1129-30
Civil service unions 675
Electoral register, Parliamentary constituencies 487-8w
Electorate, Parliamentary constituencies 514w
Employment schemes, Derbyshire 165w
High Moor colliery, Mine accidents 51w
HM Inspectorate of Schools, Curriculum 369w
Peak Park Joint Planning Board 939-40

Barnes, Mrs Rosie
Questions
Official engagements 695w

Barnsley
Water pollution 593w

Barron, Mr Kevin
Debates etc.
Associated British Ports (No 2) Bill, 3R (23:05:89) 859, 866, 871, 877, 881, 887
Atomic Energy Bill (HL), 3R (22:05:89) 751-3, 756, 758, 760-1
Members' speeches, Parliamentary privilege (24:05:89) 956
Questions
Electricity supply industry, Coal 9-10
National Power 109-10w
River Rother, River pollution 947
Tinsley Park, Airports 596w

Basildon
Police 497-8w
Rate support grants (26:05:89) 1301-7

Basildon District Council
Rate increases (22:05:89) 721-3

Bassetlaw Hospital
86w, 482w

Batiste, Mr Spencer
Debates etc.
Employment Bill, Rep (17:05:89) 358-9, 365, 393-7
Questions
Self-governing hospitals 479w
Space technology, Science & technology research 241-2w

Baton rounds
Northern Ireland 467

Battle, Mr John
Debates etc.
Poverty (22:05:89) 731-4
Questions
Community charge, Leeds 183w
Community charge exemptions 183w
"Community Charge (So-called Poll Tax)" 322w
"Community Charge (So-called Poll Tax)", Costs 322w
"Community Charge (So-called Poll Tax)", Prisoners 322w
Community charges register 489w
Community charges register, Disclosure of information 261w
Defence Export Services Organisation 274w
Defence Export Services Organisation, Public appointments 395-6w
Housing estates, Estate management boards 323-4w
Leeds-Bradford Airport 277w
Low pay, Standard of living 684w
Manufacturing industries, Productivity 233-4w
Museums & galleries, Expenditure 398-9w
School Watch, Advertising 7w
Social Fund, Social security benefits disqualification 78-80w
Supplementary benefits, Women 79w

Beaches
Sea pollution 186-7w, 196w, 206w, 265w, 350w, 680w, 795-6w

Beaumont-Dark, Mr Anthony
Debates etc.
City of London (Various Powers) Bill, 2R & Money res (15:05:89) 102
Procurement, EC action (16:05:89) 272, 276, 286, 288-9
Questions
Manufactured exports, Exchange rates 232w
Rose Theatre, Archaeological sites 25

Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Debates etc.
Identity cards, Public petitions (23:05:89) 924
Social security, Management (17:05:89) 332
Questions
Family income supplements, Social security claims 271-2w
National insurance contributions, Expenditure 549w

Beckett, Mrs Margaret—continued
Personal pensions, National Insurance Fund 682w
Residential care, Social security benefits 662
Social security appeals 74-8w
Social security benefits, Expenditure 429w
Social security reform, Young people 79w

Beef
1113
Food imports 90w
Imports 61-2w

Beef premiums
298w, 736w, 1111-2
Cattle 298w

Beer
Measurement 117w

Beggs, Mr Roy
Debates etc.
Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Bill, Rep & 3R (25:05:89) 1153, 1174, 1178, 1190, 1191-2, 1211
Questions
London Underground, Advertising 99w
Suckler cow premiums 1111

Beith, Mr A J
Debates etc.
Income tax on investment incomes, EC action (15:05:89) 132-4, 137-8
Interest rates, Standing Order No 20 applications (24:05:89) 953-4
NHS, Northumberland (26:05:89) 1235-41
Questions
A1, Road traffic 201w
A1, Road works 113-4w
Agriculture, Northumberland 740w
Beef premiums 1111
Building societies, Insurance companies 238w
Labour costs 168-9w
Nuclear power stations, Druridge bay 192w
Packaging, Plastics 595w

Belford
201w

Bell, Mr Stuart
Questions
Consumer protection, EC action 231-2w

Bellingham, Mr Henry
Debates etc.
Associated British Ports (No 2) Bill, 3R (23:05:89) 888, 889, 890, 891
Dock Work Bill, Rep & 3R (24:05:89) 973, 1043-5
Parliamentary privilege, Dagnan, Anthony (18:05:89) 502
Roads (18:05:89) 494
Questions
Dock workers, Manpower 170w
Midwives 722w
Science & technology research 537-8w

Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Debates etc.
European Communities (18:05:89) 506, 510, 544-7
Questions
Greenhouse effect, Energy 678w
Lance missiles, Modernisation 731w
Nuclear fuel cycle, Disclosure of information 634w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty, Non-governmental organisations 631-2w
Nuclear safeguards, National security 634w
Power stations, Air pollution 634w
USSR, Arms control 632w

Bennett, Mr Andrew F
Debates etc.
Associated British Ports (No 2) Bill, 3R (23:05:89) 861-2
Questions
Baton rounds, Northern Ireland 467
Cars, Locks & keys 636w

Bennett, Mr Andrew F—continued
Furniture, Child safety 312
Gibraltar, Inquiries 194w
Hedges & ditches, Farmers 372w
Low pay, Youth employment 52w
NHS finance, North West region 484w
Peak Park Joint Planning Board 939
Water authorities, Public access 584w

Bennett, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc.
Community Charge Regulations 1989 (23:05:89) 894, 896, 897, 898, 907, 908-11, 912
Dock Work Bill, Rep & 3R (24:05:89) 971-2, 976, 981-4, 1029, 1042, 1046, 1052, 1056, 1057, 1061, 1065-7
Income tax on investment incomes, EC action (15:05:89) 138
Inner city areas (23:05:89) 806-7, 831, 834-7, 840
Social security, Management (17:05:89) 325
Questions
Business sponsorship incentive scheme 400w
Dock labour scheme, Industrial disputes 508-9w
Government achievements 695-719w
Industrial relations law 158
Level crossings, Accidents 501w
Medical treatments, Costs 283w
NHS, Land ownership & tenure 344-5w
Passports, Administrative delays 753w
Pensioners, Personal income 750-1w
Picketing 54w
Potato Marketing Board 737w
Road construction, Investment returns 280w
Road finance, Wales 648w
Schools, Fees & charges 796w
Starter homes, Local authority powers 760w
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 457-8
Unichem, Monopolies & Mergers Commission 239-40w

Benzodiazepines
Medical research 5w, 88w

Bermingham, Mr Gerald
Debates etc.
City of London (Various Powers) Bill, 2R & Money res (15:05:89) 100
Dock Work Bill, Rep & 3R (24:05:89) 978, 983, 988, 1044
Questions
Blood, Viruses 418w
Bold power station, Radioactive wastes 387w
British Geological Survey, Research finance 370w
Business statements 476
Drug industry, Sales promotions 418w
Methyl chloroform, Ozone layer 384w
Potassium iodate, Nuclear power stations 386w

Betting
Greyhound racing 253-4w

Bevan, Mr David Gilroy
Debates etc.
Inner city areas (23:05:89) 823-5
Questions
Tourist industry, Manpower 167w

Bexley Health Authority
Accountants 417w

Bidwell, Mr Sydney
Debates etc.
Dock Work Bill, Rep & 3R (24:05:89) 1020, 1066
Questions
Industrial disputes 157-8

Biffen, Rt Hon John
Debates etc.
NHS, Salop (22:05:89) 701-2
Questions
Shropshire Hospitals' League of Friends 289-90w

Bilateral aid
Family planning 251-3w

Bilston Glen colliery
110w

Bingo
498w

Biology
Research councils 796-7w

Birds
Nature conservation 121w, 364w, 466w, 678w

Birmingham City Council
(18:05:89) 499-503

Birmingham City Council (No 2) Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
(18:05:89) 499-503

Blackpool
223-4w

Blair, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
Publicity, Government departments (16:05:89) 185
Questions
Advanced gas-cooled reactors, Nuclear fuel reprocessing 800-1w
Electricity supply industry, Coal consumption 5
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Sellafield 801w

Blind
"Community Charge (So-called Poll Tax)" 677w
Employment schemes 574w

Blood
Viruses 418w

Blood sports
EC action 637w
Public order 140w

Blunkett, Mr David
Questions
Community charge, Departmental correspondence 183w
Community charge, Scotland 132-3w
Community charge benefit, Personal income 327-8w
Water authorities, Debts 947

BMA
see British Medical Association

BNFL
see British Nuclear Fuels

Body, Sir Richard
Debates etc.
European Communities (18:05:89) 547-8

Bold power station
Radioactive wastes 387w

Bolton
Private patients 285w, 728w

Bolton Borough Council
Urban programme 674w

Bolton Education Authority
Teachers 246w

Bolton Health Authority
Hospital admissions 559w
Hospital patients 410-1w

Bombardier
465

Bone marrow disorders
Donors 726w
Nuclear weapons tests 67w

Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Questions
Lloyd's of London, Stocks & shares 386w

Bophuthatswana
Development aid 642w

Borders Region
65w
European Social Fund 167w
Low flying 732w

Boswell, Mr Tim
Debates etc.
"Charities White Paper" (16:05:89) 169-70
Dock Work Bill, Rep & 3R (24:05:89) 969, 977-9
Questions
Common agricultural policy, Expenditure 371w
Government grants to voluntary organisations, Efficiency scrutinies 141-2w
Picketing 173w
Suckler cow premiums 1111
Suckler cow premiums, Farm incomes 735w

Bottomley, Mr Peter, Under-Secretary of State for Transport
Debates etc.
City of London (Various Powers) Bill, 2R & Money res (15:05:89) 75, 83-5, 88, 91, 98, 101-2, 106, 111-7, 121
Dock Work Bill, Rep & 3R (24:05:89) 986-8
Exhaust emission controls, EC action (24:05:89) 1076-81, 1083, 1085, 1092-5
Questions
A1, Road traffic 201w
A1, Road works 113-4w, 276w
A19, Road works 201-2w
A47, Road works 503w
Air routes, Republic of Ireland 275-6w
Air transport, Scotland 279w
Airports, Local authorities 800w
Airports, Management 276w
Airports, Scotland 279w, 799w
British Rail 692-3w
British Rail, Privatisation 692w
Bus fares 689w
Bus services, Concessionary fares 687-8w
Bypasses, Road works 686w
Central London Rail Study 556w
Complaints, Consumer organisations 799w
Dial-a-ride, Finance 503-4w
Drinking & driving 558w, 798-9w
Driving, Deaf 10-1w
Driving, Eye tests 277w
Exhaust emissions, Harmonisation of standards 687w
Handicapped drivers, Orange badge scheme 113w
Handicapped drivers, Parking 692w
Humber bridge, Debts 556w
Leeds-Bradford Airport 277w
London Underground, Safety measures 501w
London Underground, Transport police 687w
M1, M69 504w
M11, Road works 690w
M25, Noise control 11w
M25, Road traffic 11w
M25, Road works 6889-90w
Motorways, Lighting 11w
Motorways, Road works 10w
North Devon link road, Road accidents 689w
Ports, Oil pollution 686-7w
Ports, Yorkshire & Humberside 691w
Prestwick Airport, Finance 691-2w
Prestwick Airport, Scotland 691w
Public service vehicles, Public inquiries 202w
River Severn, Toll bridges 686w
Road accidents, Costs 12w
Road accidents, Deaf 277w
Road accidents, Road works 12-3w
Road construction, Environmental impact assessment 557-8w
Road construction, Investment returns 280w
Road humps 503w
Road traffic 200-1w
Road traffic control, Electronic equipment 688-9w
Road works, North East region 278w

Bottomley, Mr Peter—continued
Road works, Public utilities 424w
Roads, Lighting 557w
Roads, Sewers 557w
Roads, South Yorkshire 503w
Roads, Telephones 114-5w
Sea rescue, Solent 690-1w
Severn bridge, Debts 504w
Severn bridge, Repairs & maintenance 504w
Severn bridge, Road safety 201w
Severn bridge, Road tolls 504w, 556w
Severn bridge, Road works 556w
Shipping accidents 504w
Stratford station, London Underground 800w
Television advertising, Dept of Transport 12w, 424w
Transport of hazardous materials, Explosives 277w
Transport of radioactive materials 8-10w
Wembley Stadium, London Underground 799-800w

Bottomley, Mrs Virginia, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of the Environment
Debates etc.
Elephants, Nature conservation (26:05:89) 1296-300
Rate support grants, Basildon (26:05:89) 1304-7
Questions
Access to countryside 596w
Air pollution control 380w, 596w, 680w
Air pollution control, Air pollution 380w
Air pollution control, Sulphur dioxide 183w
Air pollution control, Treaties 590w
Archaeological sites, City of London 678w
Archaeological sites, Planning permission 598-9w
Archaeological sites, Property development 602w
Archaeology, Government grants 598w
Aveley Methane, Ownership 493-4w
Birds, Nature conservation 678w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Aerosols 584-5w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Air pollution control 262w
Councillors' interests 492w
Dog registration scheme 795w
Domestic wastes, Recycling 187w
EC Environment Council 590-1w
Elephants, Africa 676w
Elephants, Nature conservation 489w, 794w
Hazardous wastes, Waste disposal 383-4w, 794w
HM Inspectorate of Pollution 590w
HM Inspectorate of Pollution, Civil service manpower 382-3w
HM Inspectorate of Pollution, Local authorities 491w
HM Inspectorate of Pollution, Offices 381-2w
HM Inspectorate of Pollution, Pollution control 380-1w
Ivory, EC action 676-7w
Ivory, Import controls 676w, 793-4w
Ivory, Import licensing 676w
Ivory, Imports 677w
Ivory, Nature conservation 677w
Ivory, Overseas trade 677w, 794w
Lead free petrol 586-7w, 933-4
Lead free petrol, Exhaust emission controls 934
Lead pollution, Petrol 594-5w
Listed buildings, Building regulations 600w
Listed buildings, Plumstead 186w
Local government finance, Barking & Dagenham 494w
Local government staff, Handicapped workers 793w
Marine nature reserves 597-8w
Methane, Health hazards 384w
Methyl chloroform, Ozone layer 384w
Nature conservation, EC action 678-9w

Bottomley, Mrs Virginia—continued
Nature conservation, International conferences 676w
Noise control, Codes of practice 675-6w
North Sea, Research 496w
Packaging, Plastics 595w
Paper, Recycling 187-8w, 943-6
Pesticide residues, Wild animals 266w
Pollution control, Energy conservation 186w
Pollution control, Waste disposal 186w
Public footpaths, Motor vehicles 584w
Puffins, Nature conservation 182-3w
Radioactive waste disposal, Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive 185w
Rain forests, Brazil 600w
Rate support grants, Cruelty to children 379w
Recycling, Cans 596w
Rights of way 47w
Rose Theatre, Archaeological sites 268w, 324w
Sea pollution, Irish Sea 323w, 378w
Sea pollution, Marine animals 385w
Seals, Nature conservation 321w
Sites of special scientific interest, Tree planting 493w
Tree conservation, Preservation orders 188w
UN environment programme 380w
Waste disposal, Leicester 384w
Water pollution, Pollution control 592w
World Habitat Day 262w

Bovine somatotropin
Clwyd 648w
Licensing 740w
Wales 451w

Bovine spongiform encephalopathy
291w, 295-9w, 373-5w, (17:05:89) 447-54, 474w, 803-4w
Animal experiments 291-2w
Animal feed 375w, 804w
Animal products 804w
Cattle 292w, 375-6w
Civil service manpower 292w
Compensation 375w, 741w, 804w
Council of Ministers 291w
Disease control 56w
EC countries 376w
Food contamination 56w
Industrial health & safety 361-2w
Infant foods 806w
Research 802-3w
Slaughterhouses 211w
USA 375w
Veterinary services 741w

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy Research Committee
373w, 804w

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy Working Party
375w, (17:05:89) 447-54, 474w, 804w

Bowden, Mr Andrew
Questions
Handicapped drivers, Orange badge scheme 113w
Income support, Women 269-70w
Post offices, East Sussex 775w
Severe disablement allowance, Occupational pensions 71w

Bowden, Mr Gerald
Questions
Archaeological sites, Property development 602w
Business statements 475-6
Channel tunnel, Railway freight transport 113w, 200w
Inner London Education Authority, Local government services 495w
Road construction, Environmental impact assessment 557-8w

Bowis, Mr John
Debates etc.

Bowis, Mr John—continued
By election writs, Vauxhall (22:05:89) 700
Transport (15:05:89) 60-3
Questions
Driving, Deaf 10-1w
English National Opera, Arts finance 671-2
Handicapped, Parents 668-9
Museums & galleries, Education 439w
Picketing, Law reform 166w
Post Office, Competition 311
Weapons, Northern Ireland 457

Boyes, Mr Roland
Questions
"Community Charge (So-called Poll Tax)", Blind 677w
"Community Charge (So-called Poll Tax)", Deaf 677-8w
"Community Charge (So-called Poll Tax)", Languages 673w
Empty property, Dept of the Environment 582w
Minimum wage 172w

BR
see British Rail

Bracken
Health hazards 764-5w
Wales 764-5w

Bracknell
54w

Bradbury Wilkinson
Property transfer 118w

Bradford
Social Fund 550-2w

Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Debates etc.
Gurkhas, Hong Kong (22:05:89) 688-9
Questions
Business statements 474-5, 1125
Rose Theatre, Archaeological sites 22
USSR, Diplomatic service 678-9

Brandon-Bravo, Mr Martin M
Debates etc.
Associated British Ports (No 2) Bill, 3R (23:05:89) 871, 878-9, 885
Community Charge Regulations 1989 (23:05:89) 910-1
European Communities (18:05:89) 513
Publicity, Government departments (16:05:89) 216
Transport (15:05:89) 47-50, 64
Questions
Coal fired power stations, West Burton 5

Bray, Dr Jeremy
Debates etc.
National Engineering Laboratory, Privatisation (25:05:89) 1230

Brazier, Mr Julian
Debates etc.
Armed forces reserves (19:05:89) 644-6
Social security, Management (17:05:89) 329
Questions
Armed forces retirement, Army 275-6w
Dock labour scheme 171w
Financial Services Act 1986, Takeovers 118-20w
Pensioners, Earnings rules 660

Brazil
Nuclear power 386w
Rain forests 600w

Breast cancer
Wales 649w

Brent
Ethnic minorities 96-7w

Brent Borough Council
96-7w

Brewing industry
Competition 1112
Landlord & tenant 390w, 1111-2

Brewing industry—continued
Monopolies & Mergers Commission 232w

Bridge Street underpass
Dept of the Environment 384w

Bridges
Lorries 558w

Bridging allowances
213w

Bright, Mr Graham
Questions
Business growth training 177w
Methane, Electricity generation 109w

Bright, Keith
Resignations 422w

Bristol Channel
Sea pollution 325w
Sewage 262w

British Aerospace
299
Airbuses 299-300
Redundancy 54w

British Airports Authority
799w, 802w

British Airways
25w
Passengers (22:05:89) 716-7

British American Security Information Council
274w

British Coal
see British Coal Corporation

British Coal Corporation
51w, 104w, 108w, 275w, 444-5w
Investment 445-7w
North East region 108w
Scotland 108w

British Council
Research finance 195w

British Film Institute Southbank Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
2R order read (18:05:89) 455, (25:05:89) 1103

British Food & Farming Year 1989
Festivals & special occasions 739w, 1113-4

British Gas
Monopolies & Mergers Commission 106w

British Gas Corporation
see British Gas

British Geological Survey
Research finance 370w

British Medical Association
30-1w, 480w, 483w, 784, 792-3
NHS Review 472, 761w, 785-9, 797
Scottish Office 26w

British Nationality (Honorary Citizenship) Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
Motion to ref to 2R Com negatived (19:05:89) 585
2R order read (19:05:89) 651

British Nuclear Fuels
109w, (22:05:89) 750-61, 801w

British Rail
(15:05:89) 29-71, 313w, 692-3w
Capital investment 280w
Costs 115w
Privatisation 201w, 692w

British Railways (Penalty Fares) Bill (HL) 1987/88
Debates etc.
Order for consideration read (18:05:89) 455, (25:05:89) 1103

British residents abroad
Voting rights 97w

British Shipbuilders
237w

British Telecom
241w

British Theatre Association
Libraries 399w

British Venture Capital Association
Small businesses 177w

British Veterinary Association
Animal welfare 746w

Broadcasting
Comunn Na Gaidhlig 91w
Gaelic language 91w
Ownership 317-9w
Private Members' motions (19:05:89) 585-637

Broadcasting programmes
Horse racing 527-8w

Broadleaved woodland grant scheme
Northern Ireland 649-50w
Scotland 516w

Broadleaved woodlands
Northern Ireland 451w
Tree felling 451w

Broadmoor Hospital
147-8w

Brodsworth
River pollution 182w

Brogdale experimental horticulture station
473w

Brooke, Rt Hon Peter, Paymaster General
Debates etc.
Procurement, EC action (16:05:89) 267-73, 289-90
Questions
Civil service recruitment 385w
Civil service unions, Political impartiality 807w
Privatisation, Income 385w
Property Services Agency, Pay incentives 529-30w
Television advertising, Treasury 245w
UK contributions to EC budget 158w

Brown, Mr Gordon
Questions
Bus services, Concessionary fares 687-8w
Passport Office, Glasgow 754-5w
Passports, Administrative delays 636-8w
Scottish Office, Advertising 29w

Brown, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference (25:05:89) 1142-3
Associated British Ports (No 2) Bill, 3R (23:05:89) 859, 864, 892
Dock Work Bill, Rep & 3R (24:05:89) 969-70, 973-5
Roads (18:05:89) 496
Questions
British Food & Farming Year 1989, Festivals & special occasions 1113
Dock labour scheme, Grimsby 171w
Family doctors, Doctors' list of patients 480w
Interviews, Radio programmes 1119
Shipbuilding, Government assistance to industry 777w

Brown, Mr Nicholas
Questions
Dept of Social Security, Payroll deduction scheme 543w
Information technology, Balance of trade 306

Brown, Mr Ron
Questions
International trade 231w

Bruce, Mr Ian
Debates etc.
Associated British Ports (No 2) Bill, 3R (23:05:89) 876-7
Dock Work Bill, Rep & 3R (24:05:89) 965, 968, 1061
Questions
Armilla patrol 164-5
Business statements 1129
Common sheep meat regime 1104
Youth training scheme, Manpower 154-5

Bruce, Mr Malcolm
Debates etc.
Dock Work Bill, Rep & 3R (24:05:89) 979-81, 1058-63
Exhaust emission controls, EC action (24:05:89) 1087-8
Questions
Nuclear power, Environment protection 104w
Paper, Recycling 943
Teachers, Ethnic monitoring 657w

BSE Research Consultative Committee
see Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy Research Committee

BT
see British Telecom

Buccaneer aircraft
462w

Buck, Sir Antony
Debates etc.
Gurkhas, Hong Kong (22:05:89) 689

Buckley, Mr George J
Debates etc.
Associated British Ports (No 2) Bill, 3R (23:05:89) 875
Questions
Air pollution control 680w
Empty property, Government departments 582w

Budgen, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc.
European Communities (18:05:89) 505-6, 520
Exhaust emission controls, EC action (24:05:89) 1078
Questions
EC law, Environmental health 163
Interest rates 1116

Budgeting
Family doctors 476w, 478-9w, 518w, 562w, 786w
Prescription drugs 414w

"Building Businesses not Barriers White Paper"
372w

Building industry
Capital investment 315w

Building industry safety
573w

Building regulations
Energy conservation 1-2, 103w
Listed buildings 600w

Building repairs
Defective housing 764w
Museums & galleries 398-9w
Parkinson houses 264w

Building societies
Insurance companies 238w
Investor protection 391-2w

Building Societies Act 1986
Questions
391-2w

Burglary
Drug abuse 319-20w

Burns, Mr Simon
Debates etc.
Community Charge Regulations 1989 (23:05:89) 910
Transport (15:05:89) 50-3

Burns, Mr Simon—continued
Questions
British Medical Association 483w
Child benefit 664
Estate agents, Codes of practice 237w
Paper, Recycling 946
Private Members' Bills, House of Commons procedure 16-7
Social security reform 430w
Unemployment, East Anglia 161w

Burt, Mr Alistair
Debates etc.
Basildon District Council, Rate increases (22:05:89) 721
Manufacturing industries (16:05:89) 250-2
Questions
Bury Health Authority, Hospital consultants 798
East Lancashire Railway 586w
Seals, Nature conservation 321w

Bury Health Authority
Hospital consultants 798

Bus fares
689w

Bus services
Concessionary fares 687-8w

Bushloe High School Leicester
Education Reform Act 1988 370-1w

Business
Civil servants' secondment 239w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 372w

Business growth training
177w

Business motions
(19:05:89) 651, (26:05:89) 1307

"Business of Service"
432w

Business questions
Speaker's rulings & statements (18:05:89) 474, (25:05:89) 1132

Business sponsorship incentive scheme
400w, 672

Business statements
473-81, 1121-32

Butcher, Mr John, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Education and Science
Debates etc.
School admission, Stockport Education Authority (24:05:89) 1100-2
Questions
City technology colleges 605-6w
City technology colleges, Capital investment 606w
City technology colleges, Costs 606w
City technology colleges, Educational standards 4w
City technology colleges, Operating costs 606w
City technology colleges, Private investment 606-7w
City technology colleges, Schools 607w
Educational visits, Fees & charges 607w
Pupil records, Disclosure of information 797w
School discipline 607-8w
School Discipline Inquiry 443w
School Examinations & Assessment Council, Special education 3-4w
School Watch, Advertising 7w
Schools, Fees & charges 796w
Special education 531w
Special education, Appeals 3w
Special education, Cheshire 605w
Special education, Curriculum 1-2w
Special education, Departmental circulars 2w
Special education, National Curriculum Council 2w

Butcher, Mr John—continued
Special education, School administration 1w
Special education, Teacher training 2w
Teachers, Educational exchanges 444w
Teachers, Manpower 124-5w
Teachers, Pay settlements 127w
Teachers, Resignations 443w
Teachers, Shortage subjects 605w
Teachers' pensions, Local education authorities 535-6w
Teachers' pensions, Women 536w
Village schools, Yorkshire & Humberside 535w
Voluntary schools, Capital investment 441w

Butler, Mr Chris
Questions
Burglary, Drug abuse 319-20w
Business sponsorship incentive scheme 672
Cash limits, Office of Population Censuses & Surveys 727-8w
Common sheep meat regime 337w
Community charge, Low incomes 323w
Cyprus, United Nations 388w
Drug abuse 217w
Electricity supply industry, Nuclear power stations 633w
Halton Hospital 481w
Halton Hospital, Hospital patients 481w
Hospital patients, Halton Health Authority 721w
New towns 588w
Pensioners, Social security finance 426w
Special education, Cheshire 605w
Teachers, Manpower 124-5w
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, Marketing 445w

Butterfill, Mr John
Debates etc.
European Communities (18:05:89) 528, 564-5, 574-5
Questions
Companies, VAT 776w
Handicapped, EC action 428w
Holiday accommodation, Catering 153-4

BVCA
see British Venture Capital Association

By election writs
Glasgow Central (22:05:89) 659
Speaker's rulings & statements (22:05:89) 659
Vauxhall (22:05:89) 659, 693-700

Bypasses
Road works 686w
Wales 260w

Cabinet Office
Cash limits 525w

Caborn, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Inner city areas (23:05:89) 812
Questions
Manufacturing industries, EC internal trade 309-10

Caernarfon Eye & Cottage Hospital
Hospital closures 762w
Hospital patients 347w

Calibre
Government grants to voluntary organisations 786w

Calling of Members
Speaker's rulings & statements (25:05:89) 1142

Cambrian mountains
Tree planting 453w

Cambridge
Civil servants 529-30w

Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
Departmental correspondence 147w

Campbell, Mr Menzies
Debates etc.
Gurkhas, Hong Kong (22:05:89) 686
Sports, Touting (22:05:89) 707-8
Sports boycotts, South Africa (22:05:89) 709-10
Questions
Playing fields, Land acquisition 937

Campbell, Mr Ronnie
Questions
Central Electricity Generating Board 109w

Campbell-Savours, Mr D N
Debates etc.
"Charities White Paper" (16:05:89) 173
Dock Work Bill, Rep & 3R (24:05:89) 967-8
Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Bill, Rep & 3R (25:05:89) 1155
Observer (15:05:89) 28
Questions
Bexley Health Authority, Accountants 417w
Business statements 1128
Health service ancillary staff, Manpower 789-90w
Hospital closures, North Devon Hospital 416-7w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Departmental responsibilities 1115
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Next steps initiative 338w
NHS charges, North Devon Health Authority 417w
NHS Review, Kent 788
Observer, Newspaper Publishers' Association 231w
Public Accounts Commission 15
Ulster Defence Regiment, Security vetting 272w
Water supply industry, Privatisation 587-8w

Canavan, Mr Dennis
Questions
Business statements 1122-3
Intervention stocks 734w

Cancer
Children 485-6w
Medical research 85w, 126-7w, 281w
Oral contraceptives 87-8w
Radiation 67w
Radiation hazards 3-4w, 84-5w
Research finance 444w

Cans
Recycling 596w

Capital
NHS Review 153-4w
Water authorities 268w
Welsh Water Authority 648w

Capital investment
British Rail 280w
Building industry 315w
Church schools 646w
City technology colleges 606w
Local government finance 197-9w
Manufacturing industries 315w
NHS 415-6w
Roads 280w, 798w
Severn-Trent Water Authority 495w
Voluntary schools 441w

Capital punishment
498w

Capital rules
Pensioners 270w

Car Telephones (Safety) Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
1R (24:05:89) 959-61

Caravan sites
182w
Alyn & Deeside District Council 645w
Clwyd 645w
Deeside 645w

Caravan sites—continued
Gypsies (22:05:89) 721-3, 726-8
Wales 645w
Welsh districts 645-6w

Caravan Sites Act 1968
Questions
645-6w

Caravans
VAT 528-9w

Carbon dioxide
105-6w
Air pollution control 108-9w
Coal fired power stations 7

Carbon tetrachloride
Ozone layer 384w

Cardiff
347w, 397w
Coal 278w
Nuclear accidents 397w

Cardiff Prison
102w

Cardigan bay
Dolphins 948

Care proceedings
Legal costs (18:05:89) 575

Career structure
Midwives 218w, 484w
Nurses 452w, 482w, 486-7w, 720w, 785w, 786-7

Carers
Handicapped 668-9

Carlile, Mr Alex
Debates etc.
"Charities White Paper" (16:05:89) 176
Community Charge Regulations 1989 (23:05:89) 909, 910
Income tax on investment incomes, EC action (15:05:89) 124
Mergers, EC action (17:05:89) 427, 433, 438-40
Questions
Air routes, Republic of Ireland 275-6w
Employment discrimination, Northern Ireland 143w
Osman, Lorrain Esme, Arrests 248w
Osman, Lorrain Esme, Custodial treatment 255w
Osman, Lorrain Esme, Extradition 255w, 756w
Osman, Lorrain Esme, Liberia 248w, 771w
Poland, Sikorski, Wladyslaw 523-4w
Remand in custody 254w
USSR, Diplomatic service 679
Youth training scheme, Training & enterprise councils 155

Carlisle, Mr John
Debates etc.
China, Demonstrations (22:05:89) 718
Drug crimes, Proceeds of crime (22:05:89) 706
Sports boycotts, South Africa (22:05:89) 708-13
Questions
Business statements 480

Cars
Locks & keys 636w

Cartwright, Mr John
Questions
Council house sales, Greenwich 588-9w
East London river crossing 800w
Head lice, Educational health services 82-3w
Listed buildings, Plumstead 186w
Prisons, Woolwich 525-6w
Teachers, Educational exchanges 444w

Cash, Mr William
Debates etc.
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference (25:05:89) 1142
Dock Work Bill, Rep & 3R (24:05:89) 1048

Cash, Mr William—continued
Employment Bill, Rep (17:05:89) 391
European Communities (18:05:89) 518, 555-6
Mergers, EC action (17:05:89) 428
Questions
Business statements 476
Widows, Remarriage 435w
Widows' benefits, Social security benefits rules 685-6w

Cash dispensing
Social security payments 425w

Cash limits
Cabinet Office 525w
Dept of Education & Science 610w
Dept of Employment 661-2w
Dept of Energy 634-5w
Dept of Health 726-7w
Dept of Social Security 685w
Dept of the Environment 795w
Dept of Trade & Industry 650-1w
Dept of Transport 280w
Government Actuary 629w
Housing associations 258w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 473-4w
Office of Population Censuses & Surveys 727-8w
Scottish Office 659w
Welsh Office 453w

Castlereagh
Taxis 364w

Casualty units
Singleton Hospital 452-3w

Catering
Holiday accommodation 153-4

Cattle
Animal feed 375w, 377w
Beef premiums 298w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 292w, 375-6w
Slaughterhouses 56-7w

CBI
see Confederation of British Industry

CCETSW
see Central Council for Education & Training in Social Work

CEGB
see Central Electricity Generating Board

Cellular phones
Road safety (24:05:89) 959-61

Central Council for Education & Training in Social Work
724w

Central Electricity Generating Board
4, 109-10w, 386w, 801w

Central institutions
Government grants 404-6w
Higher education teachers 405-6w
Part-time education 407-8w
Student numbers 405-8w

Central London
200-1w

Central London Rail Study
556w

Central Manchester Health Authority
285w

Central Office of Information
155-8w, 308w, 752-3w

Central Statistical Office
525w
Expenditure 630w

Central Veterinary Laboratory
292w

Ceremonies
Torness power station 657-8w

Cervical cancer
Data banks 759w
Death 417w
Screening 417-8w, 783
Wales 649w, 759w

Chalker, Rt Hon Lynda, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Debates etc.
European Communities (18:05:89) 504-12, 517, 527
Questions
Africa, Elephants 631w
Council of Ministers 632w, 772-4w
EC integration, EC action 352w
EC Presidency, EC accession 630w
European Commission, Single European Act 351-2w
Gibraltar Airport 771w
South Africa, Emergency powers 19-20w
South Africa, Political prisoners 20w
Television advertising, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 20w

Chambers of commerce
Training & enterprise councils 166w

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
12-3

Chancellor of the Exchequer
see Treasury

Channel 3
317-9w

Channel tunnel
EC grants & loans 313w
Kent 556w
Railway freight transport 113w, 200w
Railway network 114w, 268w

Channon, Rt Hon Paul, Secretary of State for Transport
Debates etc.
Roads, Ministerial statements (18:05:89) 482-96
Questions
British Rail, Capital investment 280w
Dept of Transport, Cash limits 280w
East London river crossing 800w
East London river crossing, Road tolls 115w
London Underground, Safety measures 502-3w
Lorries, Bridges 558w
Road traffic control, Parliament Square 797-8w
Roads, Capital investment 798w
Roads, Private sector 422-3w

Charitable collections
(16:05:89) 167-77

Charitable trusts
Hostels 682-3w

Charities
Ministerial statements (16:05:89) 167-77
VAT 15w

"Charities White Paper"
(16:05:89) 167-77

Charter Group initiative
Government assistance 241-2w

Chemical industries
Balance of payments 236w

Cheshire
Special education 605w

Child benefit
79-80w, 664
EC countries 663-4

Child health
Babies 416w

Child minding
155w

Child minding—continued
Employment Training 179-80w

Child safety
Furniture 312

Children
Cancer 485-6w
Income support 464-5w
Kidnapping 455-6w, (22:05:89) 714-6

China
Demonstrations (22:05:89) 718-21
Hong Kong 1117

Chlorofluorocarbons
Aerosols 584-5w
Air pollution control 262w, 585w
Industry 237w
Refrigerators 489w

Chope, Mr Christopher, Under-Secretary of State for the Environment
Debates etc.
Recreation spaces, Town & country planning (22:05:89) 776-80
Questions
Advertising controls, Tourist attractions 491w
Aggregates, Seabed resources 185w
Bridge Street underpass, Dept of the Environment 384w
Crown Suppliers, Pensions 186w
Dredging, Coastal erosion 490w
EC grants & loans, Yorkshire & Humberside 265w
Empty property, Dept of the Environment 581-4w, 950
Empty property, Government departments 582w
Empty property, Homelessness 491w
Flags, Expenditure 679w
Greenbelt 589w
Greenbelt, Town & Country planning 589w
Hypermarkets, Greater Manchester 49w
Integrated development operations, Yorkshire & Humberside 265w
New towns, Greenbelt 588w
Planning inquiries, Motorway service areas 492w
Planning permission, Stokeham 602w
Playing fields, Land acquisition 936-8
Property development, Town & Country planning 593-4w
Shipbuilding, Faslane 496-7w
Structure plans, Kent 267-8w
Tinsley Park, Airports 596w
Town & country planning 598w
Water meters, Government buildings 206w

Church Commissioners
Pay 14
Women 13

Church schools
Capital investment 646w
Wales 646w

CITB
see Construction Industry Training Board

City of London
Archaeological sites 678w

City of London School
(15:05:89) 72-123

City of London (Various Powers) Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
2R & Money res (15:05:89) 72-123

City technology colleges
605-6w
Capital investment 606w
Costs 606w
Educational standards 4w
Operating costs 606w
Private investment 606-7w
Schools 607w

Civil Aviation (Air Navigation Charges) Bill (HL) 1988/89
Debates etc.
Rep* & 3R* (22:05:89) 749

Civil Aviation (Air Navigation Charges) Bill (HL) 1988/89—continued
Royal assent (25:05:89) 1149

Civil Jurisdiction & Judgements Act 1982
Debates etc.
(25:05:89) 1150

Civil servants
Attendance Allowance Board 223-4w
Cambridge 529-30w

Civil servants' secondment
675-6
Business 239w

Civil service
Disciplinary proceedings 121w
Disclosure of information 245w, 400w
Political impartiality 675

Civil service agencies
(17:05:89) 318-32, 338w, 449w, 676, 757w
Civil service manpower 400-2w

Civil service manpower
Agricultural Inspectorate 571-4w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 292w
Civil service agencies 400-2w
Factory Inspectorate 572w
Government information services 24w
HM Inspectorate of Pollution 382-3w
Housing benefits 270w
Social security claims 73w

Civil service recruitment
385w, 675
Graduates 674
School leaving 674

Civil service unions
675
Dept of Social Security 676
Political impartiality 807w

Clark, Mr Alan, Minister of State for Trade and Industry
Questions
Antidumping duties, EC action 231w
Balance of payments 390-1w
Clothing, Turkey 316w
EC external trade, USA 236w
EC Presidency, GATT 630-1w
Electrical technology, Production 459w
Export Credits Guarantee Department 243-4w
Footwear, Imports 389-90w
Gas masks, Israel 248-9w
Information technology, Balance of trade 234w, 306-7
Information technology, EC internal trade 307
International trade 231w
International trade, Overseas trade 230w
Ivory, Hong Kong 652-5w
Ivory, Imports 651-2w
Manufactured exports 234w, 656w
Manufactured exports, Exchange rates 232-3w
Manufactured goods, Balance of trade 307
Manufactured goods, Industrial production 655w
Manufactured goods, Manufactured imports 230w
Manufactured goods, Overseas trade 231w
Manufactured goods, UK trade with EC 116-7w
Manufacturing industries, Balance of trade 308
Manufacturing industries, Import penetration 307
Manufacturing industries, Productivity 307-8
Mechanical engineering, Production 459w
Motor vehicles, Production 459w
Overseas trade 230w
Overseas trade, Nigeria 315-6
Polyester silk plants, Imports 315-6w
Rain forests, Wood 314-5
Textiles, Turkey 775-6w

Clark, Dr David

***Clark, Dr David**—continued*
Questions
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service, Nitrates 748w
Alar, Advisory Committee on Pesticides 745w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 291w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Civil service manpower 292w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Veterinary services 741w
Daminozide, Advisory Committee on Pesticides 63w
Dioxins, Food contamination 63w
Dioxins, Milk 63w
Dioxins, New Zealand 63w
Fertilisers 64w
Food, EC action 565w
Food contamination, Irradiation 62-3w
Food imports, Food contamination 788w
Hepatitis, Radiation 806w
Irradiated food 1105, 1107
Irradiated food, Food imports 805w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Business 372w
Peat, Horticulture 745w
Pesticides 63-4w
Poultry, Salmonella 212-3w
Radioactivity, Venison 409-10w
Set-aside schemes 213w
Veterinary services, Disease control 295w
Veterinary services, EC internal trade 295-7w
Veterinary services, Expenditure 296w
Veterinary services, Manpower 296w, 745w
Veterinary services, Salmonella 292w
Veterinary services, Vacancies 378w

Clark, Dr Michael
Debates etc.
Associated British Ports (No 2) Bill, 3R (23:05:89) 862, 863, 870-7
Members' speeches, Parliamentary privilege (24:05:89) 955-6
Questions
Chemical industries, Balance of payments 236w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Air pollution control 262w
Coal fired power stations, Air pollution control 8
Irradiated food 733w
Nuclear power stations, Radioactive wastes 12
Self-governing hospitals 479w
Trades Union Congress, Picketing 173w

Clark, Sir William
Questions
Local government elections, North Down 461

***Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth**, Secretary of State for Health*
Questions
Bassetlaw Hospital 482w
British Medical Association 483w
Community care 789
Family doctors, Budgeting 476w
Family doctors, Kent 789
Family doctors, Prescriptions 477w
Family doctors, Rural areas 477w
Family practitioner committees 483w
Glasgow Royal Infirmary, Hospital closures 791-2
Health services, Wolverhampton 785
Medical education, NHS Review 486w
NHS administration, Public appointments 418-9w
NHS hospital trusts, Public sector assets 86w
NHS internal market 789-90
NHS Policy Board 784-6
NHS Review 479w, 783-4, 791
NHS Review, British Medical Association 785-9
NHS Review, Family doctors 790-1
NHS Review, Kent 788
NHS Review, Patients 477w

***Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth**—continued*
Queen's Medical Centre Nottingham, NHS hospital trusts 784-5
Self-governing hospitals 475w
Self-governing hospitals, Accident & emergency departments 475w
Self-governing hospitals, Greater London 475w
Shropshire Hospitals' League of Friends 289-90w
South East Thames Regional Health Authority, Public appointments 726w

Clarke, Mr Tom
Questions
Beef premiums 1112
Low Pay Unit 177w
Social security benefits, Residential care 430w
Textile industry, Industrial production 237w

Clarke Committee
see NHS Policy Board

Clay, Mr Bob
Questions
Ambulance services, Health service staff 787w
Ambulance services, Pay 787w
British Shipbuilders 237w
Departmental leaflets, Dept of Social Security 683-4w
Housing action trusts, Sunderland 48w, 595w
Income tax, Tax rates & bands 17-20w
Mortgage relief, Tax yields 16w
Personal income, Income tax 17-8w
Personal tax allowances 15-8w
Road works, Public utilities 424w
Tax thresholds, Tax free income 18w

Clelland, Mr David
Debates etc.
Employment Bill, Rep (17:05:89) 350, 417-8
Inner city areas (23:05:89) 825-8
Members' speeches, Television programmes (24:05:89) 954
Questions
Low pay, Wages councils 159
Manufactured goods, Balance of trade 307

Clergy
Pay 14

Cleveland County Council
Part-time employment 182w

Climate
Research 694w

Clinical trials
411w

Clinical wastes
Wales 647w
Waste disposal 289w

Close companies
Company taxation 629-30w

Clothing
Exports 316w
Turkey 316w

Clwyd
Bovine somatotropin 648w
Caravan sites 645w

Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Questions
Empty housing, Dept of the Environment 950
International trade 231w
Irradiated food, Research 733w
National Museum of Wales, Finance 347w
Private Bills, House of Commons procedure 19-20

Clwyd Education Authority
Educational finance 348w
Teachers 348w

Clwyd Family Practitioner Committee
646-7w

Clwyd Health Authority
NHS Review 646-7w

Clyde River Purification Board
Public appointments 338-40w

Clyde Submarine Base
Retirement 325w

Clydebank
Private hospitals 801-2w

CND
see Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

Coal
Cardiff 278w
Electricity supply industry 9-10
Imports 633w
Ports 278w

Coal consumption
Electricity supply industry 5

Coal fired power stations
Air pollution control 8-9
Carbon dioxide 7
Electricity generation 7
West Burton 4-5

Coal mining
110w
Scotland 164
Subsidence 104w, 444-5w

Coal reserves
Garw valley 275w

Coastal erosion
Dredging 490w

Cobalt
Metal industries 178w

Codes of practice
Estate agents 237w, 777-8w
Noise control 675-6w
School governors 536w
Wines 117-8w

COE
see Council of Europe

Cohen, Mr Harry
Debates etc.
City of London (Various Powers) Bill, 2R & Money res (15:05:89) 75-108, 112-6
Computer privacy (19:05:89) 652-8
Roads (18:05:89) 483, 491
Questions
Balance of payments 529w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Cattle 292w
Business statements 1126
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 12-3
Community charge, Hornsey 184w
Driving, Eye tests 277w
Driving offences, Ministers 138w
Energy conservation, Sizewell B 105w
Football, Identity cards 673-4w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office, AIDS 194w
Guyana, Elections 194w
Harts Hospital, Property transfer 286w
Homelessness 264w
London Underground, Automatic ticketing systems 114w
London Underground, Equal opportunities 316w
M11, Road works 690w
M25, Road works 6889-90w
Maternity services 722w
Midwives 722w
Police national computer 209w
Prison accommodation, Prison population 392w
Prosecutions, Police national computer 321w
Pupil records, Disclosure of information 797w

COI
see Central Office of Information

Coleman, Mr Donald
Questions
Opposition parties, Expenditure 410w
Opposition parties, Finance 765-6w

Collections
Northern region 670-1

College closures
Veterinary services 1120

Colleges of education
Scotland 404-8w

Colvin, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Dock Work Bill, Rep & 3R (24:05:89) 983
Transport (15:05:89) 38-44
Questions
Airbus Industrie, Management 117-8w
Arts festivals 7-8w
Brewing industry, Landlord & tenant 1111-2
Brewing industry, Monopolies & Mergers Commission 232w
Co-responsibility levy, Green pound 115-6w
Dock labour scheme 171w
Family doctors, Budgeting 478w
Food composition, Offal 290w
Gibraltar Airport 771w
Prestwick Airport, Finance 691-2w
Prestwick Airport, Scotland 691w
Sea rescue, Solent 690-1w
Short Brothers, Privatisation 464-5
Social security payments 72w
Training & enterprise councils 504-5w
Water supply industry, Privatisation 591w

Combined heat & power
110w
Air pollution control 7

Commercial Hydraulics Keelavite
191w

Commercial Shearing
190w

Commission for Racial Equality
286w, 326w, 499-500w

Commission for the New Towns
262w

Commission of the European Communities
see European Commission

Committee for Monitoring Agreements on Tobacco Advertising
484w

Committee on Safety of Medicines
87-8w

Common agricultural policy
Expenditure 371w, 744w
Fruit 1109

Common farm prices
290w
Farm incomes 739w

Common fisheries policy
White fish 743w

Common sheep meat regime
337w, 736w, 1103-4, 1110

Commonwealth
Educational aid 189w

Commonwealth Development Corporation
111-2w, 388w

Community care
(22:05:89) 730-1, 789
Dept of Social Security local offices 754w
Social Fund 544w
Voluntary work 283w

Community Care Review
484-5w, (22:05:89) 730-1

Community charge
323w, 490w, (23:05:89) 898-927
Administrative costs 184w

Community charge—continued
Dept of Social Security local offices 81w
Departmental correspondence 183w
Departmental leaflets 45-6w, 48w, 266w, 795w
Ealing 379-80w, 675w
Greenwich 472
Hornsey 184w
Housing benefits 753w
Leeds 183w
Local authorities 323w, 496
Low incomes 323w
Members 202w
Merchant seamen 303w
Ministers of religion 202-3w
Newspaper press 184w
Nottingham 184w, 489-90w
One parent families 323w
Oxford 203w
Pensioners 585w
Police 139w
Press releases 183w
Quakers 202-3w
Scotland 132-3w, 303w
Social security finance 223w
Students 442-3w
Tied housing 516-7w
Wales 45-6w
Widows 322w

Community charge benefit
Personal income 327-8w

Community charge exemptions
183w

Community charge rebates
327-8w, 430w, 669-70, 753w
Advertising 553w
Standing Order No 20 applications (25:05:89) 1148-9

"Community Charge (So-called Poll Tax)"
183-4w, 322w, 489w, 795w
Blind 677w
Costs 184w, 322w
Deaf 677-8w
Languages 673w
Prisoners 322w

Community Charges (Administration & Enforcement) Regulations 1989
Debates etc.
(23:05:89) 898-927
Questions
Community charges register 184w

Community charges register
202w, 489-90w, (23:05:89) 898-927
Community Charges (Administration & Enforcement) Regulations 1989 184w
Disclosure of information 261w

Community health councils
Self-governing hospitals 285w
Wales 646w

Community programme
Housing insulation 51w, 660w

Companies
Licensing 723w
Office of Population Censuses & Surveys 723-4w
VAT 776w

Companies Act 1985
Questions
120w

Company law
EC law 160w

Company liquidations
Mortgages 391w

Company registration
120w

Company taxation
Close companies 629-30w

Compensation
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 375w, 741w, 804w

Compensation—continued
NHS 727w
Nuclear weapons tests 67-8w, 551w, (22:05:89) 702-4
Ulster Defence Regiment 789-90w
Vaccine damaged children 327-8w, 751-2w

Competition
238-9w
Brewing industry 1112
Complaints against local government 50w
Local government services 495w
Post Office 311

Complaints
Consumer organisations 799w

Complaints against local government
Competition 50w

Complaints against police
Northern Ireland 143-6w

Comptroller & Auditor General
see National Audit Office

Computer applications
Criminal investigation 395w

Computer privacy
(19:05:89) 652-8
Disclosure of information 784w

Computers in Government departments
Dept of Social Security local offices 545w
Home Office 395w
Programming languages 462w

Comunn Na Gaidhlig
Broadcasting 91w

Concessionary fares
Bus services 687-8w
Local authorities 687-8w

Conditions of employment
Employment schemes 53-4w

Confederation of British Industry
Small businesses 177w

Conference on Security & Cooperation in Europe
see European Security Conference

Conferences
Transplant surgery 782w

Conservation
Museums & galleries 530w

Constituency size
Electorate 150-2w

Construction
Factories 202w
Hospitals 39-41w, 227-8w, 350w, 365-7w
Victoria Barracks Windsor 274w

Construction costs
District health authorities 348-9w

Construction Industry Training Board
165w
Youth training scheme 155

Consultants
Dept of Health 282w
Dept of Social Security 269w
Housing action trusts 599-600w

Consumer credit
Information 234w
Interest rates 233w

Consumer organisations
Complaints 799w

Consumer protection
EC action 231-2w
EC integration 313
EC internal trade 304

Contraceptives
Standards specifications 723w

Contracts for services
Hospitals 481w
Huddersfield Health Authority 560w

Contracts for services—continued
NHS 484w

Contracts of employment
Family doctors 30-1w, 81-2w, 388w, 792-3
Redundancy 168w
Youth training scheme 303-4w

Control of Pollution Act 1974
Questions
592w

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
794w

Conventional weapons
Western Europe 273-4w

Convictions
Drug crimes 393w
Wallace, Colin 98w

Conway, Mr Derek
Questions
VAT, BAOR 245w

Cook, Mr Frank
Debates etc.
Gurkhas, Hong Kong (22:05:89) 687

Cook, Mr Robin
Debates etc.
Social security, Management (17:05:89) 319-20, 331-2
Questions
Cervical cancer, Data banks 759w
Community care 789
Elderly, Population distribution 149-50w
Family doctors, Per capita costs 218w
Health service staff, Northern Ireland 364-6w
Health service staff, Scotland 225w
Health service staff, Wales 37-8w
Health services, Northern Ireland 368w
Health services, Scotland 26w
Hospital beds 147w
Hospital beds, Northern Ireland 465w
Hospital beds, Scotland 226w
Hospital beds, Wales 38-40w
Hospital closures, Northern Ireland 365-6w
Hospital closures, Scotland 225-6w
Hospital closures, Wales 128-9w
Hospitals, Construction 39-41w, 227-8w, 365-7w
Income support, Further education 219w
Income support, Residential care 221-4w
Low incomes 664
NHS, Expenditure 41w, 82w
NHS hospital trusts, Public sector assets 86w
NHS Policy Board 785-6
Pensioners, Personal income 77-8w, 222w
Population projection, Elderly 216w
Prison medical services, Training 99-100w
Regional health authorities, Expenditure 785-6w
Risley Remand Centre, Mentally disturbed offenders 100w
Risley Remand Centre, Prison medical services 99w
Social security reform 666
Supplementary benefits, Residential care 74w

Coombs, Mr Anthony
Debates etc.
Cyprus, Foreign policy (26:05:89) 1267-71
Questions
Country Landowners' Association 734w
Dept of Employment, Cash limits 661-2w
Manufacturing industries, Productivity 302
NHS administration, Public appointments 418-9w
Registered Homes Act 1984 485w
Residential care 662
Training & enterprise councils, Chambers of commerce 166w

Coombs, Mr Simon
Questions
EC Energy Council 447w
Electorate, Constituency size 150-2w
Irradiated food 733w

Cope, Rt Hon John, Minister of State for Employment
Debates etc.
Dock Work Bill, Rep & 3R (24:05:89) 966-70, 1070-2
Employment Bill, Rep (17:05:89) 340-1, 362-5, 382-3
Questions
Bridging allowances 213w
British Venture Capital Association, Small businesses 177w
Business growth training 177w
Company law, EC law 160w
Confederation of British Industry, Small businesses 177w
Deptford skillcentre, Land ownership & tenure 169w
EC Labour & Social Affairs Council, Industrial democracy 177w
EC Social Charter, EC action 507w
Employment, EC countries 161-2w
Employment Training, European Social Fund 168w
Employment Training, North Tyneside 302w
Engineering industries, West Midlands 173w
Enterprise allowance scheme 158w
Enterprise training 165w
European Social Fund, Borders Region 167w
European Social Fund, Cornwall 167w
European Social Fund, Scotland 54-5w
Industrial democracy 51w
Industrial training, North West region 174w
Industrial training, Private sector 507-8w
Industrial training, West Midlands 173-4w
Industrial training, Yorkshire & Humberside 173w
Local enterprise agencies, Government grants 175w
Low pay, Wages councils 150-1
Minimum wage 151
Minimum wage, EC action 150
Minimum wage, EC countries 150-1
New businesses, VAT registration 174w
Non-statutory training organisations 570-1w
Part-time employment, EC law 361w
Self-employed, East Midlands 158-9w
Self-employed, Interest rates 161
Self-employed, South East region 161
Skill shortages 337w
Skill shortages, EC internal trade 337w
Skillcentres, Privatisation 169w
Small businesses, EC action 213w
Take-up of employment, Education 303w
Television advertising, Dept of Employment 52w, 362-3w
Training, Expenditure 301w, 363w
Training & enterprise councils 504-5w
Training & enterprise councils, Chambers of commerce 166w
Training & enterprise councils, East Anglia 166w
Training & enterprise councils, South East region 505w
Training & enterprise councils, Tyne & Wear 508w
Training Commission 174w
Youth employment 302w
Youth training scheme 174-5w, 214w
Youth training scheme, Construction Industry Training Board 155
Youth training scheme, Contracts of employment 303-4w
Youth training scheme, Ethnic monitoring 51w
Youth training scheme, Industrial accidents 301-2w
Youth training scheme, Lodging allowances 174-5w
Youth training scheme, Manpower 154-5
Youth training scheme, School leaving 155
Youth training scheme, Training & enterprise councils 155

Corbett, Mr Robin
Debates etc.
Broadcasting (19:05:89) 596, 609, 613, 616-21, 634-5
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 460-1
Dogs, Animal welfare 99w
Football, Public order offences 96w
Industrial training, West Midlands 173-4w
Nature conservation, International conferences 676w
Self-governing hospitals, Hospital staff 153w
Self-governing hospitals, Secret ballot 153w

Corby
Regional aid 458w

Corbyn, Mr Jeremy
Debates etc.
City of London (Various Powers) Bill, 2R & Money res (15:05:89) 112, 116, 119-22
Elephants, Nature conservation (26:05:89) 1295-6
Kurdistan, Refugees (15:05:89) 27
Political refugees, Kurdistan (26:05:89) 1257-61
Rain forests, Environment protection (23:05:89) 927-8
Transport (15:05:89) 33-8, 55, 61-2
Questions
Attendance allowance, Social security appeals 546w
Business statements 1130
Handicap benefits 546w
Handicap benefits, Medical examinations 547-8w
Handicap benefits, Medical malpractice 546w
Handicap benefits, Per capita costs 546-7w
Handicapped 545-6w
Hedges & ditches, Government grants 733w
Marine nature reserves 598w
Nurses, Career structure 482w
Rain forests, Environment protection 693w
Rain forests, Forest protection 450w

Co-responsibility levy
742w
Dairy farming 297w
Green pound 115-6w
Milk 1107

Cormack, Mr Patrick
Questions
Brewing industry, Competition 1112

Cormorant Alpha platform
Offshore accidents 193w
Petroleum production 193w

Cornercroft Engineering
190w

Cornwall
European Social Fund 167w

Cornwall & Isles of Scilly Health Authority
Hospital beds 85w

Coroners' officers
635w

Cosmetics industry
Animal experiments 393w

Cost per pupil
Shotton County Infants' School 347-8w

Cost per student
University finance 608w

Couchman, Mr James
Debates etc.
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference (25:05:89) 1144
Wheeler, Gerald, Public petitions (18:05:89) 575
Questions
Family practitioner committees 483w

Council for the Protection of Rural England
1115

Council house rents
Lambeth 592w
Rent arrears 185w
Rent increases 47-8w

Council house sales
591w
Administrative delays 588w
Greenwich 588-9w
Lambeth 591w

Council housing
Croydon 48w

Council housing finance
595-6w
Wales 196-8w

Council of Europe
455w

Council of Ministers
199w, 361w, 471w, 632w, 772-4w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 291w
Immigration 208w
Wales 760w

Council tenants
House purchase 792w
Housing benefits 73-4w

Councillors
Income support 219w

Councillors' interests
492w

Counterfeit manufacturing
Drugs 560w

Country Landowners' Association
734w

Countryside
Environment protection 737w

County Hall
Property development 941-2
Property transfer 942

Court of Auditors
245w

Cousins, Mr Jim
Debates etc.
Social security, Management (17:05:89) 327
Questions
A19, Road works 201-2w
Carbon dioxide, Air pollution control 108-9w
Charter Group initiative, Government assistance 241-2w
Contracts of employment, Redundancy 168w
Employment Training, North Tyneside 392w
Equipment, Dept of Education & Science 3w
Equipment, Dept of Health 84-5w
Equipment, Dept of Social Security 71-3w
Equipment, Dept of the Environment 47w
Equipment, Dept of Trade & Industry 23w
Equipment, Home Office 91w
Equipment, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 56w
Estate agents, Law reform 236-7w
Government buildings, Dept of Education & Science 4w
Government buildings, Dept of Health 83-4w
Government buildings, Dept of Social Security 72w
Government buildings, Dept of the Environment 47w, 49w
Government buildings, Dept of Trade & Industry 22-4w
Government buildings, Home Office 90-2w
Government buildings, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 55-6w
Higher education, Research finance 189w
Housing benefits, Civil service manpower 270w
Housing benefits, Social security claims 271w

Cousins, Mr Jim—continued
Housing benefits, Social security reform 271w
Insulin, Imports 286-7w
LINK programme, Research finance 242w
National Institute of Agricultural Botany, Pay settlements 733-4w
NHS, Capital investment 415-6w
Public service vehicles, Public inquiries 202w
Shipping, Balance of payments 114w
Social Fund, North East region 548-50w
Social Fund, Pregnant women 429w
Social security benefits, Marginal tax rates 270w
Summertime, National Farmers' Union 116w
Training & enterprise councils, Tyne & Wear 508w

Coventry Climax Engines
190w

Cox, Mr Tom
Questions
Consumer protection, EC action 232w

CPRE
see Council for the Protection of Rural England

Crack
(24:05:89) 951-2

Cran, Mr James
Questions
Cancer, Children 485-6w
EC external trade, USA 236w
Electronic surveillance 97w, 256w, 757w
Electronic surveillance, Home Office 139-40w
Electronic surveillance, Police 756-7w
HM Inspectorate of Pollution 590w
Police, Electronic surveillance 757w
Social security benefits, Public expenditure 668
Untreated milk 735-6w

CRE
see Commission for Racial Equality

Creutzfeldt-Jakob dementia
Notifiable diseases 289w

Crime prevention
Information technology 635w

Criminal investigation
Computer applications 395w

Criminal Justice Act 1988
Questions
639w

Crisis loans
436w

Crown immunity
Doctors 725w

Crown Prosecution Service
Justices' clerks 397-8w
Pay 121-2w

Crown Suppliers
Pensions 186w

Crowther, Mr Stan
Debates etc.
Manufacturing industries (16:05:89) 239-41, 244

Croydon
Council housing 48w

Cruelty to children
Departmental circulars 98w
Rate support grants 379w
Research (15:05:89) 141-8, 797-8
Research finance 98-9w
Sexual offences 89w

Cruise missiles
USSR 730w

Cryer, Mr Bob
Debates etc.
Employment Bill, Rep (17:05:89) 362-3, 364, 371-4, 400-2, 404, 405-6
Oral question time intervention (18:05:89) 465
Procurement, EC action (16:05:89) 270
Roads (18:05:89) 492-3, 497
Social security, Management (17:05:89) 330
Questions
Business statements 480-1
EC Consumer Affairs Council, Textile industry 314
Self-employed, Interest rates 161

Cryptosporidia
Water treatment 186w

CSCE
see European Security Conference

CSM
see Committee on Safety of Medicines

CSO
see Central Statistical Office

Cullen Committee
see Piper Alpha Inquiry

Cumbria County Council
587-8w

Cummings, Mr John
Questions
British Coal Corporation, North East region 108w

Cunningham, Dr John
Questions
Channel tunnel, Railway network 114w
Community charge, Ministers of religion 202-3w
Competition, Complaints against local government 50w
Domestic rates, London boroughs 600-1w
Teachers' pensions, Women 536w
Water authorities, Pay incentives 680w
Water pollution, House of Commons 602-4w
Water supply disconnections, Water authorities 204-5w

Curriculum
Educational advisers 369w
Educational qualifications 796w
HM Inspectorate of Schools 369w, 643w
Languages education 311-2w
Special education 1-2w

Curry, Mr David
Debates etc.
European Communities (18:05:89) 550-2
Questions
A1, Road works 276w
Industrial disputes 176w

Custodial treatment
Osman, Lorrain Esme 255w

Custody
Divorce settlements (22:05:89) 714-6

Customs
UK trade with EC 628-9w

Customs & Excise Management Act 1979
Questions
810w

Cyprus
Foreign policy (26:05:89) 1267-76
United Nations 388w

Czechoslovakia
Human rights 351w
Jirous, Ivan 351w

Dagnan, Anthony
Parliamentary privilege (18:05:89) 499-503

Dairy farming
Co-responsibility levy 297w
National Farmers' Union 740w

Dale, Barry
105w

Dalyell, Mr Tam
Debates etc.
"Charities White Paper" (16:05:89) 174
East-West relations (24:05:89) 954-5
Gurkhas, Hong Kong (22:05:89) 688
Mergers, EC action (17:05:89) 426, 437, 440, 442-3
National Engineering Laboratory, Written questions (17:05:89) 334
National Maritime Museum Bill (HL), 3R (22:05:89) 746-7
Oral question time intervention (16:05:89) 152
Publicity, Government departments (16:05:89) 193, 208-9, 219
Rain forests, Environment protection (23:05:89) 925-7, 930
Social security, Management (17:05:89) 330
USSR, Diplomatic relations (22:05:89) 723-6
Questions
British Council, Research finance 195w
Business statements 479-80
Civil service, Disciplinary proceedings 121w
Civil service, Disclosure of information 245w, 400w
Crown Suppliers, Pensions 186w
Dept of Education & Science 126w
House of Fraser, Dept of Trade inquiries 243w
Information officers, Ethics 388-9w
Intelligence services, History 23w
Listed buildings, Building regulations 600w
Net book agreement 777w
Nuclear power, Brazil 386w
Pesticides, Safety 743-5w
Powell, Charles 25-6w
Rain forests, Brazil 600w
Rain forests, Droughts 55w
Rain forests, Forest protection 55w
Rain forests, Wood 315
Skillcentres, Privatisation 151-2
University teachers, Pay 126w
University teachers, Working hours 126w
USSR, Diplomatic service 525w, 681
Westland Helicopters, Disclosure of information 693w

Damages
Army in Northern Ireland 789-90w

Daminozide
Advisory Committee on Pesticides 63w

Darling, Mr Alistair
Questions
Criminal investigation, Computer applications 395w
Deportation, Immigration officers 320-1w
Deportation, Tamils 138-9w
Immigration, Deportation 207-8w
Immigration appeals 189-90w
Immigration appeals, Political refugees 321w
Monopolies & Mergers Commission 310
Poiitical refugees, Harmonisation of legislation 317w
Political refugees, Immigration applications 316-7w
Political refugees, Immigration controls 317w
Press releases, Perth 520-2w
Scottish Office, Public relations 228w
Trevi Group 139w

Data banks
Cervical cancer 759w

Data Protection Act 1984
Debates etc.
(19:05:89) 652-8

Data Protection Registrar
(19:05:89) 652-8

Davies, Rt Hon Denzil
Debates etc.
Mergers, EC action (17:05:89) 441, 443-4
Questions
Financial services 808w

Davies, Rt Hon Denzil—continued
Road accidents, Wales 129-30w

Davies, Mr Quentin
Debates etc.
Procurement, EC action (16:05:89) 279-81

Davies, Mr Ron
Debates etc.
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy (17:05:89) 447-52, 453
Questions
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service, Experimental farms 60-1w
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service, Government laboratories 60-1w
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service, Wales 61w
Animal diseases, Animal products 804w
Animal feed, EC action 295w
Animal feed, Food exports 294-5w, 806w
Animal products, Drugs 376w
Beef, Food imports 90w
Beef, Imports 61-2w
Beef premiums 298w
Beef premiums, Cattle 298w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 373-5w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Animal experiments 291-2w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Animal feed 375w, 804w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Animal products 804w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Cattle 375-6w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Compensation 375w, 804w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Council of Ministers 291w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Disease control 56w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, EC countries 376w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Food contamination 56w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Infant foods 806w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Slaughterhouses 211w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, USA 375w
Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy Research Committee 373w
Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy Working Party 474w
Bracken, Health hazards 764-5w
Broadleaved woodland grant scheme, Northern Ireland 649-50w
Broadleaved woodland grant scheme, Scotland 516w
Broadleaved woodlands, Tree felling 451w
Cattle, Animal feed 375w, 377w
Community charge, Departmental leaflets 266w
Co-responsibility levy, Dairy farming 297w
Creutzfeldt-Jakob dementia, Notifiable diseases 289w
Electoral register, Disclosure of information 98w
Extensification schemes, Environment protection 737w
Farm diversification scheme, Government grants 293-4w
Farm diversification scheme, Land use 293-4w
Farm incomes 297w
Farm incomes, Wales 261w
Farms, Local government property 297w
Food composition, Offal 474w
Forestry grant scheme, Scotland 514-5w
Industrial health & safety, Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 361-2w
Meat, Food exports 806-7w
Meat, Food inspection 299w
Organic farming, Prices 1108
Paper, Recycling 187-8w
Pesticide residues, Wild animals 266w
Porcine somatotropin, Licensing 377w
Sheep, Pest control 297w

Davies, Mr Ron—continued
Sites of special scientific interest, Tree planting 493w
Slaughterhouses, Cattle 56-7w
Slaughterhouses, Food hygiene 376-7w
Slaughterhouses, Food inspection 57-8w
Transmissible encephalopathies, Agricultural research 298-9w, 370w, 804w
Transmissible encephalopathies, Animal experiments 803-4w
Transmissible encephalopathies, Diagnosis 373-4w
Tree conservation, Preservation orders 188w
Tree planting, Cambrian mountains 453w
Tree planting, Scotland 515w
Wages councils, Low pay 158w
Water authorities, Land acquisition 385w
Woodland grant scheme, Wales 349w

Davis, Mr David
Debates etc.
Dock Work Bill, Rep & 3R (24:05:89) 972, 1002-4, 1025, 1028, 1055-8
Questions
Close companies, Company taxation 629-30w
Dock labour scheme, Humberside 170w
Family benefits, European Communities 431-2w
Family doctors, Rural areas 477w

Davis, Mr Terry
Questions
Armed forces desertion, Queen's Own Hussars 325-6w, 730w
Departmental leaflets, Dept of Social Security 684w
NHS charges exemptions, Agency Benefits Unit 155w

Day, Mr Stephen
Questions
Self-governing hospitals 476w

DE
see Dept of Employment

Deaf
484w
"Community Charge (So-called Poll Tax)" 677-8w
Driving 10-1w
EC law 10-1w
Handicapped pupils 512w
Road accidents 277w

Death
Cervical cancer 417w
Nuclear weapons tests 326w
Prisoners on remand 94w
Road accidents 12w
Weil's disease 287-8w, 304w

Debt collection
Dental charges 86-7w

Debts
Erskine bridge 553w
Humber bridge 556w
Severn bridge 504w
Water authorities 947

Decommissioning grants
Fishing vessels 372w, 472w

Deeds of covenant
Student grants 13w

Deeside
Caravan sites 645w

Defamation Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
1R (17:05:89) 335-7

Defective housing
Building repairs 764w
Nottingham 185w
Wales 764w

Defence contracts
Arms exports 191w
Expenditure 190-1w

Defence contracts—continued
International cooperation 190w
Short Brothers 272w

Defence Estimates
Aerospace industry 299

Defence expenditure
Per capita costs 729w

Defence Export Services Organisation
274w
Public appointments 395-6w

Defence land
Foulness Island 731-2w
Land acquisition 551w
Wales 551w

Delors Report
470

Democracy
Nigeria 23-4w

Demonstrations
China (22:05:89) 718-21
Northern Ireland 193-4w

Denis Wild houses
598w

Dental charges
486w
Debt collection 86-7w
Dentures 724w, 784w

Dental services
86w
Hepatitis 724w
Invalidity benefits 750w
Wales 258w

Dentists
Industrial diseases 86w

Dentures
Dental charges 724w, 784w

Dept of Education & Science
126w
Cash limits 610w
Equipment 3w
Government buildings 4w

Dept of Employment
Cash limits 661-2w
Handicapped workers 577w
Television advertising 52w, 362-3w

Dept of Energy
Cash limits 634-5w
Television advertising 110-1w, 387w

Dept of Health
26w
Cash limits 726-7w
Consultants 282w
Equal opportunities 286w
Equipment 84-5w
Government buildings 83-4w
Publicity 155-8w
Television advertising 89w

Dept of Health & Social Security
758w

Dept of Social Security
72-3w, 223-4w, 546w
Cash limits 685w
Civil service unions 676
Consultants 269w
Departmental leaflets 683-4w
Departmental publications 749-50w
Equal opportunities 326w
Equipment 71-3w
Ethnic monitoring 326w
Government buildings 72w
Payroll deduction scheme 543w
Publicity 752-3w
Television advertising 71w, 437-8w

Dept of Social Security local offices
Community care 754w
Community charge 81w

Dept of Social Security local offices—continued
Computers in Government departments 545w
National insurance contributions 434w

Dept of the Environment
795w
Bridge Street underpass 384w
Cash limits 795w
Departmental leaflets 269w, 679-80w
Empty property 581-4w, 950
Equipment 47w
buildings 47w, 49w
Solicitors 49w
Television advertising 45-6w, 603-4w

Dept of Trade & Industry
Cash limits 650-1w
Equipment 23w
Government buildings 22-4w
Television advertising 121w

Dept of Trade inquiries
House of Fraser 243w

Dept of Transport
Cash limits 280w
Television advertising 12w, 424w

Departmental circulars
Cruelty to children 98w
Special education 2w

Departmental correspondence
Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament 147w
Community charge 183w
Political refugees 210w

Departmental forms
Sick pay 72w

Departmental leaflets
Community charge 45-6w, 48w, 266w, 795w
Dept of Social Security 683-4w
Dept of the Environment 269w, 679-80w
Employers' statutory sick pay scheme 72w
Recycling 269w
Social security benefits 427w

Departmental publications
Dept of Social Security 749-50w

Departmental responsibilities
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 1115

Deportation
Immigration 207-8w
Immigration officers 320-1w
Tamils 138-9w

Deposited papers
Speaker's rulings & statements (25:05:89) 1138

Deptford skillcentre
Land ownership & tenure 169w

Derby County Football Club
(23:05:89) 924

Derbyshire
Employment schemes 165w
New businesses 506w
Unemployment 506w

DES
see Dept of Education & Science

Desiccated liver powder
Food imports 420-1w

Design
Ships 398w

DESO
see Defence Export Services Organisation

Development aid
Bophuthatswana 642w
Rain forests 21-2w
Yemen 207w

Development plans
593w

"Developments in the European Community Six Monthly Report"
(18:05:89) 504-75

Devlin, Mr Tim
Debates etc.
Dock Work Bill, Rep & 3R (24:05:89) 972, 976, 1069, 1071
Roads (18:05:89) 487-8
Questions
Employment, Northern region 163w
Farm diversification scheme 740-1w
Job centres, Unemployment benefit offices 156
Leeman, John, Prisoners' release 147-8w
Members' correspondence, Administrative delays 220-4w, 749w
NHS Review, Patients 477w
Northern Ballet Theatre, Arts finance 400w

Dewar, Mr Donald
Debates etc.
Inner city areas (23:05:89) 847-50, 851
Questions
Family credit, Glasgow 448w
Housing benefits, Social security claims 448w
Tax evasion, Scotland 513w

DH
see Dept of Health

DHSS
see Dept of Health & Social Security

Diagnosis
Transmissible encephalopathies 373-4w

Dial-a-ride
Finance 503-4w

Dialysis machines
EC countries 781w

Dickens, Mr Geoffrey
Debates etc.
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference (25:05:89) 1146
Lonrho, Observer (25:05:89) 1150
Questions
Business statements 1127
Whales, Elephants 1109-10

Dioxins
Food contamination 63w
Milk 63w
New Zealand 63w

Diplomatic relations
USSR (22:05:89) 723-6, (24:05:89) 952

Diplomatic service
Prisoners 248w
USSR 525w, 677-82, 1118

Dir76/160/EEC
196w

Dir79/409/EEC
466w, 678w

Dir80/778/EEC
199w, 204w, 492w

Direct labour departments
Local authorities 305w

Director General of Electricity Supply
Public appointments 387-8w

Director of Public Prosecutions
143-4w

Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944
Questions
576w

Disabled Persons (Northern Ireland) Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
Royal assent (25:05:89) 1149

Disablement Services Authority
782
Prosthetics 781

Disablement Services Authority—continued
Wheelchairs 781

Disasters
Social security benefits rules 431w

Disciplinary proceedings
Civil service 121w

Disclosure of information
Adoption 785w
Civil service 245w, 400w
Community charges register 261w
Computer privacy 784w
Educational records 535w, 658w
Electoral register 98w
Intelligence services 1117
Medical records (26:05:89) 1277-84
Nuclear fuel cycle 634w
Piper Alpha Inquiry 193w
Planning permission 204w
Police 394w
Pupil records 797w
Restart programme 53w
Single people 320w
Westland Helicopters 693w

Disease control
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 56w
Veterinary services 295w

Dismissal
Hospital consultants 486w

Disposable syringes
Drug abuse 419-20w

District health authorities
Construction costs 348-9w
Hospitals 478w
Industrial diseases 485w
Wales 348-9w
West Lancashire Health Authority 218w

Divorce
Publicity 397w
Scotland 304w

Divorce settlements
Custody (22:05:89) 714-6

Dobson, Mr Frank
Debates etc.
Associated British Ports (No 2) Bill, 3R (23:05:89) 862
Manufacturing industries (16:05:89) 259
Members' interests (22:05:89) 712
Poverty (22:05:89) 734-6
Publicity, Government departments (16:05:89) 181-90, 192, 195, 198
Sports boycotts, South Africa (22:05:89) 712-3
Questions
Business statements 473-4, 1121-2
Employers' contributions, Prosecutions 433w
Health service staff, Temporary staff 282w
National insurance contributions 433-4w
National insurance contributions, Dept of Social Security local offices 434w
National insurance contributions, Social security claims 434w
NHS, Income 324w
Private Members' Bills, House of Commons procedure 17
Publicity, Dept of Health 155-8w
Publicity, Dept of Social Security 752-3w
Publicity, Scottish Office 308w

Dock labour scheme
170-1w, (24:05:89) 962-1075
Age 170w
Fisheries 737w
Grimsby 171w
Humberside 170w
Industrial disputes 508-9w
Liverpool 170w
Port of London 169-70w
Southampton 171w

"Dock Labour Scheme White Paper"
171w

Dock Work Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.

Dock Work Bill 1988/89—continued
Allocation of time motion*, Rep & 3R (24:05:89) 962-1075

Dock workers
Industrial relations 158-9
Manpower 170w

Doctors
Crown immunity 725w
Handicapped 546-8w
Wales 43-4w
"Working for Patients White Paper" 475w

Doctors' list of patients
81-2w
Family doctors 479-80w
Scotland 27w

DOE
see Dept of the Environment

Dog registration scheme
(22:05:89) 704-7, 795w

Dogs
757w
Animal welfare 99w

Dolphins
Cardigan bay 948
Moray firth 948

Domestic electrical appliances
Import penetration 236w

Domestic rates
Leeds 183w
London boroughs 262-4w, 600-1w, 792-3w

Domestic violence
Government grants to voluntary organisations 142w

Domestic wastes
Recycling 187w

Don valley
Low flying 729w

Doncaster
51w
Prisoners on remand 638w
Young offenders 153w

Donors
Bone marrow disorders 726w

Doran, Mr Frank
Debates etc.
Procurement, EC action (16:05:89) 281-3
Questions
Cormorant Alpha platform, Offshore accidents 193w
Cormorant Alpha platform, Petroleum production 193w
North Sea oil, Petroleum exploration 3
Offshore structures, Offshore safety 10
Piper Alpha Inquiry, Disclosure of information 193w
Piper Alpha platform, Offshore safety 192-3w

Double glazing
Energy conservation 2

Double taxation
Sweden (24:05:89) 1096

Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Estates of Deceased Persons & Inheritances & on Gifts) (Sweden) Order 1989
Debates etc.
(24:05:89) 1096

Douglas, Mr Dick
Debates etc.
Community Charge Regulations 1989 (23:05:89) 907, 908, 919
Questions
Balance of payments 390-1w
British Coal Corporation, Scotland 108w

Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James, Under-Secretary of State for Scotland
Questions
Airports, Scotland 304-5w, 346w, 802w
Alcoholic drinks, Public order offences 343-4w

Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James—continued
Broadleaved woodland grant scheme, Scotland 516w
Clyde River Purification Board, Public appointments 338-40w
Divorce, Scotland 304w
Electorate, Parliamentary constituencies 514w
Erskine bridge, Debts 553w
Erskine bridge, Road tolls 553w
Forestry grant scheme, Scotland 514-5w
Forfar bypass, Road accidents 659-60w
Local authorities, Direct labour departments 305w
Mathematics education 28w
Mathematics education, Educational standards 28w
Police deaths on duty, Scotland 339w
Police firearms, Policewomen 346w
Policewomen, Firearms 801w
Prison staff, Firearms 517w
Prison staff, Footwear 517w
Public houses, Landlord & tenant 28w
Radioactive waste disposal, Dounreay 228w
Radioactive waste disposal, Scotland 229w
Rents to mortgages scheme, Scotland 343w
Road finance, Scotland 131w, 303w
Road works, Prestwick Airport 227-8w
Road works, Scotland 31-7w
Scottish Parent Teacher Council 28w
Tree planting, Scotland 515w
Water pollution, Pollution monitoring 30w

Dounreay
Radioactive waste disposal 228w

Dover, Mr Den
Questions
Employment, North West region 163w
Export Credits Guarantee Department 244w

DPP
see Director of Public Prosecutions

Dredging
185w
Coastal erosion 490w

Drinking & driving
558w, 798-9w

Driving
Deaf 10-1w
Eye tests 277w

Driving offences
Ministers 138w

Droughts
Rain forests 55w

Drug abuse
217w, 1118, 1120
Burglary 319-20w
Disposable syringes 419-20w
Sports 596-7w
Standing Order No 20 applications (24:05:89) 951-2

Drug crimes
Convictions 393w
Proceeds of crime 319w, (22:05:89) 704-7

Drug industry
Medicines Control Agency 482w
Sales promotions 418w

Drug labelling
EC action 88w

Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986
Questions
319w, 393w

Drugs
AIDS 411w
Animal products 376w
Counterfeit manufacturing 560w
EC action 558w
Labelling 725w
Parallel imports 560w

Drugs—*continued*
Prices 411-3w
Quality control 289w

Druridge bay
Nuclear power stations 192w

DSS
see Dept of Social Security

DTI
see Dept of Trade & Industry

DTp
see Dept of Transport

Dual jobholding
665-8w

Duffy, Mr A E P
Questions
EC grants & loans, Yorkshire & Humberside 265w
Employment, Service industries 163w
Employment discrimination, Northern Ireland 281w
Integrated development operations, Yorkshire & Humberside 265w
NHS Review, British Medical Association 788-9

Dunlop
190w

Dunn, Mr Bob
Questions
British Rail, Capital investment 280w
Structure plans, Kent 267-8w

Dunnachie, Mr Jimmy
Questions
Consumer protection, EC action 231-2w
Skillcentres, Privatisation 169w

Dunnet Committee
see Salmon Advisory Committee

Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Debates etc.
European Communities (18:05:89) 526, 548-50
Roads (18:05:89) 483
Questions
International trade, Overseas trade 230w

Durant, Mr Tony Vice-Chamberlain of Her Majesty's Household
Debates etc.
Broadcasting (19:05:89) 616

Dutch elm disease
Agricultural research 292-3w

Dyfed
Primary education 763w
Welsh Development Agency 762-3w

Dykes, Mr Hugh
Debates etc.
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference (25:05:89) 1145
European Communities (18:05:89) 551, 558-61
Procurement, EC action (16:05:89) 278, 285
Questions
Cash limits, Dept of Energy 634-5w
Consumer credit, Information 234w
EC Labour & Social Affairs Council, Industrial democracy 177w
Furniture, Fire regulations 313
Social services, Homelessness 410w
Town & country planning 598w

Eadie, Mr Alexander
Debates etc.
Associated British Ports (No 2) Bill, 3R (23:05:89) 863-4, 871, 889-90
Questions
Coal mining, Scotland 110w, 164
Community charge rebates 430w
Manufacturing industries, Productivity 301

Ealing
Community charge 379-80w, 675w

Ear nose & throat
44w

Early day motions
Speaker's rulings & statements (15:05:89) 28, (25:05:89) 1150

Earnings rules
Pensioners 544w, 660
Retirement pensions 427w

East Anglia
Employment 164w
Self-employed 164w
Training & enterprise councils 166w
Unemployment 161w

East Lancashire railway
586w

East London river crossing
800w
Road tolls 115w

East Midlands
Employment 164w
Self-employed 158-9w
Unemployment 161w

East Sussex
Post offices 775w

Eastbourne Waterworks Company
Water charges (26:05:89) 1285-91

Eastham, Mr Ken
Debates etc.
Employment Bill, Rep (17:05:89) 391-5, 397
Questions
Consumer protection, EC action 232w
EC Environment Council 591w
Empty property, Dept of the Environment 583w
Industrial training, North West region 174w
Residential care, Social security benefits 660-1

EC accession
EC Presidency 630w

EC action
Animal feed 295w
Antidumping duties 231w
Blood sports 637w
Consumer protection 231-2w
Drug labelling 88w
Drugs 558w
EC integration 352w
EC Social Charter 507w
Education 536-7w
Exhaust emission controls (24:05:89) 1076-96
Firearms certificates 635-6w
Fisheries 471w
Food 565w
Footwear 389-90w
Handicapped 428w
Income tax on investment incomes (15:05:89) 124-40
Ivory 676-7w
Languages education 309w
Mergers (17:05:89) 425-46
Minimum wage 150
Nature conservation 678-9w
Procurement (16:05:89) 267-91
Small businesses 213w
Speaker's rulings & statements (17:05:89) 391

EC Agriculture Council
565w
Wales 642w

EC aid
Rain forests 20w

EC budget
UK contributions 158w, 471-2

EC Commission
see European Commission

EC Coms Doc 8803/88
(16:05:89) 267-91

EC Coms Doc 4763/89
(15:05:89) 124-40

EC Consumer Affairs Council
304-5, 313
EC integration 314
Textile industry 314

EC countries
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 376w
Child benefit 663-4
Dialysis machines 781w
Employment 161-2w
Energy conservation 2
Family benefits 662-3
Maternity benefits 666-8
Minimum wage 150-1
Pensioners 685w
Public holidays 456w
Social security benefits 664
Transplant surgery 781w

EC Draft 5936/88
(17:05:89) 425-46

EC Draft 8804/88
(16:05:89) 267-91

EC Draft 8805/88
(16:05:89) 267-91

EC Draft 9822/88
(17:05:89) 425-46

EC Draft 10449/88
(16:05:89) 177

EC Draft 6529/89
(24:05:89) 1076-96

EC Economic & Finance Council
see EC Finance Council

EC Education Council
536-7w

EC Energy Council
447w

EC Environment Council
590-1w

EC external trade
USA 236w

EC Finance Council
245w

EC Foreign Affairs Council
523w

EC General Affairs Council
see EC Foreign Affairs Council

EC grants & loans
Channel tunnel 313w
European Tourism Year 762w
Fishing vessels 736w
Regional aid 120-2w
Road works 519-20w
South Yorkshire 165, 325w
Transport infrastructure 313w
Yorkshire & Humberside 265w

EC integration
162, 164
Consumer protection 313
EC action 352w
EC Consumer Affairs Council 314
European monetary union 470

EC internal trade
Anglo-Irish Agreement 462
Animal welfare 742w
Consumer protection 304
Government assistance to industry 237-8w
Information technology 307
Manufacturing industries 308-10
Microelectronics industry 309
Publicity 461w
Scotland 238w
Skill shortages 337w
Veterinary services 295-7w

EC Labour & Social Affairs Council
Industrial democracy 177w

EC law
122w, 199w
Company law 160w
Deaf 10-1w
Electromagnetic interference 650w
Environmental health 163
Game 745-6w
Lorries 558w
Part-time employment 361w
Sea pollution 186-7w, 206w, 795-6w
Speaker's rulings & statements (17:05:89) 425
Water pollution 13, 204w

EC Presidency
EC accession 630w
GATT 630-1w

EC social charter
(17:05:89) 338-424, (18:05:89) 504-75
EC action 507w

ECGD
see Export Credits Guarantee Department

ECOFIN
see EC Finance Council

Economic growth
628w

Economic League
(17:05:89) 338-424

Economic policy
1116-7, 1119

Economic regions
Employment 578-80w
Employment Training 581w
Part-time employment 578-80w
Schools 532-6w
Unemployment 353-62w

Edinburgh
177-8w
Asbestos 27-8w

Education
EC action 536-7w
Museums & galleries 398w, 439w
Take-up of employment 303w
Training grants 128w

Education Act 1981
Questions
3w

Education Reform Act 1988
Questions
1-2w, 796w
Bushloe High School Leicester 370-1w

"Education Reform in Northern Ireland"
459

Educational advisers
Curriculum 369w

Educational aid
Commonwealth 189w

Educational exchanges
Teachers 444w

Educational finance
Clwyd Education Authority 348w

Educational health services
Head lice 82-3w, 217w

Educational policy
Northern Ireland 459

Educational qualifications
Curriculum 796w
Employment 663-6w

Educational records
Disclosure of information 535w, 658w

Educational standards
City technology colleges 4w
Mathematics education 28w, 403-4w

Educational visits
796w
Fees & charges 607w

EEC
see European Economic Community

Eels
Fisheries 657w

EESA
see Electrical & Engineering Staff Association

Efficiency scrutinies
(16:05:89) 167-77
Government grants to voluntary organisations 141-2w

"Efficiency Scrutiny of Supervision of Charities"
(16:05:89) 167-77

EFTA
see European Free Trade Association

Eggar, Mr Tim, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs
Debates etc.
Lebanon (16:05:89) 295-8
Questions
Africa, Nature conservation 631w
British Council, Research finance 195w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office, AIDS 194w
Guyana, Elections 194w
Hong Kong, Ivory 631w
Human rights, United Nations 137w
India, Human rights 456w
Kidnapping, Children 455-6w
Montserrat, Banks 772w
Osman, Lorrain Esme, Arrests 248w
Osman, Lorrain Esme, Liberia 248w
Pakistan, Immigration applications 137w, 330w
Prisoners 247-8w
Prisoners, Diplomatic service 248w
US senate, Judiciary 456w
USA, Telephone services 457w

Eggs
Food standards 739-40w
Salmonella 291w

Elderly
Population distribution 149-50w
Population projection 216w
Public order offences 96w

Elders IXL
775w

Elections
Guyana 194w
Northern Ireland 146w, 791w, 1117-8
Proof of identity 146w, 791w
USSR 471

Electoral reform
Northern Ireland 464

Electoral register
Disclosure of information 98w
European Parliament elections 526w
Parliamentary constituencies 487-8w
Research 253w
Scotland 514w

Electorate
Constituency size 150-2w
Parliamentary constituencies 487w, 514w

Electrical & Engineering Staff Association
807w

Electrical technology
Exports 459w
Production 459w

Electricity Council
633w

Electricity distribution
Households 633w

Electricity generation
Advanced gas-cooled reactors 9
Coal fired power stations 7

Electricity generation—continued
Costs 104-5w
Methane 109w
Nuclear power 10, 104w
Nuclear power stations 105w
Privatisation 105w
Water power 633w

Electricity supply industry
Coal 9-10
Coal consumption 5
Industrial democracy 6-7
Industrial relations 158
Nuclear power stations 633w
Privatisation 6, 107w, 191-2w
Profit sharing 6

Electricity tariffs
Industrial energy prices 109w
Pensioners 314w

Electromagnetic interference
EC law 650w

Electronic equipment
Road traffic control 688-9w

Electronic surveillance
97w, 256w, 757w
Home Office 139-40w
Police 756-7w

Elephants
796
Africa 631w, 641w, 676w
Nature conservation 489w, 641w, (22:05:89) 728-9, 794w, (26:05:89) 1292-300
Whales 1109-10

Elton Committee
see School Discipline Inquiry

Emergency planning
Navy 397w

Emergency powers
South Africa 19-20w

Emery, Sir Peter
Debates etc.
Roads (18:05:89) 491

Emigration
USSR 455w

Employers' contributions
Prosecutions 433w

Employers' statutory sick pay scheme
Departmental leaflets 72w

Employment
163w, 352-4w
East Anglia 164w
East Midlands 164w
EC countries 161-2w
Economic regions 578-80w
Educational qualifications 663-6w
European Free Trade Association 161-2w
Graduates 662-4w
Manufacturing industries 331-4w
North West region 163w
Northern region 163w
Occupations 669-72w
Scotland 577-8w
Service industries 163w, 333-4w, 671-4w
West Midlands 163w
Yorkshire & Humberside 164w

Employment Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
Rep (17:05:89) 338-424

Employment by sector
53w

Employment discrimination
Handicapped 153
Handicapped workers 152-3
Northern Ireland 143w, 181w, 281w, 455-7, (25:05:89) 1151-226

Employment opportunities
Handicapped 152-3
Personnel management 156

Employment rehabilitation
Rehabilitation centres 576w

Employment schemes
Blind 574w
Conditions of employment 53-4w
Derbyshire 165w
Release for training scheme 574w
Social security benefits reductions 54w
Young people 302w

Employment Select Committee
(15:05:89) 140

Employment service
53w

Employment Training
29-30w, 51w, 167-8w, 214w, 331-2w, (17:05:89) 338-424, 454w, 581w, 662w
Child minding 179-80w
Economic regions 581w
European Social Fund 168w
Fees & charges 301-2w, 519w
Fraud 215-6w, 407-8w, 519w
Income support 500w
North Tyneside 302w
One parent families 179-80w
Remedial education 165w
Scotland 407-8w, 519w, 662w
South Yorkshire 167w
Training allowances 167w
Wales 581w
Yorkshire & Humberside 156-7

Empty housing
Lambeth 591w
Public sector housing 583w
Scotland 516-7w

Empty property
Dept of the Environment 581-4w, 950
Government departments 582w
Homelessness 491w
Welsh Office 452w

Energy
Environment protection 146-7w
Greenhouse effect 678w

Energy conservation
106-7w
Air pollution control 1-2, 7-8, 106w
Building regulations 1-2, 103w
Double glazing 2
EC countries 2
Housing insulation 103w
Pollution control 186w
Sizewell B 105w

Energy consumption
104w

Energy research
Alternative energy 147w
Fluidised bed combustion 386w

Energy Technology Support Unit
105w

Enforcement notices
Town & country planning 938

"Enforcing Planning Control"
938

Engineering industries
Apprentices 173w
West Midlands 173w

English Heritage
see Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission for England

English National Board for Nursing Midwifery & Health Visiting
218-9w

English National Opera
Arts finance 671-2

English Tourist Board
Holiday accommodation 153-4

ENO
see English National Opera

Enterprise allowance scheme
158w
Unemployment benefits 52w

Enterprise Initiative
520w

Enterprise training
165w

Environment
Open University 126w
Research finance 597w

Environment protection
795
Countryside 737w
Energy 146-7w
Extensification schemes 737w
Nuclear power 104w
Rain forests 314, 693w, (23:05:89) 925-32

Environment Select Committee
383-4w

Environmental health
EC law 163

Environmental health officers
102w

Environmental impact assessment
556w
Road construction 557-8w

EOC
see Equal Opportunities Commission

Epping Forest
(15:05:89) 72-123

Equal opportunities
Dept of Health 286w
Dept of Social Security 326w
London Underground 316w
Ministry of Defence 396w
Police 499-500w
Women 463

Equal Opportunities Commission
286w, 326w

Equipment
Dept of Education & Science 3w
Dept of Health 84-5w
Dept of Social Security 71-3w
Dept of the Environment 47w
Dept of Trade & Industry 23w
Home Office 91w
Manufacturing industries 301
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 56w

Erskine bridge
Debts 553w
Road tolls 553w

Estate agents
Codes of practice 237w, 777-8w
Law reform 236-7w

Estate management
49w

Estate management boards
Housing estates 323-4w

Estuaries
Pollution monitoring 948

Ethics
Information officers 388-9w

Ethnic minorities
Brent 96-7w
Prisoners on remand 92-4w
Students 7w
Transplant surgery 783w
Unemployment 353-62w

Ethnic monitoring
674
Dept of Social Security 326w
Minister for the Civil Service 673-4
Teachers 657w

Ethnic monitoring—continued
Youth training scheme 51w

European Assembly
see European Parliament

European Commission
199w, 265w, 444w
Ministers' visits abroad 642w
Scottish Office 658w
Single European Act 351-2w
Water Bill 1988/89 496w

European Communities
(18:05:89) 504-75
Family benefits 431-2w
Maternity benefits 435-6w

European Economic Community
734w

European fighter aircraft
552w

European Free Trade Association
536-7w
Employment 161-2w

European monetary system
245w, 796

European monetary union
EC integration 470

European Parliament
678-9w

European Parliament elections
162
Electoral register 526w

European Regional Development Fund
120-2w, 265w, 313w, 325w
Regional aid 460w
Scotland 134-6w, 519-20w

European Security Conference
Human rights 329w
Information 329-30w

European Social Fund
120-2w
Borders Region 167w
Cornwall 167w
Employment Training 168w
Scotland 54-5w

European Tourism Year
52-3w
EC grants & loans 762w
Wales 42w, 762w

Evans, Mr David
Questions
Hospitals, Contracts for services 481w
"Removing Barriers to Employment Consultation Paper" 172w
School Discipline Inquiry 443w
Small businesses, EC action 213w
Social security benefits, Publicity 426w
Sports, Private investment 597w

Evans, Mr John
Questions
Africa, Overseas aid 641w
Agricultural research, Research finance 562-4w
Bus fares 689w
Community charge, Social security finance 223w
Empty property, Dept of the Environment 583w
Interest rates 807w
NHS Review 283w
Nuclear power 8-9
Nuclear submarines, Fires 272-3w
Nuclear submarines, Nuclear accidents 273w
Nuclear weapons policy 451w
Official engagements 695w
Special education 531w
Submarines, Fires 273w

Evennett, Mr David
Questions
"Business of Service" 432w
Community charge, One parent families 323w

Evennett, Mr David—continued
District health authorities, Hospitals 478w
Dock labour scheme, Age 170w
EC integration 162
Handicapped, Employment opportunities 153
Teachers, Pay incentives 5-6w

Ewing, Mr Harry
Debates etc.
National Engineering Laboratory, Written Questions (17:05:89) 334
Social security, Management (17:05:89) 325
Questions
Business statements 475
Family doctors, Budgeting 518w
Ministers' domestic visits, Stirling 517-8w
Official engagements 343w
Post Office 311-2

Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Debates etc.
Social security, Management (17:05:89) 324
Questions
British Rail, Costs 115w
Community charge, Tied housing 516-7w
Community charge rebates, Advertising 553w
Cosmetics industry, Animal experiments 393w
Divorce, Scotland 304w
Eels, Fisheries 657w
European Regional Development Fund, Scotland 519-20w
Fishing quotas 1114-5
Glasgow Royal Infirmary, Hospital closures 791-2
Holiday lettings, Scotland 517w
Income support, Hospital discharges 270w
Marine animals, Moray firth 948
Radioactive waste disposal, Dounreay 228w
Research finance, Cancer 444w
Road finance, Scotland 131w, 303w
Torness power station 9

Examinations
Security 443-4w

Exceptional needs payments
Northern Ireland 466-8w

Exchange rates
Manufactured exports 232-3w

Exercise Highland Cardinal
463-4w

Exercise OSEX 16
463-4w

Exhaust emission controls
EC action (24:05:89) 1076-96
Lead free petrol 934

Exhaust emissions
Harmonisation of standards 687w

Experimental farms
60w
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service 60-1w

Explosives
Transport of hazardous materials 277w

Export Credits Guarantee Department
243-4w

Export initiative
520w

Exports
Clothing 316w
Electrical technology 459w
Mechanical engineering 459w
Motor vehicles 459w, 524w

Exservicemen
Nuclear weapons tests 67w

Extensification schemes
737w
Environment protection 737w

Extradition
Fiore, Roberto 257w
Osman, Lorrain Esme 255w, 756w

Eye tests
486w
Driving 277w
NHS charges 728w

F111 aircraft
Upper Heyford 274w

Factories
Construction 202w
Scottish Development Agency 343w

Factory Inspectorate
Civil service manpower 572w

Fair Employment Agency for Northern Ireland
143w

Fair Employment Commission for Northern Ireland
(25:05:89) 1151-226

Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1976
Questions
181w

Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
Rep & 3R (25:05:89) 1151-226

Fair Employment Tribunal for Northern Ireland
(25:05:89) 1151-226

Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Questions
Objects in lieu of tax, Scotland 339-40w
Public holidays 160

Family benefits
EC countries 662-3
European Communities 431-2w
Expenditure 431w

Family credit
Glasgow 448w
Personal income 71w
Social security claims 271-2w
Social security recipients 429-30w

Family doctors
480-1w
Budgeting 476w, 478-9w, 518w, 562w, 786w
Contracts of employment 30-1w, 81-2w, 388w, 792-3
Doctors' list of patients 479-80w
Family planning 87-8w
Home visits 413-4w
Kent 789
NHS Review 468, 790-1
Pay 284w
Per capita costs 218w
Prescriptions 477w
Rural areas 31w, 477w, 646w, 787w
Scotland 26-7w, 30-1w, 518w
Training 89w
Wales 388w, 646w, 760w
Women 480w, 760w, 792

Family income
80-1w

Family income supplements
Social security claims 271-2w

Family Law (Scotland) Act 1985
Questions
304w

Family planning
Bilateral aid 251-3w
Costs 87w
Family doctors 87-8w
Joint funding scheme 249-52w
UK contributions 251w
Voluntary organisations 249-52w

Family practitioner committees
478w, 483w
NHS Review 646w
Wales 646w

Family practitioner services
Homelessness 485w
Wakefield Family Practitioner Committee 422w

Fares to work scheme
575w

Farm & conservation grants scheme
Hedges & ditches 1115

Farm diversification scheme
740-1w
Government grants 293-4w
Land use 293-4w

Farm incomes
297w
Common farm prices 739w
Green pound 1108
Suckler cow premiums 735w
Wales 261w

Farmers
Hedges & ditches 372w

Farms
Local government property 297w
Waste disposal 744w

Farr, Sir John
Questions
A47, Road works 503w
Blood sports, Public order 140w
Bushloe High School Leicester, Education Reform Act 1988 370-1w
Clothing, Turkey 316w
Employment Training, Income support 508w
Footwear, Imports 389-90w
Hospital waiting lists 88w
Textiles, Turkey 775-6w
VAT, Sports facilities 809w

Fashion
Shipbuilding 496-7w

Fatchett, Mr Derek
Questions
City technology colleges, Educational standards 4w
Housing estates 587w
Inflation 794
Self-governing hospitals, Yorkshire Regional Health Authority 152-3w
Women, Northern Ireland 281w
Youth training scheme, School leaving 155

Faulds, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Roads (18:05:89) 482
Questions
Mergers, Monopolies & Mergers Commission 235w

Favell, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
Inner city areas (23:05:89) 807, 810
Roads (18:05:89) 498
Social security, Management (17:05:89) 330
Questions
Bingo 498w
Community Care Review 484-5w
Family doctors, Contracts of employment 793
Football 679w
Northern Ballet Theatre, Arts finance 671

FCO
see Foreign & Commonwealth Office

Fearn, Mr Ronnie
Debates etc.
Social security, Management (17:05:89) 322
Questions
Benzodiazepines, Medical research 5w, 88w
Cryptosporidia, Water treatment 186w
Dental charges, Debt collection 86-7w

Fearn, Mr Ronnie—continued
Dental charges, Dentures 724w, 784w
Dental services 86w
Dental services, Hepatitis 724w
Dentists, Industrial diseases 86w
Drug labelling, EC action 88w
Family doctors, Women 480w
Invalidity benefits, Dental services 750w
Medical research, Cancer 126-7w
National Girobank, Privatisation 230w
NHS complaints 783w
NHS Policy Board 784
Residential care 661-2
Transport of radioactive materials 8-10w

Fees & charges
Educational visits 607w
Employment Training 301-2w, 519w
Nurses' training 719w
Public libraries 8w
Residential care 661
Schools 796w

Felixstowe Port Diversion bypass
Road construction 555w

Fennell Committee
see King's Cross Fire Inquiry

Ferries
Taxation 385-6w

Fertilisers
64w
Nitrates 738w
Pollution control 738w
Safety 564-5w
Water pollution 738w

Festivals & special occasions
British Food & Farming Year 1989 739w, 1113-4

Field, Mr Barry
Debates etc.
Dock Work Bill, Rep & 3R (24:05:89) 1030
Human Organ Transplant Bill, Money res (22:05:89) 770-1
Social security, Management (17:05:89) 331
Questions
Advertising controls, Tourist attractions 491w
Aggregates, Seabed resources 50w, 185w
Coroners' officers 635w
Customs, UK trade with EC 628-9w
Dept of Trade & Industry, Cash limits 650-1w
Dredging, Coastal erosion 490w
Drugs, EC action 558w
Maternity benefits, European Communities 435-6w
National Girobank, Takeovers 303
Official engagements 123-4w, 246w, 451w
Ports, Oil pollution 686-7w
Puffins, Nature conservation 182-3w
Rain forests, Forest protection 641w
River Thames, Water transport 113w
Sea pollution, Health hazards 205-6w
Sick pay, Departmental forms 72w
Women, Northern Ireland 463

Field, Mr Frank
Questions
Armed forces training, Iraq 67w
Attendance Allowance Board, Civil servants 223-4w
Child benefit 79-80w
Collections, Northern region 670-1
Income support, Councillors 219w
Residential care 661
Social security benefits, EC countries 664
Westminster & Chelsea Hospital, NHS finance 153w

Financial Provisions (Northern Ireland) Order 1989
Debates etc.
(22:05:89) 763-6

Financial services
888w

Financial Services Act 1986
Questions
391-2w

Financial Services Act 1986—continued
Takeovers 118-20w
Water supply industry 264w

Fines
Litter 528w, 795-6

Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Debates etc.
Broadcasting (19:05:89) 608
City of London (Various Powers) Bill, 2R & Money res (18:05:89) 72-5, 77-8, 80, 99, 115, 121
Questions
Government grants to voluntary organisations, Government departments 122-3w
Landlord & tenant 942
NHS Review 784

Fiore, Roberto
Extradition 257w

Fire prevention
Furniture 312

Fire regulations
Furniture 313

Fire services
Nuclear accidents 273w
Water charges 46w

Firearms
Policewomen 801w
Prison staff 517w

Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988
Questions
256-7w

Firearms certificates
EC action 635-6w

Firearms Expert Consultative Committee
Public appointments 637-8w

Fires
Nuclear submarines 272-3w
Submarines 273w

Fish
Food imports 471w
Iceland 59-60w, 377w
Processed food 516w
River Humber 399w
Scotland 516w

Fish diseases
Freshwater fish 805w
Shellfish 805w

Fish farming
Salmon 742w

Fishburn, Mr Dudley
Questions
Nuclear fusion, Government grants 11-2

Fisher, Mr Mark
Debates etc.
National Maritime Museum Bill (HL), 3R (22:05:89) 742-6, 748
Questions
Museums & galleries, Repairs & maintenance 673
Rose theatre, Archaeological sites 22-3

Fisheries
Dock labour scheme 737w
EC action 471w
Eels 657w
Finance 471w
Interest charges 515-6w
Licensing 515w
Scotland 515-6w

Fishing catches
Iceland 59w
Scotland 516w

Fishing crews
Pay 515w

Fishing quotas
1114-5
Scotland 515w

Fishing quotas—continued
Shipping registration 1114

Fishing vessels
471w
Decommissioning grants 372w, 472w
EC grants & loans 736w
Licensing 472w
Modernisation 736w
Scotland 515w
Shipping registration 472w
Submarines 430w

Flags
Expenditure 679w

Flannery, Mr Martin
Debates etc.
Associated British Ports (No 2) Bill, 3R (23:05:89) 872-3
Inner city areas (23:05:89) 805, 814
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 461, 466
Community charge rebates 430w
Industrial training schemes 172-3w
International trade 231w
Urban development corporations, Expenditure 581w

Fletcher, Eric
794

Flue gas desulphurisation
8-9

Fluidised bed combustion
Energy research 386w
Grimethorpe 103w

Fluoridation
Water supply 561w

Flynn, Mr Paul
Questions
Access to countryside 596w
Association of Independent Electricity Producers 110w
British American Security Information Council 274w
Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, Departmental correspondence 147w
Carbon dioxide 106w
Conventional weapons, Western Europe 273-4w
Educational aid, Commonwealth 189w
Electricity supply industry, Privatisation 191-2w
Empty property, Dept of the Environment 582-4w
Fertilisers, Nitrates 738w
Medical research, Rodents 125-6w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty, Italy 758w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty, Luxembourg 759w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty, Netherlands 759w
Nuclear submarines, Zirconium 273w
Nuclear weapons 759w
Nuclear weapons, Radioactive waste disposal 464w
Open University, Environment 126w
Open University Visiting Committee 246w
Postgraduate education, Open University 309-10w
Radioactive waste disposal, Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive 185w
Romania 450w
Uranium, Imports 314w

Foetal tissue
Retail trade 482-3w

Fokker
50w

Food
EC action 565w

Food additives
Food labelling 290w

Food composition
Offal 290w, 474w

Food contamination
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 56w
Dioxins 63w
Food imports 788w
Irradiation 62-3w

Food exports
Animal feed 294-5w, 804w, 806w
Meat 806-7w

Food hygiene
Slaughterhouses 376-7w

Food imports
Beef 90w
Desiccated liver powder 420-1w
Fish 471w
Food contamination 788w
Irradiated food 805w
Meat 299w

Food inspection
Meat 299w
Slaughterhouses 57-8w

Food labelling
Food additives 290w
Pesticides 211-2w

Food packaging
Safety 239w
Waste biodegradability (23:05:89) 801-3

Food poisoning
Prisons 102w
Untreated milk 736w

Food standards
741w
Eggs 739-40w
Organic farming 738w
Pesticides 1113-4

Food surpluses
Expenditure 211w

Fookes, Dame Janet
Debates etc.
"Charities White Paper" (16:05:89) 171

Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Debates etc.
Dock Work Bill, Rep & 3R (24:05:89) 1020, 1022
Employment Bill, Rep (17:05:89) 345-6, 349, 376-8, 383
Questions
Offshore safety, Health & Safety Executive 10-1
Private Bills, House of Commons procedure 19

Foot, Paul
19w

Football
679w
Arrests 138w
Hooliganism 162-3
Identity cards 384w, 594w, 673-4w, (23:05:89) 924
Public order offences 96w

Football grounds
210w
Government assistance 490w
Safety 203w

Football pools
Tax yields 13w

Football Spectators Bill (HL) 1988/89
Questions
585w

Football Supporters' Association
(23:05:89) 924

Footwear
EC action 389-90w
Imports 389-90w

Footwear—continued
Prison staff 517w

Fords
Water authorities 45w

Foreign & Commonwealth Office
AIDS 194w
Television advertising 20w

Foreign companies in UK
118w

Foreign investment in UK
235w, 306, 460w
Manufacturing industries 305
Motor industry 235w
Scotland 305-6
Water supply industry 791-2w

Foreign languages
311-2w

Foreign patients
NHS charges 46w
Transplant surgery 782w
Wales 46w

Foreign policy
Cyprus (26:05:89) 1267-76

Foreign trade
Ivory 652-5w

Forest protection
Rain forests 22w, 55w, 450w, 641w

Forestry Commission
514-5w, 741w

Forestry grant scheme
Scotland 514-5w

Forfar bypass
Road accidents 659-60w

Forsyth, Mr Michael, Under-Secretary of State for Scotland
Questions
Ambulance services, Scotland 513-4w
Asbestos, Edinburgh 27-8w
Central institutions, Government grants 404-6w
Central institutions, Higher education teachers 405-6w
Central institutions, Part-time education 407-8w
Central institutions, Student numbers 405-8w
Doctors' list of patients, Scotland 27w
Educational records, Disclosure of information 658w
Eels, Fisheries 657w
Family doctors, Budgeting 518w
Family doctors, Contracts of employment 30-1w
Family doctors, Rural areas 31w
Family doctors, Scotland 26-7w
Fish, Processed food 516w
Fisheries, Interest charges 515-6w
Fisheries, Licensing 515w
Fishing crews, Pay 515w
Handicapped pupils, Deaf 512w
Health Education in Scotland Review 131-2w
Health service staff, Scotland 225w
Health services, Scotland 26w
Holiday lettings, Scotland 517w
Hospital beds, Scotland 226w
Hospital closures, Scotland 225-6w
Hospitals, Construction 227-8w
Mathematics education, Educational standards 403-4w
Medical malpractice, Insurance 514w
NHS, Land ownership & tenure 344-5w
NHS Review, Scotland 27w
Radioactivity, Venison 409-10w
Scottish Office, British Medical Association 26w
Smoking, Young people 29-30w
Teachers, Ethnic monitoring 657w
Teachers, Resignations 514w
Teachers, Scotland 657w

Forsyth, Mr Michael—continued
Total allowable catches, Scotland 515w
Weil's disease, Death 304w

Forth, Mr Eric, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs
Debates etc.
Mergers, EC action (17:05:89) 443
National Engineering Laboratory, Privatisation (25:05:89) 1230-4
Questions
Advertising controls, Private health services 457w
Beer, Measurement 117w
Building societies, Insurance companies 238w
Charter Group initiative, Government assistance 241-2w
Consumer protection, EC action 231-2w
EC Consumer Affairs Council 304-5, 313
EC Consumer Affairs Council, EC integration 314
EC Consumer Affairs Council, Textile industry 314
Equipment, Dept of Trade & Industry 23w
Estate agents, Codes of practice 237w, 777-8w
Estate agents, Law reform 236-7w
Food packaging, Safety 239w
Furniture, Child safety 312
Furniture, Fire regulations 313
Government buildings, Dept of Trade & Industry 22-4w
House of Fraser, Dept of Trade inquiries 243w
Letter boxes 230w
LINK programme, Research finance 242w
Post offices, East Sussex 775w
Television advertising, Dept of Trade & Industry 121w
Wines, Codes of practice 117-8w
Wines, Measurement 524w

Foulkes, Mr George
Debates etc.
European Communities (18:05:89) 558, 563, 565-8, 570
Questions
Air pollution control 596w
Community charge rebates 430w
Electricity supply industry, Profit sharing 6
Radioactive waste disposal, Scotland 229w
Smoking, Industrial health & safety 176w
Tobacco advertising 484w

Fouinese Island
Defence land 731-2w

Fowler, Rt Hon Norman, Secretary of State for Employment
Debates etc.
Dock Work Bill, Rep & 3R (24:05:89) 1019-24, 1027-8
Questions
Dept of Employment, Cash limits 661-2w
Employment Training, Yorkshire & Humberside 156-7
Industrial disputes 157-8
Industrial disputes, Lost working days 157
Industrial relations, Dock workers 158-9
Industrial relations, Electricity supply industry 158
Industrial relations law 158
Labour force survey 161-2
Skillcentres, Privatisation 151-2

Fox, Sir Marcus
Questions
Public transport, Industrial disputes 468

Franks, Mr Cecil
Debates etc.
Roads (18:05:89) 498
Questions
Curriculum, Educational qualifications 796w

Fraser, Mr John
Debates etc.
Inner city areas (23:05:89) 844
Questions
Economic policy 1116-7
Housing estates, Tenants' choice 592w
Political refugees, Departmental correspondence 210w
Rose theatre, Archaeological sites 24
Uniform business rate, Lambeth 182w

Fraud
Employment Training 215-6w, 407-8w, 519w

Freeman, Mr Roger, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Health
Debates etc.
Cruelty to children, Sexual offences (15:05:89) 145-8
Human Organ Transplant Bill, Money res (22:05:89) 767, 770-1
Medical records, Disclosure of information (26:05:89) 1280-4
NHS, Northumberland (26:05:89) 1241-4
Questions
Abortion, Liverpool 725w
Abortion, Prostoglandin 147w
Adoption, Disclosure of information 785w
Ambulance services, Health service staff 787w
Ambulance services, Pay 787w
Analgesics, Research 217w
Babies, Child health 416w
Bexley Health Authority, Accountants 417w
Blood, Viruses 418w
Bone marrow disorders, Donors 726w
Calibre, Government grants to voluntary organisations 786w
Cancer, Children 485-6w
Cancer, Radiation hazards 84-5w
Cash limits, Office of Population Censuses & Surveys 727-8w
Cervical cancer, Death 417w
Cervical cancer, Screening 417-8w
Clinical wastes, Waste disposal 289w
Creutzfeldt-Jakob dementia, Notifiable diseases 289w
Dental charges, Debt collection 86-7w
Dental charges, Dentures 724w, 784w
Dental services 86w
Dental services, Hepatitis 724w
Dentists, Industrial diseases 86w
Disclosure of information, Computer privacy 784w
District health authorities, Industrial diseases 485w
Drug abuse 217w
Elderly, Population distribution 149-50w
Electoral register, Parliamentary constituencies 487-8w
Electorate, Constituency size 150-2w
Electorate, Parliamentary constituencies 487w
Equipment, Dept of Health 84-5w
Family doctors, Per capita costs 218w
Fluoridation, Water supply 561w
Foetal tissue, Retail trade 482-3w
Food imports, Food contamination 788w
Government buildings, Dept of Health 83-4w
Halton Hospital 481w
Halton Hospital, Hospital patients 481w
Harts Hospital, Property transfer 286w
Head lice, Educational health services 82-3w, 217w
Health service ancillary staff, Oxford 560-1w
Hospital beds 147w, 559w
Hospital beds, Heart diseases 559w
Hospital beds, South Western Regional Health Authority 85w
Hospital closures 485w
Hospital closures, North Devon Hospital 416-7w
Hospital patients, Bolton Health Authority 410-1w

Freeman, Mr Roger—continued
Hospital patients, Halton Health Authority 721w
Hospital patients, West Lancashire Health Authority 411w
Hospitals, Contracts for services 481w
Hospitals, Operating costs 148-9w
Infant mortality 726w
Leeman, John, Prisoners' release 147-8w
Licensing, Companies 723w
Maternity services 722w
Medical treatments, Costs 283w
Midwives, Career structure 218w
NHS, Capital investment 415-6w
NHS, Compensation 727w
NHS, Contracts for services 484w
NHS, Income 324w
NHS & private practice 793-4
NHS charges, North Devon Health Authority 417w
NHS charges exemptions, Agency Benefits Unit 155w
NHS complaints 785w
NHS finance 481-2w
NHS finance, North West region 484w
Nurses, Career structure 786-7
Nurses, Pay 787
Office of Population Censuses & Surveys, Companies 723-4w
Organ donor cards 488w
Pain 83w
Pain Relief Foundation, Walton Hospital 725w
Pontefract General Infirmary, Geriatric patients 154w
Population projection, Elderly 216w
Radiation hazards, Genetics 151w
Schizophrenia, Expenditure 719-20w
Snapethorpe Hospital, Hospital closures 414-5w, 721w
Snapethorpe Hospital, Hospital patients 414-6w
Snapethorpe Hospital, Housing construction 414w, 721-2w
Snapethorpe Hospital, Land use 415w, 721w
Snapethorpe Hospital, Land values 414w
Snapethorpe Hospital, Medical treatments 721w
Technicians, Pay 218w
Test tube babies, South Western Regional Health Authority 82w, 422w, 485w
Tomography, West Midlands Regional Health Authority 488w
Transplant surgery, Conferences 782w
Transplant surgery, EC countries 781w
Transplant surgery, Ethnic minorities 783w
Transplant surgery, Foreign patients 782w
Transplant surgery, Heart diseases 488w
Transplant surgery, Hospital waiting lists 781-2w
Transplant surgery, Kidney patients 782w
Transplant surgery, Libraries 783w
Transplant surgery, Medical malpractice 488w
Transplant surgery, NHS Review 779-81w
Transplant surgery, Private hospitals 781w
Transplant surgery, Publicity 782-4w
Trent Regional Health Authority, Land values 784w
Trent Regional Health Authority, Surgery 778-80w
Weil's disease, Death 287-8w
West Lancashire Health Authority, District health authorities 218w
Westminster & Chelsea Hospital, NHS finance 153w

French, Mr Douglas
Debates etc.
Car Telephones (Safety) Bill, 1R (24:05:89) 959-61
Questions
British Coal Corporation, Investment 445-7w
Electricity tariffs, Pensioners 314w
Gas tariffs, Pensioners 314w
Nuclear power, Electricity generation 104w
Technicians, Pay 218w

French, Mr Douglas—continued
Telephone charges, Pensioners 241w
Water charges, Pensioners 383w
Water supply industry, Privatisation 589w

Freshwater fish
Fish diseases 805w

Fruit
Common agricultural policy 1109

Funerals
Social Fund 269w

Furniture
Child safety 312
Fire prevention 312
Fire regulations 313

Furniture & Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988
Questions
312

Further education
Income support 219w

Further education colleges
Teachers 247w

Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Debates etc.
Employment Bill, Rep (17:05:89) 409-13
Questions
Advertising controls, Private health services 457w
Trade competitiveness 229w

Fylde
Pensioners 426w

G7
see Group of Seven

Gaelic language
Broadcasting 91w

Galbraith, Mr Sam
Questions
Ambulance services, Scotland 513-4w
Doctors, Crown immunity 725w
Medical malpractice, Insurance 514w
Private hospitals, Clydebank 801-2w
Vaccine damaged children, Compensation 751w

Gale, Mr Roger
Debates etc.
Broadcasting (19:05:89) 585-92, 605, 611, 619, 625, 631, 632, 637
"Charities White Paper" (16:05:89) 175
Questions
Radio frequencies 524-5w

Galloway, Mr George
Debates etc.
Dock Work Bill, Rep & 3R (24:05:89) 1040-3

Game
EC law 745-6w

Games
VAT 189w

Gaming Machines (Prohibition on Use by Persons under Eighteen) Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
2R order read (19:05:89) 651

Garel-Jones, Mr Tristan, Vice-Chamberlain of Her Majestys Household
Debates etc.
Publicity, Government departments (16:05:89) 183

Garrett, Mr John
Debates etc.
Manufacturing industries (16:05:89) 256-9
Questions
Beaches, Sea pollution 265w
Manufacturing industries, Productivity 302

Garrett, Mr John—continued
River pollution, Mercury 264-5w
Water pollution, Inland waterways 265w

Garrett, Mr Ted
Questions
EC Consumer Affairs Council 304, 313
Social security benefits, Social security reform 682w

Garw valley
Coal reserves 275w
Spoil heaps 275w

Gas masks
Israel 248-9w

Gas supply industry
Gas tariffs 11

Gas tariffs
Gas supply industry 11
Horticulture 563w
Pensioners 314w

GATT
EC Presidency 630-1w

GEC
50w

GEC Telecommunications
190w

General Agreement on Tariffs & Trade
see GATT

General Electric Company
see GEC

General Medical Council
488w

Genetics
Radiation hazards 151w

Geriatric patients
Pontefract General Infirmary 154w

German measles
285-6w

Ghana
Overseas trade 315-6

Gibraltar
Inquiries 194w
IRA (22:05:89) 723-6

Gibraltar Airport
771w

Gill, Mr Christopher
Questions
Housing associations, Right to buy 585w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Cash limits 473-4w
Self-governing hospitals, Salop 479w
Suckler cow premiums 1110-1

Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Questions
Housing benefits, Community charge 753w

Glasgow
520w
Family credit 448w
Passport Office 754-5w

Glasgow Central
By election writs (22:05:89) 659

Glasgow Royal Infirmary
Hospital closures 790-2

Glenochil Prison
Prison staff 517w

Glyn, Dr Alan
Questions
Domestic wastes, Recycling 187w
Rights of way 47w
Victoria Barracks Windsor, Construction 274w

Goat meat
Radioactivity 409-10w

Goats
409w

Godman, Dr Norman A
Debates etc.
Dock Work Bill, Rep & 3R (24:05:89) 996-7, 1005
Questions
Birds, Nature conservation 121w
Dept of Social Security local offices, Community charge 81w
Fishing vessels, Decommissioning grants 372w
Fishing vessels, Submarines 450w
Jobclubs, Strathclyde 176w
North Sea, Research 496w
Shipbuilding, Port Glasgow 777w
Shipping, Kilbrannan sound 424w
Social Fund, Port Glasgow 328w
Transport of hazardous materials, Treaties 693w
Weil's disease, Death 287-8w, 304w

Golding, Mrs Llin
Questions
Income support, Social security benefits uprating 425w
Sports facilities, Privatisation 595w

Goodlad, Mr Alastair
Debates etc.
National Theatre (18:05:89) 576-81
Questions
Bypasses, Road works 686w
Drug abuse 1118
Immigration appeals, Political refugees 566w
Political refugees, Immigration applications 500w
Schizophrenia, Expenditure 719-20w
VAT zero rated goods 471

Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Questions
Housing 675w
Letter boxes 230w
Post Office 312
Self-employed 159-60w

Gordon, Ms Mildred
Debates etc.
Inner city areas (23:05:89) 837-42
Questions
Handicapped drivers, Parking 692w

Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Debates etc.
Employment Bill, Rep (17:05:89) 420
Questions
Council of Ministers 772-4w
Family doctors, Budgeting 476w
Unemployment, South East region 164w

Gorst, Mr John
Questions
Police, Disclosure of information 394w
Social workers' training, Mentally ill 724w

Gould, Mr Bryan
Debates etc.
Manufacturing industries (16:05:89) 224-30
Questions
EC internal trade, Publicity 461w
Trade competitiveness 300-1

Government achievements
695-719w

Government Actuary
Cash limits 629w

Government assistance
Charter Group initiative 241-2w
Football grounds 490w

Government assistance to industry
EC internal trade 237-8w
Integrated circuits 656-7w
Shipbuilding 777w

Government buildings
Dept of Education & Science 4w
Dept of Health 83-4w

Government buildings—continued
Dept of Social Security 72w
Dept of the Environment 47w, 49w
Dept of Trade & Industry 22-4w
Home Office 90-2w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 55-6w
Water meters 206w

Government departments
Advertising 14-6
Empty property 582w
Government grants to voluntary organisations 122-3w
Recycling 943

Government grants
Air pollution 694w
Archaeology 598w
Central institutions 404-6w
Farm diversification scheme 293-4w
Handicapped workers 575w, 577w
Hedges & ditches 733w
Job introduction scheme 569w
Local enterprise agencies 175w
Nuclear fusion 11-2
Special aids to employment scheme 574w
Urban development corporations 944-5

Government grants to voluntary organisations
Calibre 786w
Domestic violence 142w
Efficiency scrutinies 141-2w
Government departments 122-3w
Information Network Focus on Religious Movements 395w
Wales Epilepsy Association 762w

Government information services
Civil service manpower 24w

Government laboratories
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service 60-1w

Gow, Mr Ian
Debates etc.
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference (25:05:89) 1138
By election writs, Vauxhall (22:05:89) 696-8, 700
"Charities White Paper" (16:05:89) 174
Eastbourne Waterworks Company, Water charges (26:05:89) 1285-8
Publicity, Government departments (16:05:89) 188
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 463-4
Council house sales 591w
County Hall, Property transfer 942
EC Consumer Affairs Council 304

Graduates
Civil service recruitment 674
Employment 662-4w

Graham, Mr Thomas
Questions
Sheep premiums 734w
Trade competitiveness, Manufacturing industries 300

Grant, Mr Bernie
Debates etc.
By election writs, Vauxhall (22:05:89) 659, 693-6
Inner city areas (23:05:89) 821, 831

Greater London
Ground water 496w
Handicapped drivers 692w
Self-governing hospitals 475w

Greater Manchester
Housing standards 585-6w
Hypermarkets 49w

Green pound
Co-responsibility levy 115-6w
Farm incomes 1108

Greenbelt
589w
Housing 589w

Greenbelt—*continued*
New towns 588w
Town & country planning 589w

Greenhouse effect
8-9, 694w
Energy 678w

Greenock
81w

Greenway, Mr Harry
Debates etc.
Community Charge Regulations 1989 (23:05:89) 910, 917
Publicity, Government departments (16:05:89) 187-8, 191
Riders of Equine Animals Bill, TR (23:05:89) 798-800
Questions
Arts Council grants 8w
Church Commissioners, Pay 14
Civil service recruitment, School leaving 674
Community charge, Ealing 379-80w, 675w
Examinations, Security 443-4w
Family doctors, Doctors' list of patients 479-80w
Higher education, Student numbers 368-70w
Irradiated food 733w
Manufacturing industries, Foreign investment in UK 305
Official engagements 123-4w, 246w, 451w, 695w
Playing fields, Land use 379w
Private Members' Bills, House of Commons procedure 16
Pupil-teacher ratios, Northern Ireland 462
Skillcentres, Privatisation 152

Greenway, Mr John
Debates etc.
Roads (18:05:89) 492
Questions
British Food & Farming Year 1989, Festivals & special occasions 739w
Firearms Expert Consultative Committee, Public appointments 637-8w
Housing, House prices 589-90w
Prisoners, Married people 138w

Greenwich
Community charge 472
Council house sales 588-9w

Gregory, Mr Conal
Debates etc.
Tyres, Road safety (26:05:89) 1247-9
Questions
Public holidays 160

Greyhound racing
Betting 253-4w
Finance 254w

Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Questions
Aircraft noise, Sound insulation 729-30w
Property Services Agency, Pay incentives 529-30w

Griffiths, Mr Nigel
Questions
Asbestos, Edinburgh 27-8w
Employment Training 214w
Employment Training, Fees & charges 301-2w, 519w
Employment Training, Fraud 215-6w, 407-8w, 519w
Employment Training, Scotland 519w
Protein Fractionation Centre, Asbestos 177-8w
Skillcentres, Privatisation 169w
Training allowances 214w

Griffiths, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Exhaust emission controls, EC action (24:05:89) 1089

Griffiths, Mr Win
Debates etc.
Mergers, EC action (17:05:89) 435, 436, 444-5
Questions
Energy conservation, Building regulations 1-2
Food standards 741w
Manufactured goods, Manufactured imports 230w
Pre-school education, Wales 130w
Teachers, Pay incentives 247w

Griffiths Committee
see Community Care Review

Grimethorpe
Fluidised bed combustion 103w

Grimsby
Dock labour scheme 171w

Grist, Mr Ian, Under-Secretary of State for Wales
Questions
Beaches, Sea pollution 196w
Breast cancer, Wales 649w
Caernarfon Eye & Cottage Hospital, Hospital closures 762w
Caernarfon Eye & Cottage Hospital, Hospital patients 347w
Caravan sites, Clwyd 645w
Caravan sites, Wales 645w
Caravan sites, Welsh districts 645-6w
Cervical cancer, Data banks 759w
Cervical cancer, Wales 649w
Clinical wastes, Wales 647w
Community charge, Departmental leaflets 45-6w
Community health councils, Wales 646w
Defective housing, Building repairs 764w
Dental services, Wales 258w
District health authorities, Construction costs 348-9w
Doctors, Wales 43-4w
Empty property, Welsh Office 452w
Family doctors, Rural areas 646w
Family doctors, Wales 760w
Foreign patients, NHS charges 46w
Gwent Health Authority, Expenditure 42w
Health service staff, Wales 37-8w
Homelessness, Wales 452w
Hospital beds, Wales 38-40w, 453w
Hospital closures, Wales 128-9w
Hospital finance, Gwent 44-5w
Hospital waiting lists, Gwent 43-4w
Hospitals, Construction 39-41w, 350w
Hospitals, Gwent 43w
Hospitals, Wales 260w
Housing associations, Cash limits 258w
Housing capital allocations, Wales 196-8w
Housing for Wales, Rural areas 260-1w
Housing insulation, Neighbourhood energy action scheme 454w
Immunopathology, Wales 764w
Kidney patients, Transplant surgery 643w
Local government finance, Capital investment 197-9w
Medical Practices Committee, Wales 759-60w
Midwives, Manpower 648-9w
NHS, Expenditure 41w
NHS, Welsh language 195w
NHS complaints, Wales 259w
NHS finance, Wales 259w
NHS Review, British Medical Association 761w
NHS Review, Clwyd Health Authority 646-7w
NHS Review, Family practitioner committees 646w
NHS Review, Royal College of Nursing 761w
NHS Review, Trade unions 761w
NHS Review, Wales 761w
Nurses, Career structure 452w
Nurses' training, Welsh language 257w
Perinatal mortality, Wales 259-60w
River pollution, Wales 763w
Road accidents, Wales 129-30w

Grist, Mr Ian—continued
Second homes, Wales 764w
Self-governing hospitals, Wales 646w
Sewage, Sea pollution 759w
Sewage, Waste disposal 199w
Singleton Hospital, Casualty units 452-3w
Starter homes, Local authority powers 760w
Swansea City Council (Tawe Barrage) Act 1986 261w
Wales Epilepsy Association, Government grants to voluntary organizations 762w
Water pollution, Wales 199w
Welsh Water Authority, Advertising 763w
Welsh Water Authority, Capital 648w
Welsh Water Authority, Land ownership & tenure 763w
Welsh Water Authority, Land values 763w
Welsh Water Authority, Sea pollution 350w

Grocott, Mr Bruce
Debates etc.
Inner city areas (23:05:89) 815
Members' speeches, Television programmes (24:05:89) 956-7
Publicity, Government departments (16:05:89) 195, 215-8
Questions
Community charge, Departmental leaflets 266w
"Community Charge (So-called Poll Tax)", Costs 184w
Dept of the Environment, Departmental leaflets 269w, 679-80w
Engineering industries, West Midlands 173w
Holiday leave 160
Non-departmental public bodies 695w
Official engagements 695w
Parliamentary broadcasting, Television 796-7
Television advertising, Dept of Employment 52w, 362-3w
Television advertising, Dept of Energy 110-1w, 387w
Television advertising, Dept of Health 89w
Television advertising, Dept of Social Security 71w, 437-8w
Television advertising, Dept of the Environment 45-6w, 603-4w
Television advertising, Dept of Trade & Industry 121w
Television advertising, Dept of Transport 12w, 424w
Television advertising, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 20w
Television advertising, Home Office 98w
Television advertising, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 64w
Television advertising, Ministry of Defence 69w, 398w
Television advertising, Northern Ireland Office 281w, 368w, 649w
Television advertising, Scottish Office 660w
Television advertising, Treasury 245w
Television advertising, Welsh Office 45w, 349-50w
Tree planting, Agricultural land 746-8w

Ground, Mr Patrick
Questions
Family doctors, Prescriptions 477w
Training & enterprise councils, South East region 505w

Ground water
Greater London 496w

Group of Seven
Productivity 810-2w

Guard dogs
Police raids 757-8w

Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn, Minister of State for Local Government
Debates etc.
Community Charge Regulations 1989 (23:05:89) 897, 902, 909, 913-9
Questions
Community charge 323w, 490w

Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn—continued
Community charge, Administrative costs 184w
Community charge, Departmental correspondence 183w
Community charge, Departmental leaflets 48w, 266w, 795w
Community charge, Ealing 379-80w, 675w
Community charge, Hornsey 184w
Community charge, Leeds 183w
Community charge, Local authorities 323w
Community charge, Low incomes 323w
Community charge, Members 202w
Community charge, Newspaper press 184w
Community charge, Nottingham 489-90w
Community charge, One parent families 323w
Community charge, Oxford 203w
Community charge, Press releases 183w
Community charge, Widows 322w
Community charge exemptions 183w
"Community Charge (So-called Poll Tax)" 183-4w, 322w
"Community Charge (So-called Poll Tax)", Blind 677w
"Community Charge (So-called Poll Tax)", Costs 184w, 322w
"Community Charge (So-called Poll Tax)", Deaf 677-8w
"Community Charge (So-called Poll Tax)", Languages 673w
"Community Charge (So-called Poll Tax)", Prisoners 322w
Community Charges (Administration & Enforcement) Regulations 1989, Community charges register 184w
Community charges register 489w
Community charges register, Disclosure of information 261w
Dept of the Environment, Departmental leaflets 269w
Domestic rates, London boroughs 262-4w, 792-3w
Inner London Education Authority, Local government services 495w
Local government constituencies, West Midlands 187w
Local government expenditure, Local government revenue 188w
Local income tax 594w
Part-time employment, Cleveland County Council 182w
Rates & rating, Nurses 593w
Uniform business rate, Lambeth 182w

Gummer, John Selwyn
Publishing 488-9w

Gurkhas
731w
Armed forces strength 731w
Ministerial statements (22:05:89) 683-90
Nepal 771w

Guyana
Elections 194w

Guy's Hospital
Baby care units 468

Gwent
Hospital finance 44-5w
Hospital waiting lists 43-4w
Hospitals 43w

Gwent Health Authority
43-5w
Expenditure 42w

Gwynedd
Ambulance services 555w

Gwynedd Health Authority
762w

Gynaecology
Hospital consultants 151-2w
Trent Regional Health Authority 421w

Gypsies
182w
Caravan sites (22:05:89) 721-3, 726-8

Haberdashers' Aske's School
607w

Hague, Mr William
Questions
Animal welfare, EC internal trade 742w
Business sponsorship incentive scheme 672
Employment, Yorkshire & Humberside 164w
Self-governing hospitals, Accident & emergency departments 475w

Halton Health Authority
Hospital patients 721w

Halton Hospital
481w
Hospital patients 481w

Hamilton, Mr Archie, Minister of State for the Armed Forces
Questions
Air force, Jet aircraft 142w
British American Security Information Council 274w
Conventional weapons, Western Europe 273-4w
Cruise missiles, USSR 730w
Defence contracts, Short Brothers 272w
Defence expenditure, Per capita costs 729w
Gurkhas 731w
Gurkhas, Armed forces strength 731w
Harrier aircraft 462w
HMS Cardiff, Weapons 397w
Lance missiles, Modernisation 731w
NATO, Yorkshire & Humberside 730w
Navy, Emergency planning 397w
Navy, Medical records 69w
Navy, Shipping accidents 732w
Nuclear submarines, Fires 272-3w
Nuclear submarines, Nuclear accidents 273w
Nuclear weapons, Road accidents 730w
Submarines, Fires 273w
Submarines, Health surveys 68-9w
Submarines, Industrial health & safety 68w
Ulster Defence Regiment, Security vetting 272w
Warships, Urban areas 70w

Hamilton, Mr Neil
Debates etc.
Social security, Management (17:05:89) 328
Questions
NHS Review, British Medical Association 797
Short Brothers 50w

Hampson, Dr Keith
Questions
University finance, Cost per student 608w
World Habitat Day 262w

Handicap benefits
428w, 546w
Age 467-9w
Medical examinations 547-8w
Medical malpractice 546w
Northern Ireland 467-9w
Per capita costs 546-7w
Social security recipients 467w
Terminal care 71w

Handicapped
545-6w, 548w
Carers 668-9
Doctors 546-8w
EC action 428w
Employment discrimination 153
Employment opportunities 152-3
Expenditure 483w
Local government services 428w
Parents 668-9
Sports competitors 427-8w

Handicapped drivers
Greater London 692w
Orange badge scheme 113w
Parking 692w

Handicapped pupils
Deaf 512w
St Mungo's School Glasgow 512w

Handicapped workers
Aids for handicapped 574w
Dept of Employment 577w
Employment discrimination 152-3
Government grants 575w, 577w
Local government staff 793w
Prosecutions 576w
Quota of handicapped workers 575-6w

Hanley, Mr Jeremy
Debates etc.
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference (25:05:89) 1142
By election writs, Vauxhall (22:05:89) 693
Questions
Business statements 481
Dial-a-ride, Finance 503-4w
Domestic rates, London boroughs 262-4w, 792-3w
Immigrant detainees, Latchmere House 528w
Immigration, Airports 498-9w
Pensioners, EC countries 685w
Productivity, Group of Seven 810-2w

Hannam, Mr John
Questions
Electricity supply industry, Privatisation 107w
Handicapped, Sports competitors 427w
North Sea oil, Petroleum exploration 3

Harbours, Docks & Piers Clauses Act 1847
Questions
278-9w

Hard core unemployed
161-2

Hardy, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Associated British Ports (No 2) Bill, 3R (23:05:89) 863, 872, 878, 892
Private Bills, House of Commons procedure (24:05:89) 957-8
Questions
Barlow Clowes 238w
EC countries, Public holidays 456w
Electricity generation, Nuclear power stations 105w
Employment Training, South Yorkshire 167w
Employment Training, Yorkshire & Humberside 157
Energy conservation, EC countries 2
Greenbelt 589w
Hazardous wastes, Waste disposal 794w
Hillsborough Stadium, Public order policing 639-40w
Income support, Social security recipients 425w
Industries, Manpower 768w
Ivory, Overseas trade 794w
NHS Review 469-70, 783-4
Nurses, Pay 787-8w
Sea pollution, Marine animals 385w
Set-aside schemes 338w
VAT, Tax officers 529w
Water supply, Lead pipes 680-1w

Hargreaves, Mr Ken
Questions
Abortion, Prostoglandin 147w
Armed forces civilians, Teachers 766-7w
Service Children's Education Authority, Trade union recognition 396w

Harland & Wolff
Privatisation 143w

Harman, Ms Harriet
Questions
Bone marrow disorders, Donors 726w
City technology colleges 605-6w
City technology colleges, Capital investment 606w
City technology colleges, Costs 606w
City technology colleges, Operating costs 606w
City technology colleges, Private investment 606-7w

Harman, Ms Harriet—continued
Health Education Council, Expenditure 420w
Organ donor cards 488w
Transplant surgery, Conferences 782w
Transplant surgery, EC countries 781w
Transplant surgery, Ethnic minorities 783w
Transplant surgery, Foreign patients 782w
Transplant surgery, Heart diseases 488w
Transplant surgery, Hospital waiting lists 781-2w
Transplant surgery, Kidney patients 782w
Transplant surgery, Libraries 783w
Transplant surgery, Medical malpractice 488w
Transplant surgery, NHS Review 779-81w
Transplant surgery, Private hospitals 781w
Transplant surgery, Publicity 782-4w

Harmonisation of legislation
Political refugees 317w

Harmonisation of standards
Exhaust emissions 687w

Harp
321w

Harrier aircraft
462w

Harris, Mr David
Questions
Fishing quotas, Shipping registration 1114
River pollution, South West Water Authority 936
Self-employed, South West region 159w
Sewage, Water pollution 594w

Harts Hospital
Property transfer 286w

Haselhurst, Mr Alan
Questions
Dept of Transport, Cash limits 280w

Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Debates etc.
Inner city areas (23:05:89) 804-11, 813, 815-6

Hayes, Mr Jerry
Questions
Contraceptives, Standards specifications 723w
Family doctors 480w
Low pay, Wages councils 159
NHS Review, British Medical Association 785
USSR, Diplomatic service 681-2

Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Questions
Chlorofluorocarbons, Air pollution control 585w

Haynes, Mr Frank
Debates etc.
Atomic Energy Bill (HL), 3R (22:05:89) 755-7, 758
City of London (Various Powers) Bill, 2R & Money res (15:05:89) 91-2, 94, 100, 111
Employment Bill, Rep (17:05:89) 349-50, 399-400
Income tax on investment incomes, EC action (15:05:89) 137-9
Manufacturing industries (16:05:89) 229
Oral question time intervention (15:05:89) 11
Procurement, EC action (16:05:89) 270, 277
Publicity, Government departments (16:05:89) 184
Questions
Beef 1113
Business statements 481
Coal fired power stations, West Burton 4
Community charge rebates 669-70
Countryside, Environment protection 737w
Museums & galleries, Repairs & maintenance 673
Paper, Recycling 946

Hayward, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
Recreation spaces, Town & country planning (22:05:89) 774-6
Questions
European fighter aircraft 552w
Lead pollution, Petrol 594-5w
Playing fields, Land acquisition 937-8

Hazardous wastes
Members' correspondence 795w
Waste disposal 383-4w, 794w

HBMC
see Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission for England

Head lice
Educational health services 82-3w, 217w
Staffordshire North 217w

Headcorn Aerodrome
(22:05:89) 726-8

Health & Safety Commission
see Health & Safety Executive

Health & Safety Executive
176-8w, (17:05:89) 338-424, 361-2w, 571-4w, (22:05:89) 750-61
Offshore safety 10-1

Health Care International
801-2w
Scottish Development Agency 802w

Health education
AIDS 288-9w

Health Education Authority
288-9w
Health for All 786w

Health Education Council
Expenditure 420w

Health Education in Scotland Review
131-2w

Health for All
Health Education Authority 786w
Local authorities 786w

Health hazards
Bracken 764-5w
Methane 384w
Pesticide residues 212w
Sea pollution 205-6w

Health insurance
NHS 166

Health service ancillary staff
Manpower 789-90w
Oxford 560-1w

Health service staff
Ambulance services 787w
Manpower 560w
Northern Ireland 364-6w
Scotland 225w
Temporary staff 282w
Wales 37-8w

Health services
Expenditure 148w
Northern Ireland 368w
Scotland 26w
Wolverhampton 785

Health surveys
Submarines 68-9w

Heart diseases
Hospital beds 559w
Transplant surgery 488w

Heddle, Mr John
Questions
Airports, Local authorities 800w
Airports, Management 276w
Council tenants, House purchase 792w
Land registration, Rugeley 766w
Leasehold housing, Appeals 324w

Heddle, Mr John—continued
Litter, Fines 528w
Metropolitan Police, Parking offences 253w
Mortgage defaulters, Repossession orders 940-1
Rent arrears, Council house rents 185w
Town & country planning, West Midlands 674-5w
Urban programme, Accounting 203w
Water pollution, Pollution control 592w

Hedges & ditches
Farm & conservation grants scheme 1115
Farmers 372w
Government grants 733w

Heffer, Mr Eric S
Debates etc.
By election writs, Vauxhall (22:05:89) 698-9
European Communities (18:05:89) 505
Inner city areas (23:05:89) 812, 817, 831, 845-6
Questions
Industrial disputes 158
Pain Relief Foundation, Walton Hospital 725w
Rose theatre, Archaeological sites 24-5
Social security benefits, Public expenditure 668
Sports facilities, Urban areas 592w

Henderson, Mr Doug
Questions
Horse racing, Broadcasting programmes 527-8w
Income support, Social security benefits uprating 424-5w
Motor vehicles, Northern Ireland Office 470-2w
National Girobank, Takeovers 303-4

Hepatitis
Dental services 724w
Radiation 806w

Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Debates etc.
European Communities (18:05:89) 530-2

Hetherington Committee
see War Crimes Inquiry

Hicks, Mrs Maureen
Debates etc.
Drug abuse, Standing Order No 20 applications (24:05:89) 951-2
Inner city areas (23:05:89) 828-32, 845
Manufacturing industries (16:05:89) 236-9
Questions
Child minding 155w
Council house sales, Administrative delays 588w
Drug abuse 1120
Employment Training, Remedial education 165w
Food packaging, Safety 239w
NHS Review, British Medical Association 786

Hicks, Mr Robert
Questions
Bradbury Wilkinson, Property transfer 118w
Council housing finance 595-6w
Hospital beds, South Western Regional Health Authority 85w
NHS Review 479w
Pensioners, Social security reform 426w
White fish, Common fisheries policy 743w
Yemen, Development aid 207w
Yemen, Overseas aid 207w

HIDB
see Highlands & Islands Development Board

Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L
Debates etc.
Roads (18:05:89) 486

High Moor colliery
Mine accidents 51w

Higher education
Official engagements 608-10w
Research finance 189w
Student numbers 368-70w, 644-5w

Higher education administration
Pay 369w
Public appointments 609-28w

Higher education admission
Wales 195-6w

Higher education teachers
Central institutions 405-6w

Highland Association
see Comunn Na Gaidhlig

Highlands & Islands Development Board
Expenditure 343w

Highlane
(24:05:89) 1097-102

Hill, Mr James
Questions
Business statements 479, 1130
Dock labour scheme, Southampton 171w
EC integration 164
Minimum wage, EC countries 151

Hill livestock allowances
1107-8

Hillsborough Stadium
Public order policing 639-40w

Hillsborough Stadium Inquiry
96w, 140w

Hinchliffe, Mr David
Questions
Alcoholic drinks duties, Tax yields 441w
Dental charges 486w
Invalidity benefits, Medical examinations 427w
Nuclear weapons tests, Compensation 551w
Palace of Westminster 497w
Self-governing hospitals, Community health councils 285w
Self-governing hospitals, Performance related pay 285w
Self-governing hospitals, Public opinion 285w
Self-governing hospitals, Voting methods 285w
Sewage, Water pollution 595w
Snapethorpe Hospital, Hospital closures 414-5w, 721w
Snapethorpe Hospital, Hospital patients 414-6w
Snapethorpe Hospital, Housing construction 414w, 721-2w
Snapethorpe Hospital, Land use 415w, 721w
Snapethorpe Hospital, Land values 414w
Snapethorpe Hospital, Medical treatments 721w

Hind, Mr Kenneth
Debates etc.
Inner city areas (23:05:89) 836, 841
Mergers, EC action (17:05:89) 436, 440-2
Social security, Management (17:05:89) 326
Questions
Factories, Construction 202w
Gas supply industry, Gas tariffs 11
Government Actuary, Cash limits 629w
Hospital patients, West Lancashire Health Authority 411w
NHS, Compensation 727w
NHS Review, British Medical Association 787-8
Potato Processors' Association 740w
West Lancashire Health Authority, District health authorities 218w

Hinkley Point C
147w
Inquiries 104w

Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission for England
21-2, 186w

History
Intelligence services 23w

HL
see House of Lords

HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary
see HM Inspectorate of Constabulary

HM Factory Inspectorate
see Factory Inspectorate

HM Inspectorate of Constabulary
98w, 757w

HM Inspectorate of Pollution
590w, 680w
Civil service manpower 382-3w
Local authorities 491w
Offices 381-2w
Pollution control 380-1w

HM Inspectorate of Schools
Curriculum 369w, 643w
Wales 643w

HMI
see HM Inspectorate of Schools

HMS Cardiff
Weapons 397w

HMS Scarborough
67w

Hogg, Mr Douglas, Under-Secretary of State at the Home Office
Questions
Absent voting 138w
Albany Prison, Segregation of prisoners 394w
Blood sports, Public order 140w
Burglary, Drug abuse 319-20w
Cosmetics industry, Animal experiments 393w
Criminal investigation, Computer applications 395w
Cruelty to children, Departmental circulars 98w
Dogs, Animal welfare 99w
Driving offences, Ministers 138w
Drug crimes, Convictions 393w
Electoral register, Disclosure of information 98w
Electoral register, Research 253w
Equipment, Home Office 91w
European Parliament elections, Electoral register 526w
Football, Arrests 138w
Government buildings, Home Office 90-2w
Hillsborough Stadium Inquiry 96w, 140w
Hull Prison, Mental illness 527w
Hull Prison, Prison accommodation 527w
Hull Prison, Young offenders 140w
Immigrant detainees, Latchmere House 528w
London Underground, Advertising 99w
Metropolitan Police, Parking offences 253w
Osman, Lorrain Esme, Custodial treatment 255w
Parole Board 139w
Police 499w
Police, Basildon 497-8w
Police, Community charge 139w
Police, Disclosure of information 394w
Police, Manpower 394w
Police, Recruitment 499-500w
Police, Surveillance 755w
Police deaths on duty 255w
Police deaths on duty, Robbery 525w
Police national computer 209w
Policewomen, Maternity leave 526w
Polling stations, Access to buildings 254w
Prison accommodation, Prison population 392w
Prison medical services, Manpower 100-2w
Prison medical services, Training 99-100w
Prisoners, Married people 138w
Prisoners, Prisons 96w
Prisoners, Risley Remand Centre 526w
Prisoners on remand 93w
Prisoners on remand, Administrative delays 95w

Hogg, Mr Douglas—continued
Prisoners on remand, Death 94w
Prisoners on remand, Ethnic minorities 92-4w
Prisoners on remand, Mentally ill 94-5w
Prisoners on remand, Prison population 94-5w
Prisoners on remand, Prisoners' rights 93-4w
Prisoners on remand, Psychiatry 94w
Prisoners on remand, Suicide 94w
Prisons, Food poisoning 102w
Prisons, Private sector 392-3w
Prisons, Woolwich 525-6w
Remand centres, Private sector 210w
Remand in custody 254w
Risley Remand Centre, Mentally disturbed offenders 100w
Risley Remand Centre, Prison medical services 99w
Segregation of prisoners 320w
Segregation of prisoners, Women 499w
Single people, Disclosure of information 320w
Vagrancy, Young people 141w
Voting rights, British residents abroad 97w

Holiday accommodation
Catering 153-4
English Tourist Board 153-4

Holiday leave
160

Holiday lettings
Scotland 517w

Holt, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Broadcasting (19:05:89) 610-6, 618, 621-2, 633
Manufacturing industries (16:05:89) 240, 254-5
Members' speeches, Television programmes (24:05:89) 954
Social security, Management (17:05:89) 328-9
Questions
Energy conservation, Double glazing 2
Fletcher, Eric 794
Hospital consultants, Dismissal 486w
Part-time employment, Cleveland County Council 182w
Rain forests, Wood 314

Home Office
757-8w
Computers in Government departments 395w
Electronic surveillance 139-40w
Equipment 91w
Government buildings 90-2w
Television advertising 98w

Home Robertson, Mr John
Debates etc.
Social security, Management (17:05:89) 326
Questions
Common sheep meat regime 1104
Dolphins, Moray firth 948
Eggs, Food standards 739-40w
Public houses, Landlord & tenant 28w
Radioactive waste disposal, Scotland 229w
Smoking, Young people 29-30w
Torness power station, Scottish Office 657w
Torness power station, South of Scotland Electricity Board 657-8w

Home visits
Family doctors 413-4w

Homelessness
264w
Empty housing 491w
Family practitioner services 485w
Mortgage defaulters 940
Social security reform 544w
Social services 410w
South East region 940
Wales 452w

Homosexuality

Homosexuality—continued
Age of consent 640w
Immigration controls 638-9w

Hong Kong
China 1117
Ivory 631w, 652-5w

Hood, Mr Jimmy
Questions
British Coal Corporation, Scotland 108w
Income support, Social security benefits uprating 425w

Hooded seals
321w

Hooliganism
Football 162-3

Hordern, Sir Peter
Questions
Government departments, Advertising 15-6
National Audit Office, Advertising 14-5
Public Accounts Commission 15
Public Accounts Commission, Public appointments 765w

Horne Committee
see Public Utilities Street Works Act 1950 Review

Hornsey
Community charge 184w

Horse racing
Broadcasting programmes 527-8w

Horse riding
Protective clothing (23:05:89) 798-800

Horticulture
Gas tariffs 563w
Peat 745w

Hospital admissions
Bolton Health Authority 559w

Hospital beds
147w, 559w
Cornwall & Isles of Scilly Health Authority 85w
Heart diseases 559w
Northern Ireland 465w
Scotland 226w
South Western Regional Health Authority 85w
Wales 38-40w, 453w

Hospital closures
485w
Caernarfon Eye & Cottage Hospital 762w
Glasgow Royal Infirmary 790-2
North Devon Hospital 416-7w
Northern Ireland 365-6w
Scotland 225-6w
Snapethorpe Hospital 414-5w, 721w
Wales 128-9w

Hospital consultants
Bury Health Authority 798
Dismissal 486w
Gynaecology 151-2w
Immunopathology 788-9w

Hospital discharges
Income support 270w

Hospital doctors
Temporary staff 725-6w

Hospital finance
Gwent 44-5w

Hospital patients
Bolton Health Authority 410-1w
Caernarfon Eye & Cottage Hospital 347w
Halton Health Authority 721w
Halton Hospital 481w
Snapethorpe Hospital 414-6w
West Lancashire Health Authority 411w

Hospital staff
Self-governing hospitals 153w

Hospital waiting lists
88w
Gwent 43-4w
Information 410w
Northern Ireland 468
Transplant surgery 781-2w
Wales 44w

Hospitals
Construction 39-41w, 227-8w, 350w, 365-7w
Contracts for services 481w
District health authorities 478w
Gwent 43w
Northern Ireland 365-7w
Operating costs 148-9w
Scotland 227-8w
Wales 39-41w, 43w, 260w, 350w

Hostels
Charitable trusts 682-3w

Hotel & catering industry
Industrial training 149-50

House of Commons
Water pollution 602-4w

House of Commons debates
Speaker's rulings & statements (23:05:89) 892, 894, (24:05:89) 1019, 1076

House of Commons division of time
Speaker's rulings & statements (18:05:89) 488, 492, 496-8

House of Commons divisions
Speaker's rulings & statements (18:05:89) 575

House of Commons procedure
Private Bills 17-20
Private Members' Bills 16-7
Private Members' time 509w
Speaker's rulings & statements (22:05:89) 692, (23:05:89) 897-8

House of Commons (Services) Select Committee
(26:05:89) 1307

House of Commons Standing Committees
House of Commons standing orders 510-2w

House of Commons standing orders
House of Commons Standing Committees 510-2w

House of Fraser
Dept of Trade inquiries 243w

House of Lords
756w

House prices
Housing 589-90w

House purchase
Council tenants 792w

House renovation grants
Northern Ireland Housing Executive 363w

Households
Electricity distribution 633w

Housing
675w
Greenbelt 589w
House prices 589-90w
Young people 590w

Housing Act 1985
Questions
Service charges 203w

Housing Act 1988
Questions
753w, 792w

Housing action trusts
Consultants 599-600w
Lambeth 599w
Sunderland 48w, 595w

Housing & Planning Act 1986
Questions
203w

Housing associations
Cash limits 258w
Right to buy 585w
Wales 258w

Housing benefits
Civil service manpower 270w
Community charge 753w
Council tenants 73-4w
Housing revenue accounts 73-4w
Social security claims 271w, 448w
Social security reform 271w
Women 269-70w

Housing capital allocations
Wales 196-8w

Housing construction
Snapethorpe Hospital 414w, 721-2w

Housing Corporation
675w

Housing Defects Act 1984
Questions
764w

Housing estates
587w
Estate management boards 323-4w
Tenants' choice 592w

Housing for Wales
Rural areas 260-1w

Housing insulation
103w
Action for Community Employment 660w
Community programme 51w, 660w
Energy conservation 103w
Neighbourhood energy action scheme 102-3w, 105-6w, 454w
Wales 454w

Housing revenue account subsidies
73-4w

Housing revenue accounts
47-8w
Housing benefits 73-4w

Housing standards
Greater Manchester 585-6w

Howard, Michael
23w

Howard, Mr Michael, Minister of State for Water and Planning
Questions
Allotments, Planning permission 598w
Beaches, Sea pollution 186-7w, 206w, 265w, 680w, 795-6w
Cryptosporidia, Water treatment 186w
Development plans 593w
Estuaries, Pollution monitoring 948
Ground water, Greater London 496w
Planning appeals 601-2w
Planning permission, Disclosure of information 204w
River pollution, Mercury 264-5w
River pollution, Pollution control 49w
River pollution, Pollution monitoring 946-7
River pollution, Private prosecutions 935
River pollution, Research 935
River pollution, South West Water Authority 935-6
River pollution, Yorkshire Water Authority 947
River Rother, River pollution 947
Rural planning 949
Sea pollution, Health hazards 205-6w
Sea pollution, Waste disposal 378-9w
Severn-Trent Water Authority, Capital investment 495w
Sewage, Bristol Channel 262w
Sewage, Water pollution 594-5w
Town & country planning, Enforcement notices 938

Howard, Mr Michael—continued
Town & country planning, Law reform 495w
Town & country planning, Property development 938
Water authorities, Debts 947
Water authorities, Fords 45w
Water authorities, Land acquisition 385w
Water Bill 1988/89, European Commission 496w
Water charges, Fire services 46w
Water charges, Pensioners 383w
Water pollution, Barnsley 593w
Water pollution, EC law 204w
Water pollution, Inland waterways 265w
Water pollution, South Yorkshire 674w
Water pollution, Yorkshire Water Authority 492w
Water supply, Lead pipes 680-1w
Water supply industry, Financial Services Act 1986 264w
Water supply industry, Foreign investment in UK 791-2w
Water supply industry, Privatisation 268w, 383w, 587-9w, 591-2w

Howarth, Mr George
Debates etc.
Dock Work Bill, Rep & 3R (24:05:89) 970-3
Employment Bill, Rep (17:05:89) 397-9
Inner city areas (23:05:89) 831
Questions
Analgesics, Research 217w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Compensation 741w
Cancer, Medical research 281w
Housing estates 587w
Housing insulation, Neighbourhood energy action scheme 102-3w
Merseyside Development Corporation 945
Pain 83w

Howarth, Mr Gerald
Questions
Airbuses, British Aerospace 299-300
Productivity, Group of Seven 812w

Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Questions
EC Foreign Affairs Council 523w
USSR, Diplomatic service 677-82

Howell, Rt Hon David
Debates etc.
European Communities (18:05:89) 542-4
Roads (18:05:89) 488-9
Questions
Passports, Administrative delays 256w

Howell, Rt Hon Denis
Questions
Playing fields, Land acquisition 937

Howell, Mr Ralph
Questions
Family income 80-1w
Health service staff, Manpower 560w
Hospital beds 559w
Social security benefits, Marginal tax rates 441w

Howells, Mr Geraint
Questions
Agricultural research, Wales 642-3w
Agricultural workers, Wales 452w
Bovine somatotropin, Wales 451w
Common sheep meat regime 1103-4
EC Agriculture Council, Wales 642w
Public holidays, Wales 161
Set-aside schemes, Wales 555w
Welsh plant breeding station 555w

Howells, Dr Kim
Debates etc.
Associated British Ports (No 2) Bill, 3R (23:05:89) 889
Questions
Electricity generation, Costs 104-5w

Howells, Dr Kim—continued
National Museum of Wales, Finance 347w

Hoyle, Mr Doug
Questions
Clinical wastes, Waste disposal 289w
Information technology, Balance of trade 234w
Manufacturing industries, EC internal trade 309
Television licences, Prosecutions 500-1w
Warrington & Runcorn Development Corporation, Public sector housing 267w

HSE
see Health & Safety Executive

Huddersfield Health Authority
Contracts for services 560w
Pay beds 559w

Hughes, Mr John
Questions
Manufacturing industries, Productivity 233-4w

Hughes, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
"Charities White Paper" (16:05:89) 171
Dock Work Bill, Rep & 3R (24:05:89) 980, 987, 997, 1009-10, 1023, 1038, 1060, 1067-9
Employment Bill, Rep (17:05:89) 415-7
Publicity, Government departments (16:05:89) 218
Roads (18:05:89) 482, 490, 495-6
Written questions, House of Commons procedure (22:05:89) 691
Questions
Community charge rebates 669-70
North Sea oil, Petroleum exploration 3

Hughes, Mr Robert G
Debates etc.
Broadcasting (19:05:89) 606-10
Questions
Broadcasting, Ownership 317-9w
Drinking & driving 798-9w
Languages education, Curriculum 311-2w
NHS Review, British Medical Association 787
Nitrates, Land pollution 1115-6
Official engagements 695w
Public sector debt 15w
River pollution, Private prosecutions 935
Training Commission 174w
Water supply industry, Privatisation 588w

Hughes, Mr Roy
Debates etc.
Dock Work Bill, Rep & 3R (24:05:89) 973, 975-7, 1039
Questions
Doctors, Wales 43-4w
Erskine bridge, Debts 553w
Erskine bridge, Road tolls 553w
Gwent Health Authority, Expenditure 42w
Hospital finance, Gwent 44-5w
Hospital waiting lists, Gwent 43-4w
Hospitals, Gwent 43w
Humber bridge, Debts 556w
NHS Review 476w
Severn bridge, Debts 504w
Severn bridge, Repairs & maintenance 504w
Severn bridge, Road safety 201w
Severn bridge, Road tolls 504w, 556w
Severn bridge, Road works 556w
Unemployment 175w

Hughes, Mr Sean
Questions
Armed forces housing 731w
Consultants, Dept of Health 282w
Consultants, Dept of Social Security 269w
Gurkhas 731w
Gurkhas, Armed forces strength 731w
National Girobank, Privatisation 229w
Slaughterhouses, Veterinary services 734w

Hughes, Mr Simon
Debates etc.
Community Charge Regulations 1989 (23:05:89) 905-9
Questions
City technology colleges, Schools 607w
Energy conservation, Air pollution control 106w
Flags, Expenditure 679w
Road traffic control, Electronic equipment 688-9w
Rose Theatre, Archaeological sites 21-2, 268w, 324w
Self-governing hospitals, Greater London 475w
Teachers, Pay settlements 127w
Wages councils, Managers 157-8w

Hull Prison
Mental illness 527w
Prison accommodation 527w
Prisoners on remand 638w
Young offenders 140w, 755w

Human Organ Transplants Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
2R* & Money res (22:05:89) 767-71

Human organs
(22:05:89) 767-71

Human rights
392w
Czechoslovakia 351w
European Security Conference 329w
India 456w
Nicaragua 23-4w
Tibet 771-2w
Turkey (26:05:89) 1257-66
United Nations 137w

Humber bridge
Debts 556w

Humberside
Dock labour scheme 170w

Hume, Mr John
Questions
Attendance allowance, Social security appeals 469w
Exceptional needs payments, Northern Ireland 466-8w
Family doctors, Training 89w
Handicap benefits, Age 467-9w
Handicap benefits, Social security recipients 467w
Mobility allowance, Social security appeals 469-70w

Hunter, Mr Andrew
Questions
Enterprise training 165w

Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas, Secretary of State for the Home Department
Debates etc.
Charities, Ministerial statements (16:05:89) 167-77
Questions
Blood sports, EC action 637w
Broadcasting, Ownership 317-9w
Cars, Locks & keys 636w
Coroners' officers 635w
Crime prevention, Information technology 635w
Dogs 757w
Electronic surveillance 97w, 256w, 757w
Electronic surveillance, Home Office 139-40w
Electronic surveillance, Police 756-7w
Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 256-7w
Firearms certificates, EC action 635-6w
Firearms Expert Consultative Committee, Public appointments 637-8w
Government grants to voluntary organisations, Efficiency scrutinies 141-2w
Guard dogs, Police raids 757-8w
Hillsborough Stadium, Public order policing 639-40w
Hull Prison, Prisoners on remand 638w

Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas—continued
Hull Prison, Young offenders 755w
Immigration, Council of Ministers 208w
Information Network Focus on Religious Movements, Government grants to voluntary organisations 395w
Mentally disturbed offenders 758w
Nazi war crimes 210w
Official secrets, Newspaper press 756w
Osman, Lorrain Esme, Extradition 756w
Parking 210w
Passports, Administrative delays 637w
Police, Electronic surveillance 757w
Police national computer 209w
Policewomen, Police firearms 499w
Prisoners' transfers, Northern Ireland 636w
Prisons, Suicide 755w
Risley Remand Centre, Suicide 755w
Television advertising, Home Office 98w

Hypermarkets
Greater Manchester 49w

Hythe Kent Marina Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
2R order read (18:05:89) 455, (25:05:89) 1103

Iceland
Fish 59-60w, 377w
Fishing catches 59w

ICSTIS
see Independent Committee for Supervision of Telephone Services

Identity cards
Football 384w, 594w, 673-4w, (23:05:89) 924
Public petitions (23:05:89) 924

ILEA
see Inner London Education Authority

Illsley, Mr Eric
Questions
Fluidised bed combustion, Grimethorpe 103w
Water pollution, Barnsley 593w

ILO
see International Labour Organisation

Immigrant detainees
Latchmere House 528w

Immigration
Airports 498-9w
Council of Ministers 208w
Deportation 207-8w
Trevi Group 208w

Immigration Act 1971
Questions
320-1w

Immigration appeals
189-90w
Political refugees 321w, 566w

Immigration applications
Pakistan 137w, 330w
Political refugees 316-7w, 500w

Immigration controls
AIDS 638-9w
Homosexuality 638-9w
Political refugees 317w

Immigration officers
Deportation 320-1w

Immunopathology
Hospital consultants 788-9w
Wales 764w, 788-9w

Imperial Cancer Research Fund
444w

Import controls
Ivory 676w, 793-4w, 810w
Nature conservation 810w

Import licensing
Ivory 676w

Import of live animals
Nature conservation 809-10w

Import penetration
Domestic electrical appliances 236w
Manufacturing industries 307

Imports
Beef 61-2w
Coal 633w
Footwear 389-90w
Insulin 286-7w
Ivory 651-2w, 677w
Polyester silk plants 315-6w
Uranium 314w

Income
Museums & galleries 400w
NHS 324w
Privatisation 385w

Income support
Children 464-5w
Councillors 219w
Employment Training 508w
Further education 219w
Hospital discharges 270w
Leeds 425w
Residential care 74w, 221-4w, 544w
Social security benefits uprating 424-5w
Social security recipients 425w
Women 79w, 269-70w
Young people 220w

Income tax
Personal income 17-8w
Tax rates & bands 17-20w

Income tax on investment incomes
EC action (15:05:89) 124-40

Independent Commission for Police Complaints for Northern Ireland
143-6w

Independent Committee for Supervision of Telephone Services
Telephone services 457w

Independent Television Commission
317-9w

India
Human rights 456w

Indian subcontinent
Visas 392w

Induction loops
Public buildings 776w

Industrial accidents
Presses 571-2w
Youth training scheme 301-2w

Industrial democracy
51w
EC Labour & Social Affairs Council 177w
Electricity supply industry 6-7

Industrial diseases
Dentists 86w
District health authorities 485w

Industrial disputes
157-8, 176w
Dock labour scheme 508-9w
Lost working days 157
Public transport 468

Industrial energy prices
Electricity tariffs 109w

Industrial health & safety
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 361-2w
Passive smoking 176w
Presses 572w
Prosecutions 571w
Smoking 176w
Submarines 68w

Industrial investment
Manufacturing industries 807w

Industrial production
Manufactured goods 655w
Manufacturing industries 234w, 439-40w
Scotland 440w, 658w
Textile industry 237w
Wales 439-40w

Industrial relations
Dock workers 158-9
Electricity supply industry 158
Trades Union Congress 172w

Industrial relations law
158

Industrial training
Hotel & catering industry 149-50
Manpower 767-70w
North West region 174w
Private sector 507-8w
Tourist industry 149
West Midlands 173-4w
Yorkshire & Humberside 173w

Industrial training boards
569-70w

Industrial training schemes
172-3w

Industries
Manpower 768w

Industry
Chlorofluorocarbons 237w
Interest rates 233w

Industry Act 1972
Questions
777w

Industry Act 1975
Questions
Manufacturing industries 775w

Infant foods
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 806w

Infant mortality
726w

Inflation
794-5, 798, 807w, 1120

INFORM
see Information Network Focus on Religious Movements

Information
Consumer credit 234w
European Security Conference 329-30w
Hospital waiting lists 410w

Information Network Focus on Religious Movements
Government grants to voluntary organisations 395w

Information officers
Ethics 388-9w

Information technology
Balance of trade 234w, 306-7
Crime prevention 635w
EC internal trade 307

Ingham, Bernard
24w

Ingram, Mr Adam
Debates etc.
National Engineering Laboratory, Privatisation (25:05:89) 1227-30, 1231, 1232, 1233
National Engineering Laboratory, Standing Order No 20 applications (17:05:89) 333

Inland waterways
Water pollution 265w

Inner cities initiative
(23:05:89) 804-58

Inner city areas
Opposition days (23:05:89) 804-58

Inner London Education Authority
Local government services 495w

Inquiries
Gibraltar 194w
Hinkley Point C 104w

Institute of Psychiatry
5w

Insulin
Imports 286-7w

Insurance
Medical malpractice 514w

Insurance companies
Building societies 238w

"Insurance for Unemployment"
361w

Integrated circuits
Government assistance to industry 656-7w

Integrated development operations
Yorkshire & Humberside 265w

Intelligence services
Disclosure of information 1117
History 23w

Interest charges
Fisheries 515-6w

Interest rates
807w, 1116
Consumer credit 233w
Industry 233w
Manufacturing industries 233w
Self-employed 161
Standing Order No 20 applications (24:05:89) 953-4

International conferences
Nature conservation 676w
North South dialogue 455w

International cooperation
Defence contracts 190w

International Fund for Ireland
467

International Labour Organisation
568-9w

International Planned Parenthood Federation
251w

International trade
231w
Ivory 694w, (22:05:89) 728-9
Overseas trade 230w

International Westminster Bank Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
3R* (17:05:89) 299

International Whaling Commission
1109

Intervention stocks
734w

Interviews
Radio programmes 1119

Invalid care allowances
430w

Invalidity benefits
Dental services 750w
Medical examinations 427w

Investment
British Coal Corporation 445-7w

Investment returns
Road construction 280w

Investor protection
Building societies 391-2w

IPPF
see International Planned Parenthood Federation

IRA
194w
Gibraltar (22:05:89) 723-6

Iraq
Armed forces training 67w

Irish Republican Army
see IRA

Irish Sea
Sea pollution 323w, 378w

Irradiated food
62-3w, 733w, 1105-7
Food imports 805w
Netherlands 805w
Research 733w

Irradiation
Food contamination 62-3w

Irvine, Mr Michael
Questions
Self-employed, East Anglia 164w

Irving, Mr Charles
Questions
Remand centres, Private sector 210w
Segregation of prisoners 320w

Isle of Wight Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
Rep* (23:05:89) 781

Israel
Gas masks 248-9w

Italy
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 758w

Ivory
489w, 631w, (22:05:89) 704-7, (26:05:89) 1292-300
EC action 676-7w
Foreign trade 652-5w
Hong Kong 631w, 652-5w
Import controls 676w, 793-4w, 810w
Import licensing 676w
Imports 651-2w, 677w
International trade 694w, (22:05:89) 728-9
Nature conservation 677w
Overseas trade 677w, 794w

Jack, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Dock Work Bill, Rep & 3R (24:05:89) 1006-9, 1012
Social security, Management (17:05:89) 324
Questions
Advanced gas-cooled reactors, Electricity generation 9
Babies, Child health 416w
Civil service recruitment 385w
Electromagnetic interference, EC law 650w
Family doctors, Women 480w
Horticulture, Gas tariffs 563w
Industrial investment, Manufacturing industries 807w
National savings 809w
New businesses, Scotland 552w
Office of Telecommunications, Annual reports 650w
Pensioners, Fylde 426w
Premium bonds 629w, 808w
Premium bonds, National savings gift tokens 808w
Privatisation, Income 385w
Tourist industry, Industrial training 149
Voluntary schools, Capital investment 441w

Jackson, Robert
608-10w

Jackson, Mr Robert, Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science
Questions
Association of University Teachers 443w
Benzodiazepines, Medical research 5w
British Geological Survey, Research finance 370w
Cancer, Medical research 281w

Jackson, Mr Robert—continued
Dept of Education & Science 126w
Educational aid, Commonwealth 189w
Higher education, Official engagements 608-10w
Higher education, Research finance 189w
Higher education, Student numbers 368-70w
Higher education administration, Pay 369w
Languages education, EC action 309w
LINK programme 127-8w
Medical research, Cancer 126-7w
Medical research, Radiation hazards 3-4w
Medical research, Rodents 125-6w
Monnet, Jean, Video recordings 444w
Open University, Environment 126w
Open University Visiting Committee 246w
Postgraduate education, Open University 309-10w
Research councils, Biology 796-7w
Research finance, Cancer 444w
Student grants, Mandatory student grants 310w
Student grants, Parental contributions 310-1w
Student grants, Part-time education 246-7w
Student numbers, Universities 5-7w
Students, Community charge 442-3w
Students, Ethnic minorities 7w
Students, Social class 7w
Transmissible encephalopathies, Research 370w
Universities, Pay 4w
Universities, Statistics 247w
University finance, Cost per student 608w
University teachers, Pay 126w
University teachers, Working hours 126w

Jaguar aircraft
Air accidents 66-7w

Jaguar Cars
191w

Jauman, Mr Tim
Debates etc.
Dock Work Bill, Rep & 3R (24:05:89) 1026, 1028, 1036, 1037-40
Questions
Dock labour scheme, Port of London 169-70w
Family doctors, Budgeting 476w
Fisheries, Dock labour scheme 737w

Janner, Mr Greville
Questions
British Coal Corporation 108w
Business statements 1125
Equal opportunities, Dept of Health 286w
Equal opportunities, Dept of Social Security 326w
Ethnic monitoring, Dept of Social Security 326w
Ethnic monitoring, Minister for the Civil Service 673-4
Maternity benefits 429w
Ministry of Defence, Equal opportunities 396w

Japan
Whales 1109

Jessel, Mr Toby
Debates etc.
National Theatre (18:05:89) 577
Transport (15:05:89) 41-2
Questions
English National Opera, Arts finance 672
Rose theatre, Archaeological sites 23

Jet aircraft
Air force 142w

Jirous, Ivan
Czechoslovakia 351w

Job centres
155-6
Manpower 156
Unemployment benefit offices 156

Job interview guarantee scheme
53-4w

Job introduction scheme
Government grants 569w

Job start scheme
506w

Job training scheme
29-30w

Jobclubs
505w
Strathclyde 176w

Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Debates etc.
Armed forces reserves (19:05:89) 638-42
Gurkhas, Hong Kong (22:05:89) 688
Roads (18:05:89) 491

Johnston, Sir Russell
Debates etc.
European Communities (18:05:89) 525-30

Joint funding scheme
Family planning 249-52w

Jones, Mr Barry
Questions
Bovine somatotropin, Clwyd 648w
Breast cancer, Wales 649w
Caravan sites, Alyn & Deeside District Council 645w
Caravan sites, Clwyd 645w
Caravan sites, Wales 645w
Caravan sites, Welsh districts 645-6w
Cervical cancer, Wales 649w
Church schools, Capital investment 646w
Clinical wastes, Wales 647w
Clwyd Education Authority, Educational finance 348w
Clwyd Education Authority, Teachers 348w
Community health councils, Wales 646w
District health authorities, Construction costs 348-9w
Empty property, Welsh Office 452w
European Commission, Ministers' visits abroad 642w
Family doctors, Rural areas 646w
Family doctors, Wales 760w
Higher education, Student numbers 644-5w
HM Inspectorate of Schools, Curriculum 643w
HM Inspectorate of Schools, Wales 643w
Homelessness, Wales 452w
Hospitals, Construction 350w
Kidney patients, Transplant surgery 643w
Midwives, Manpower 648-9w
National Farmers' Union, Wales 761w
National Union of Mineworkers, South Wales 761w
NHS Review, British Medical Association 761w
NHS Review, Clwyd Health Authority 646-7w
NHS Review, Family practitioner committees 646w
NHS Review, Royal College of Nursing 761w
NHS Review, Trade unions 761w
NHS Review, Wales 761w
Northop bypass, Road construction 764w
Nursery schools, School population 647-8w
Nurses, Career structure 452w
River pollution, Wales 763w
River Severn, Toll bridges 686w
Road tolls, Wales 762w
Roads, Wales 647w, 761-2w
St Etholwold's School Shotton, School buildings 348w
Second homes, Wales 764w
Self-governing hospitals, Wales 646w
Shotton County Infants' School, Cost per pupil 347-8w
Social security abuse, Wales 684w
Venerable Edward Morgan School Shotton, School administration 348w
Welsh language, Teachers 643-4w
Welsh Water Authority, Advertising 763w
Welsh Water Authority, Capital 648w
Welsh Water Authority, Land ownership & tenure 763w

Jones, Mr Barry—continued
Welsh Water Authority, Land values 763w

Jones, Mr Gwilym
Questions
Defective housing, Building repairs 764w
Welsh Office, Cash limits 453w

Jones, Mr Ieuan Wyn
Questions
Bail 92w
Bail hostels 91-2w
Defence land, Land acquisition 551w
Induction loops, Public buildings 776w
Prisoners on remand 93w, 95-6w
Prisoners on remand, Administrative delays 95w
Prisoners on remand, Death 94w
Prisoners on remand, Ethnic minorities 92-4w
Prisoners on remand, Mentally ill 94-5w
Prisoners on remand, Prison population 94-5w
Prisoners on remand, Prisoners' rights 93-4w
Prisoners on remand, Psychiatry 94w
Prisoners on remand, Suicide 94w
Radioactive waste disposal, Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive 185w

Jones, Mr Martyn
Questions
Irradiated food 733w, 1106-7
Power industry, Air pollution control 106w
Research councils, Biology 796-7w
Welsh Office, Mental health services 258w

Jones, Mr Robert B
Questions
Dock labour scheme 171w
Elections, Northern Ireland 1117-8

Journalists
USSR 677-8

JS Chinn Holdings
190w

Judicial Proceedings (Regulation of Reports) Act 1926
Questions
397w

Judiciary
US senate 456w

Justices' clerks
Crown Prosecution Service 397-8w
Magistrates' courts 319w
Pay 121-2w, 393w

Kaluser Climax
191w

Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Debates etc.
East-West relations (24:05:89) 953-4
USSR, Diplomatic relations (26:05:89) 1255-6
Questions
Community Charges (Administration & Enforcement) Regulations 1989, Community charges register 184w
Poverty, Manchester 199-200w
USSR, Diplomatic service 677-8

Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Debates etc.
Community Charge Regulations 1989 (23:05:89) 897
Publicity, Government departments (16:05:89) 190
Questions
Hotel & catering industry, Industrial training 150

Kennedy, Mr Charles
Debates etc.
Inner city areas (23:05:89) 832-4
Manufacturing industries (16:05:89) 243-6
Procurement, EC action (16:05:89) 281, 289

Kennedy, Mr Charles—continued
Questions
Holiday accommodation, English Tourist Board 154
Information technology, Balance of trade 306-7
Manufacturing industries, Interest rates 233w
Medicines Control Agency, Drug industry 482w

Kent
Channel tunnel 556w
Family doctors 789
NHS Review 788
Structure plans 267-8w

Key, Mr Robert
Questions
Civil service agencies 676
Holiday accommodation, English Tourist Board 154
Museums & galleries, Income 400w
NHS Review, Patients 477w
River pollution, Research 935
Rural planning 949
Untreated milk 735-6w

Kidnapping
Children 455-6w, (22:05:89) 714-6

Kidney patients
Transplant surgery 643w, 782w
Wales 643w

Kilbrannan sound
Shipping 424w

Kilfedder, Mr James
Debates etc.
British Airways, Passengers (22:05:89) 716-7
Drug crimes, Proceeds of crime (22:05:89) 705, 706
Financial Provisions (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 (22:05:89) 764
Questions
Employment discrimination, Northern Ireland 456
Hospital waiting lists, Northern Ireland 468
International Fund for Ireland 467

King, Mr Roger
Debates etc.
Exhaust emission controls, EC action (24:05:89) 1079, 1090-2
Parliamentary privilege, Dagnan, Anthony (18:05:89) 500-2
Tyres, Road safety (26:05:89) 1249-51
Questions
Cash limits, Dept of Health 726-7w
Employment, West Midlands 163w
Foreign investment in UK, Motor industry 235w
Handicapped, Sports competitors 427-8w
Manufacturing industries, Import penetration 307

King, Rt Hon Tom, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Debates etc.
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference, Ministerial statements (25:05:89) 1133-46
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 460-4, 466, 539-43w
Anglo-Irish Agreement, EC internal trade 462
Arms trade, South Africa 280-1w
Electoral reform, Northern Ireland 464
Local government, Northern Ireland 466
Local government elections, North Down 461

King's Cross Fire Inquiry
501w

Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Debates etc.
Oral question time intervention (25:05:89) 1119
Questions
Balance of trade 1116

Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil—continued
European Parliament elections 162
Inflation 794-5
NHS Review, Family doctors 468

Kirkhope, Mr Timothy
Questions
Civil servants' secondment 675-6
Organic farming, Food standards 738w

Kirkwood, Mr Archy
Debates etc.
Medical records, Disclosure of information (26:05:89) 1277-80, 1283
Questions
721 Signals Unit, Air force 66w
AIDS, Health education 288-9w
Aircraft noise, Measurement 66w
British Rail 692-3w
Business statements 1124
Chlorofluorocarbons, Aerosols 585w
Doctors' list of patients, Scotland 27w
Educational records, Disclosure of information 535w, 658w
Energy conservation 106w
European Social Fund, Borders region 167w
Family doctors, Contracts of employment 30-1w
Family doctors, Rural areas 31w
Family doctors, Scotland 26-7w
Hill livestock allowances 1107-8
Hostels, Charitable trusts 682-3w
Jaguar aircraft, Air accidents 66-7w
Low flying, Air safety 65-6w
Low flying, Aircraft noise 65w
Low flying, Lockerbie 65w
Low flying, Scotland 65w
Manufactured exports, Exchange rates 232-3w
Military aircraft, Supersonic aircraft 66w
NHS Review, Scotland 27w
Personal income 13-5w
Personal income, Income tax 17-8w
Personal pensions 681-2w
Potato Marketing Board 737w
Prescription drugs, Budgeting 414w
Rents to mortgages scheme, Scotland 343w
Scottish Office, British Medical Association 26w
Social security benefits 73w
Social security claims, Civil service manpower 73w
Social security payments, Cash dispensing 425w

Knapman, Mr Roger
Questions
Family benefits, Expenditure 431w
Green pound, Farm incomes 1108
Museums & galleries, Expenditure 399w
NHS Review, Medical audit 475w
Nuclear weapons, Arms control 1119
Untreated milk 290w
Water supply industry, Privatisation 591-2w

Knight, Mr Greg
Questions
Business statements 1132
Community charge, Widows 322w
Council for the Protection of Rural England 1115
Energy, Environment protection 146-7w
Irradiated food 1107
Lome Convention 642w
National Engineering Laboratory, Privatisation 240-1w
Roads, Private sector 422-3w

Knight, Dame Jill
Questions
Cervical cancer, Screening 783
NHS Review, British Medical Association 472
Self-governing hospitals 165-6

Knowles, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
European Communities (18:05:89) 515

Knox, Mr David
Questions
EC integration, EC action 352w
Manufacturing industries, Industrial production 234w
National Farmers' Union, Dairy farming 740w
NHS Review 475w
Peak Park Joint Planning Board 939

Kurdistan
Political refugees 97w, (26:05:89) 1257-66
Refugees (15:05:89) 26-7

Labelling
Drugs 725w

Labour costs
168-9w
Museums & galleries 398w

Labour force survey
161-2, 181w, 568-9w

Labour market
172w, 335-7w

Lake District Special Planning Board
587-8w

Lambeth
Council house rents 592w
Council house sales 591w
Empty housing 591w
Housing action trusts 599w
Uniform business rate 182w

Lamond, Mr James
Debates etc.
Manufacturing industries (16:05:89) 253-4
Questions
EC Environment Council 590-1w
Lead free petrol 933-4

Lamont, Rt Hon Norman, Financial Secretary to the Treasury
Questions
Close companies, Company taxation 629-30w
Income tax, Tax rates & bands 17-20w
Lloyd's of London, Stocks & shares 386w
Mortgage relief 13w
Mortgage relief, Tax yields 16w
Personal income 13-5w
Personal income, Income tax 17-8w
Personal tax allowances 15-8w
Student grants, Deeds of covenant 13w
Tax thresholds, Tax free income 18w
Taxation, Ferries 385-6w

Lance missiles
Modernisation 731w

Land acquisition
Defence land 551w
Playing fields 936-8
Ports (23:05:89) 859-93
Private Bills 18
Water authorities 385w

Land ownership & tenure
Deptford skillcentre 169w
NHS 344-5w
Welsh Water Authority 763w

Land pollution
Nitrates 1115-6

Land registration
Rugeley 766w

Land use
Agricultural land 743-4w
Farm diversification scheme 293-4w
National Garden Festival 1988 520w
Playing fields 379w
Snapethorpe Hospital 415w, 721w

Land values
Snapethorpe Hospital 414w
Trent Regional Health Authority 784w
Welsh Water Authority 763w

Landing rights
Airlines 25w

Landlord & tenant
942-3
Brewing industry 390w, 1111-2
Private rented housing 942
Public houses 28w

Lang, Mr Ian, Minister of State for Scotland
Questions
Community charge, Merchant seamen 303w
Community charge, Scotland 132-3w
Community charge, Tied housing 516-7w
Community charge rebates, Advertising 553w
Employment, Scotland 577-8w
Employment Training, Fees & charges 519w
Employment Training, Fraud 407-8w, 519w
Employment Training, Scotland 519w, 662w
European Regional Development Fund, Scotland 134-6w, 519-20w
Highlands & Islands Development Board, Expenditure 343w
Industrial production, Scotland 658w
Location of industry, Scotland 340w
Manufactured exports, Scotland 520w
National Garden Festival 1988, Land use 520w
New businesses, Scotland 552w
Pay, Scotland 130w
Private hospitals, Clydebank 801-2w
Publicity, Scottish Office 308w
Regional development grants, Scotland 134w
Regional enterprise grants, Scotland 133-4w
Regional selective assistance, Scotland 133w
Scottish Development Agency, Expenditure 340-3w
Scottish Development Agency, Factories 343w
Torness power station, Scottish Office 657w
Torness power station, South of Scotland Electricity Board 657-8w
Training, Expenditure 29-30w

Languages
"Community Charge (So-called Poll Tax)" 673w
Organ donor cards 783w

Languages education
471
Curriculum 311-2w
EC action 309w

Latchmere House
Immigrant detainees 528w

Latham, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
"Charities White Paper" (16:05:89) 176
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 461
Business statements 1129
Construction Industry Training Board 165w
Family doctors, Contracts of employment 792-3
Milk, Co-responsibility levy 1107
Youth training scheme, Construction Industry Training Board 155

Law Commission
639-40w

Law reform
Abortion (22:05:89) 726-8
Estate agents 236-7w
Picketing 166w
Town & country planning 495w

Lawrence, Mr Ivan
Debates etc.
"Charities White Paper" (16:05:89) 173
Questions
Elections, USSR 471

Lawrence, Mr Ivan—continued
Fluoridation, Water supply 561w
Nazi war crimes 210w
Pornography 253w
Prisons, Private sector 392-3w
USSR, Diplomatic service 680

Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel, Chancellor of the Exchequer
Questions
Central Statistical Office, Expenditure 630w
Financial services 808w
Premium bonds 807-8w

Lazarus Committee
see Committee for Monitoring Agreements on Tobacco Advertising

LBA
see London Boroughs' Association

Lead free petrol
586-7w, 933-4
Exhaust emission controls 934

Lead pipes
Water supply 680-1w

Lead pollution
Petrol 594-5w

Leasehold housing
Appeals 324w

Leasehold Reform Act 1967
Questions
324w

Lebanon
(16:05:89) 292-8

Lee, Mr John, Under-Secretary of State for Employment
Debates etc.
Employment Bill, Rep (17:05:89) 403-5, 421-2
Questions
Availability for work 180-1w
Availability for work, Unemployment 568-9w
Average earnings, North West region 52w
British Aerospace, Redundancy 54w
Dual jobholding 665-8w
Employment 163w, 352-4w
Employment, East Anglia 164w
Employment, East Midlands 164w
Employment, Economic regions 578-80w
Employment, Educational qualifications 663-6w
Employment, Graduates 662-4w
Employment, Manufacturing industries 331-4w
Employment, North West region 163w
Employment, Northern region 163w
Employment, Occupations 669-72w
Employment, Service industries 163w, 671-4w
Employment, West Midlands 163w
Employment, Yorkshire & Humberside 164w
Employment by sector 53w
Employment opportunities, Personnel management 156
Employment rehabilitation, Rehabilitation centres 576w
Employment schemes, Blind 574w
Employment schemes, Conditions of employment 53-4w
Employment schemes, Derbyshire 165w
Employment schemes, Social security benefits reductions 54w
Enterprise allowance scheme, Unemployment benefits 52w
European Tourism Year 52-3w
Handicapped, Employment discrimination 153
Handicapped, Employment opportunities 153
Handicapped workers, Dept of Employment 577w
Handicapped workers, Employment discrimination 152-3

Lee, Mr John—continued
Handicapped workers, Government grants 575w, 577w
Handicapped workers, Prosecutions 576w
Handicapped workers, Quota of handicapped workers 575-6w
Holiday accommodation, Catering 153-4
Holiday accommodation, English Tourist Board 154
Hotel & catering industry, Industrial training 150
Industrial training, Manpower 767-70w
Industrial training schemes 172-3w
Industries, Manpower 768w
"Insurance for Unemployment" 361w
Job centres 155-6
Job centres, Manpower 156
Job centres, Unemployment benefit offices 156
Job introduction scheme, Government grants 569w
Job start scheme 506w
Jobclubs 505w
Jobclubs, Strathclyde 176w
Labour costs 168-9w
Labour market 172w, 335-7w
Low pay, Manpower 168w
"Mirage of Private Unemployment Insurance" 361w
New businesses, Derbyshire 506w
Pensioner price index 329w
Redundancy 335-6w
Restart programme 53w, 178-9w
Restart programme, Disclosure of information 53w
Self-employed 159-60w
Self-employed, East Anglia 164w
Self-employed, Manpower 333-4w
Self-employed, South West region 159w
Special aids to employment scheme, Government grants 574w
Tourism, North West region 166-7w
Tourism, Northumberland 166w
Tourist industry, Industrial training 149
Tourist industry, Low pay 149-50
Tourist industry, Manpower 167w
Training 330-2w
Unemployment 163-4w, 175w, 667-70w
Unemployment, Availability for work 162-4w
Unemployment, Derbyshire 506w
Unemployment, East Anglia 161w
Unemployment, East Midlands 161w
Unemployment, Ethnic minorities 353-62w
Unemployment, South East region 164w
Unemployment benefits, Availability for work 179w
Unemployment benefits, West Midlands 181w
Vacancies 333-6w

Leeds
Community charge 183w
Domestic rates 183w
Income support 425w

Leeds-Bradford Airport
277w

Leeman, John
Prisoners' release 147-8w

Legal Aid (Functions) (No 2) Order 1989
Debates etc.
(18:05:89) 575

Legal aid scheme
South Yorkshire 19w

Legal costs
Care proceedings (18:05:89) 575

Leicester
Waste disposal 384w

Leicestershire Health Authority
Nurses 786-7

Leigh, Mr Edward
Debates etc.
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference (23:05:89) 1145
Associated British Ports (No 2) Bill, 3R (23:05:89) 892

Leigh, Mr Edward—continued
European Communities (18:05:89) 509-10
Members' speeches, Parliamentary privilege (24:05:89) 956
Procurement, EC action (16:05:89) 277
Questions
Manufacturing industries, EC internal trade 310
Private rented housing 943

Leighton, Mr Ron
Debates etc.
Dock Work Bill, Rep & 3R (24:05:89) 1067
European Communities (18:05:89) 505, 507, 561-3
Questions
Enterprise allowance scheme, Unemployment benefits 52w
Health Education Authority, Health for all 786w
Health for All, Local authorities 786w
Infant mortality 726w
Job centres, Manpower 156
UK contributions to EC budget 471-2

Lester, Mr Jim
Questions
Industrial training boards 569-70w
Non-statutory training organisations 570-1w
Philippines, Armed forces training 352w
Philippines, Military aid 352w

Lestor, Miss Joan
Questions
Arms exports, Malaysia 191w
Elephants, Nature conservation 794w
Ivory, Import controls 793-4w

Letter boxes
230w

Level crossings
Accidents 501w

Lewis, Mr Terry
Questions
Empty property, Dept of the Environment 582w
Office of Telecommunications 457-8w
Office of Telecommunications, Telephone services 656w
Telephone services 457w
Telephone services, Independent Committee for Supervision of Telephone Services 457w
Telephones, Obscenity 497w
USA, Telephone services 457w
Veterinary services, Manpower 739w

Liberia
Osman, Lorrain Esme 248w, 771w

Libraries
British Theatre Association 399w
Stock control 439w
Transplant surgery 783w

Licensing
Bovine somatotropin 740w
Companies 723w
Fisheries 515w
Fishing vessels 472w
Porcine somatotropin 377w
Salmon 805w

Licensing laws
Scotland 343-4w

Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976
Questions
343-4w

"Lifting the Burden White Paper"
372w

Lighting
Motorways 11w
Roads 557w

Lilley, Mr Peter, Economic Secretary to the Treasury

Lilley, Mr Peter—continued
Debates etc.
Income tax on investment incomes, EC action (15:05:89) 124-8, 139-40
Questions
Alcoholic drinks duties, Tax yields 441w
Customs, UK trade with EC 628-9w
Economic growth 628w
European monetary system 245w
Government Actuary, Cash limits 629w
Inflation 807w
Interest rates 807w
Ivory, Import controls 810w
National savings 809w
National Savings Bank, Personal savings 566w
Nature conservation, Import controls 810w
Nature conservation, Import of live animals 809-10w
Premium bonds 315w, 629w, 808w
Premium bonds, National savings gift tokens 808w
Public sector debt 15w
Tax yields, Football pools 13w
Tobacco duties 441w
VAT, BAOR 245w
VAT, Caravans 528-9w
VAT, Charities 15w
VAT, Games 189w
VAT, Sports facilities 809w
VAT, Tax harmonisation 440-1w
VAT, Tax officers 529w

LINK programme
127-8w
Research finance 242w

Listed buildings
Building regulations 600w
Plumstead 186w

Litherland, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
Inner city areas (23:05:89) 821-2, 824

Litter
Fines 528w, 795-6

Liverpool
393-4w
Abortion 725w
Dock labour scheme 170w
Passport Office 753-4w
Passports 637w
Social Fund 544w

Livingstone, Mr Ken
Questions
Employment discrimination, Northern Ireland 455-6
Ethnic minorities, Brent 96-7w
Foetal tissue, Retail trade 482-3w
Manufacturing industries, Productivity 233-4w
River pollution, Pollution control 49w
South Africa, Emergency powers 19-20w
South Africa, Political prisoners 20w
Wallace, Colin, Convictions 98w
"Who Framed Colin Wallace" 1117
"Who Framed Colin Wallace", Official secrets 19w

Livsey, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Roads (18:05:89) 488
Transport (15:05:89) 53-5, 65
Questions
Beef premiums 736w
Bypasses, Wales 260w
Hospitals, Wales 260w
Housing for Wales, Rural areas 260-1w
Midwives, Career structure 484w
NHS complaints, Wales 259w
NHS finance, Wales 259w
Perinatal mortality, Wales 259-60w
Recycling, Cans 596w
Regional development grants, Wales 259w
Regional selective assistance, Wales 258w

Lloyd, Sir Ian
Questions
Climate, Research 694w
Information technology, Balance of trade 306
Monnet, Jean, Video recordings 444w
Nuclear power, Air pollution control 9

Lloyd, Mr Peter, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Social Security
Questions
"Business of Service" 432w
Child benefit 79-80w
Community care, Dept of Social Security local offices 754w
Community charge, Social security finance 223w
Community charge benefit, Personal income 327-8w
Community charge rebates 430w, 669-70
Consultants, Dept of Social Security 269w
Dept of Social Security local offices, Community charge 81w
Dept of Social Security local offices, Computers in government departments 545w
Departmental leaflets, Dept of Social Security 683-4w
Employers' contributions, Prosecutions 433w
Equal opportunities, Dept of Social Security 326w
Equipment, Dept of Social Security 71-3w
Ethnic monitoring, Dept of Social Security 326w
Family benefits, European Communities 431-2w
Family benefits, Expenditure 431w
Family credit, Glasgow 448w
Family credit, Personal income 71w
Family credit, Social security recipients 429-30w
Family income 80-1w
Family income supplements, Social security claims 271-2w
Government buildings, Dept of Social Security 72w
Hostels, Charitable trusts 682-3w
Housing benefits, Civil service manpower 270w
Housing benefits, Community charge 753w
Housing benefits, Housing revenue accounts 73-4w
Housing benefits, Social security claims 271w, 448w
Housing benefits, Social security reform 271w
Income support, Councillors 219w
Income support, Further education 219w
Income support, Hospital discharges 270w
Income support, Leeds 425w
Income support, Residential care 221-4w, 544w
Income support, Social security benefits uprating 424-5w
Income support, Social security recipients 425w
Income support, Women 269-70w
Income support, Young people 220w
Low pay, Standard of living 684w
Maternity benefits, European Communities 435-6w
Members' correspondence, Administrative delays 220-4w, 749w
National insurance contributions 433-4w
National insurance contributions, Dept of Social Security local offices 434w
National insurance contributions, Expenditure 549w
National insurance contributions, Social security claims 434w
"Our Business is Service" 749-50w
Pensioners, Earnings rules 544w, 660
Pensioners, EC countries 685w
Pensioners, Fylde 426w
Pensioners, Personal income 77-8w, 222w, 750-1w
Pensioners, Social security finance 426w

Lloyd, Mr Peter—continued
Pensioners, Social security reform 426w
Pensions 326-7w
Pensions, Retail price index 681w
Personal pensions 447w, 681-2w
Personal pensions, National Insurance Fund 682w
Publicity, Dept of Social Security 752-3w
Retirement pensions, Earnings rules 427w
Retirement pensions, Social security benefits rules 329w
Sick pay, Departmental forms 72w
Social Fund, Advertising 448-9w
Social Fund, Community care 544w
Social Fund, Funerals 269w
Social Fund, Liverpool 544w
Social Fund, Loans 221-2w
Social Fund, North East region 548-52w
Social Fund, Port Glasgow 328w
Social Fund, Pregnant women 429w
Social Fund, Redcar 683w
Social Fund, Social security benefits disqualification 78-80w
Social Fund, Social security claims 544-5w
Social Fund, Social security recipients 436w
Social Fund, Training 545w
Social Fund, West Midlands 683w
Social security abuse, Wales 684w
Social security appeals 74-8w
Social security appeals, Administrative delays 436w
Social security appeals, Availability for work 224w
Social security benefits 73w
Social security benefits, Departmental leaflets 427w
Social security benefits, Marginal tax rates 270w, 441w
Social security benefits, Publicity 426w
Social security benefits, Residential care 430-1w
Social security benefits, Social security reform 682w
Social security claims, Age 684-5w
Social security claims, Civil service manpower 73w
Social security payments 72w
Social security payments, Cash dispensing 425w
Social security recipients, Nottingham 425-6w
Social security reform, Homelessness 544w
Social security reform, Young people 79w
Supplementary benefits, Residential care 74w
Supplementary benefits, Women 79w
Television advertising, Dept of Social Security 71w, 437-8w
Unemployment benefits, Private sector 550w
Vaccine damaged children, Compensation 327-8w, 751-2w
War pensions, Nuclear weapons tests 73w
War pensions, Social security appeals 434-5w
Widows, Remarriage 435w
Widows' benefits, Social security benefits rules 685-6w

Lloyd, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy (17:05:89) 450
Questions
Cervical cancer, Death 417w
Cervical cancer, Screening 417-8w
Extensification schemes 737w
Housing standards, Greater Manchester 585-6w
Hypermarkets, Greater Manchester 49w
Low pay 165w
Manchester Airport, Railway network 11w
National Girobank, Takeovers 302-3
Passports, Members' correspondence 97w
Political refugees 756w
Prisoners, Prisons 96w
Regional health authorities, Medical audit 723w

Lloyd, Mr Tony—continued
Road accidents, Deaf 277w
Self-governing hospitals, Community health councils 285w
Self-governing hospitals, North West region 284-5w
Skinningrove, Privatisation 152
Social security claims, Age 684-5w
Transport infrastructure, EC grants & loans 313w

Lloyd's of London
Stocks & shares 386w

Loans
Social Fund 221-2w

Local authorities
Airports 800w
Community charge 323w, 496
Concessionary fares 687-8w
Direct labour departments 305w
Health for All 786w
HM Inspectorate of Pollution 491w
Scotland 305w

Local authority powers
Starter homes 780w

Local education authorities
Non-teaching staff 124-5w
Teachers' pensions 535-6w

Local education authority training grant scheme
128w

Local enterprise agencies
Government grants 175w

Local government
Northern Ireland 466

Local Government & Housing Bill 1988/89
Questions
494w, 793w

Local Government Boundary Commission for England
187w

Local government constituencies
West Midlands 187w

Local government elections
North Down 461
Northern Ireland 470

Local government expenditure
Local government revenue 188w

Local government finance
Barking & Dagenham 494w
Capital investment 197-9w
Wales 197-9w

Local government property
Farms 297w

Local government revenue
Local government expenditure 188w

Local government services
Competition 495w
Handicapped 428w
Inner London Education Authority 495w

Local government social services
421w

Local government staff
Handicapped workers 793w

Local income tax
594w

Local valuation panels
(23:05:89) 898-927

Locusts in Scotland
340w

Location of industry
Scotland 348w

Lockerbie
Low flying 65w

Locks & keys
Cars 636w

Lodging allowances
Youth training scheme 174-5w

Lofthouse, Mr Geoffrey
Debates etc.
Associated British Ports (No 2) Bill, 3R (23:05:89) 875, 876, 880, 882, 888
Questions
European Regional Development Fund, Regional aid 460w
Greenbelt, Town & Country planning 589w
Industrial training, Yorkshire & Humberside 173w

Loans Convention
642w

London boroughs
Domestic rates 262-4w, 600-1w, 792-3w

London Boroughs' Association
264w

London Dumping Convention
464w

London Regional Transport
99w, 422w, 503-4w

London Regional Transport (Penalty Fares) Bill (HL) 1986/87
Debates etc.
Order for consideration read (18:05:89) 455, (25:05:89) 1103

London Underground
Advertising 99w
Automatic ticketing systems 114w
Equal opportunities 316w
Safety measures 501-3w
Stratford station 800w
Transport police 687w
Wembley Stadium 799-800w

London Underground (Victoria) Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
2R order read (18:05:89) 455, (25:05:89) 1103

London University
398w

Lord, Mr Michael
Questions
Employment, East Anglia 164w

Lord Chancellor
1116

Lord Chancellor's Office
see Lord Chancellor

Lorries
Bridges 558w
EC law 558w

Lost working days
Industrial disputes 157

Lough Erne
364w

Lough Neagh
364w

Low flying
732w
Air safety 65-6w
Aircraft noise 65w
Borders region 732w
Don valley 729w
Lockerbie 65w
Military aircraft 732w
Military exercises 462-4w
Military police 463w
Night flying 551-2w
RAF Lakenheath 729-30w
Scotland 65w
Skyguard radar 729w
Yorkshire & Humberside 65w

Low incomes
664
Community charge 323w
Pensioners 663
Social security benefits 665

Low pay
150, 165w
Manpower 168w
Prosecutions 159
Standard of living 684w
Tourist industry 149-50
Wages councils 150-1, 158w, 159-60
Yorkshire & Humberside 165-6w
Youth employment 52w

Low Pay Unit
177w

Loyden, Mr Eddie
Debates etc.
"Charities White Paper" (16:05:89) 172
Dock Work Bill, Rep & 3R (24:05:89) 970, 983, 998, 1000-2, 1005, 1049, 1063-5

LRT
see London Regional Transport

Lucas Aerospace
190w

Luce, Rt Hon Richard, Minister of State Privy Council Office (Minister for the Arts)
Debates etc.
National Maritime Museum Bill (HL), 3R (22:05:89) 742, 747-9
National Theatre (18:05:89) 581-4
Publicity, Government departments (16:05:89) 218-20
Questions
Arts Council grants 8w
Arts festivals 7-8w
Arts grants 399w
British Theatre Association, Libraries 399w
Business sponsorship incentive scheme 400w, 672
Civil servants' secondment 675-6
Civil service, Disclosure of information 400w
Civil service agencies 676
Civil service agencies, Civil service manpower 400-2w
Civil service recruitment 675
Civil service recruitment, School leaving 674
Civil service unions 675
Civil service unions, Dept of Social Security 676
Collections, Northern region 670-1
English National Opera, Arts finance 671-2
Ethnic monitoring 674
Ethnic monitoring, Minister for the Civil Service 673-4
Museums & galleries 670
Museums & galleries, Building repairs 398-9w
Museums & galleries, Conservation 530w
Museums & galleries, Education 398w, 439w
Museums & galleries, Expenditure 398-9w
Museums & galleries, Income 400w
Museums & galleries, Labour costs 398w
Museums & galleries, Repairs & maintenance 673
Museums & galleries, Stock control 439w
National Union of Civil & Public Servants 400w
Northern Ballet Theatre, Arts finance 400w, 671
Public libraries 8w
Public libraries, Fees & charges 8w
Tate Gallery 399w
Tate Gallery, Manpower 400w

Luxembourg
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 759w

M1
M69 504w

M6
277w

M11
Costs 690w
Road works 690w

M20
492w

M25
Costs 6889-90w
Noise control 11w
Road traffic 11w
Road works 6889-90w

M69
M1 504w

McAllion, Mr John
Debates etc.
Community charge rebates, Standing Order No 20 applications (25:05:89) 1148-9
Dock Work Bill, Rep & 3R (24:05:89) 1012-4
Questions
British Gas, Monopolies & Mergers Commission 106w
Dog registration scheme 795w
Dogs 757w
EC internal trade, Scotland 238w
Employment opportunities, Personnel management 156
Guard dogs, Police raids 757-8w
Wages councils 157w

McAvoy, Mr Thomas
Debates etc.
Publicity, Government departments (16:05:89) 211-3
Questions
Housing insulation, Neighbourhood energy action scheme 105-6w
Manufactured goods, Manufactured imports 230w
Minimum wage, EC countries 150

MacBride principles
455-6

McCartney, Mr Ian
Debates etc.
Associated British Ports (No 2) Bill, 3R (23:05:89) 864, 869, 876, 883, 889
Basildon District Council, Rate increases (22:05:89) 722
"Charities White Paper" (16:05:89) 176
Kidnapping, Children (22:05:89) 714-6
Members' speeches, Parliamentary privilege (24:05:89) 955
Publicity, Government departments (16:05:89) 189-90, 197, 215
Questions
Consumer protection, EC action 232w

McCrea, Rev William
Debates etc.
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference (25:05:89) 1143
Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Bill, Rep & 3R (25:05:89) 1169-70, 1174, 1177, 1189, 1192-4, 1211, 1212, 1218

McCrindle, Mr Robert
Questions
Air pollution control, Sulphur dioxide 183w
Building societies, Investor protection 391-2w
Company liquidations, Mortgages 391w
Complaints, Consumer organisations 799w
Council house rents, Rent increases 47-8w
EC Consumer Affairs Council 304-5
Housing benefits, Housing revenue accounts 73-4w
Local government expenditure, Local government revenue 188w
NHS finance 481-2w
Rain forests, Development aid 21-2w
Rain forests, EC aid 20w
Rain forests, Forest protection 22w
Residential care, Social security benefits 661
Road accidents, Costs 12w

McCrindle, Mr Robert—continued
Road accidents, Road works 12-3w
Sea pollution, Waste disposal 378-9w
Social security reform 665

McCusker, Mr Harold
Debates etc.
Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Bill, Rep & 3R (25:05:89) 1162
Questions
International Fund for Ireland 467
Police firearms, Republic of Ireland 790-1w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Police firearms 791w
Security, Northern Ireland 458

Macdonald, Mr Calum
Questions
Family doctors, Budgeting 479w
Gaelic language, Broadcasting 91w
Inflation 798

McFall, Mr John
Questions
Clyde Submarine Base, Retirement 325w
Consumer protection, EC action 232w
Educational policy, Northern Ireland 459
Guy's Hospital, Baby care units 468
Low Pay Unit 177w
Poverty, Scotland 163-4
Shipbuilding, Faslane 496-7w
Teachers 535w
Teachers, Resignations 443w, 514w
Teachers, Scotland 657w
Teachers, Shortage subjects 605w

McGrady, Mr Eddie
Debates etc.
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference (25:05:89) 1137-8
Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Bill, Rep & 3R (25:05:89) 1164-5, 1187, 1199, 1214-7

MacGregor, Rt Hon John, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Questions
Beef premiums 1111
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Infant foods 806w
British Food & Farming Year 1989, Festivals & special occasions 739w, 1113-4
Common agricultural policy, Expenditure 371w
Common farm prices 290w
Common farm prices, Farm incomes 739w
Common sheep meat regime 1103-4
Co-responsibility levy 742w
Co-responsibility levy, Green pound 115-6w
Food standards, Pesticides 1113-4
Forestry Commission 741w
Fruit, Common agricultural policy 1109
Green pound, Farm incomes 1108
Hill livestock allowances 1107-8
Irradiated food 733w, 1105-7
Irradiated food, Research 733w
Milk, Co-responsibility levy 1107
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Cash limits 473-4w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Next steps initiative 338w
National Farmers' Union 740w
Nitrates, Land pollution 1115-6
Organic farming, Prices 1108
Potato Marketing Board 737w
Suckler cow premiums 1110-1
Women's Farmers' Union 740w

Machine tools industry
239w

McKay, Mr Allen
Debates etc.
Associated British Ports (No 2) Bill, 3R (23:05:89) 869, 876
Community Charge Regulations 1989 (23:05:89) 902
Questions
Beer, Measurement 117w
EC grants & loans, South Yorkshire 165

McKay, Mr Allen—continued
Economic policy 1116
Hillsborough Stadium Inquiry 140w
Low pay, Yorkshire & Humberside 165-6w
Trade competitiveness 229w
Warships, Repairs & maintenance 142w
Wines, Codes of practice 117-8w

MacKay, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Community Charge Regulations 1989 (23:05:89) 894
Roads (18:05:89) 495
Questions
Brewing industry, Monopolies & Mergers Commission 232w
Lead free petrol 586-7w
Ports 174w
Town & country planning, Property development 938

McKelvey, Mr William
Questions
Social security benefits, Residential care 430w
UK Offshore Operators' Association 110w

McLeish, Mr Henry
Questions
Capital investment, Building industry 315w
Capital investment, Manufacturing industries 315w
Central institutions, Government grants 404-6w
Central institutions, Higher education teachers 405-6w
Central institutions, Part-time education 407-8w
Central institutions, Student numbers 405-8w
Dual jobholding 665-8w
Educational policy, Northern Ireland 459
Employment, Economic regions 578-80w
Employment, Educational qualifications 663-6w
Employment, Graduates 662-4w
Employment, Manufacturing industries 331-4w
Employment, Occupations 669-72w
Employment, Scotland 577-8w
Employment, Service industries 671-4w
Employment Training 331-2w
Employment Training, Economic regions 581w
Employment Training, Scotland 662w
European Regional Development Fund, Scotland 134-6w
Foreign investment in UK 460w
Highlands & Islands Development Board, Expenditure 343w
Industrial production, Scotland 440w
Industrial training, Manpower 767-70w
Industrial training, Private sector 507-8w
Labour market 335-7w
Location of industry, Scotland 340w
Manufacturing industries, Industrial production 439-40w
Mathematics education 28w
Mathematics education, Educational standards 28w, 403-4w
National income 316w
Redundancy 335-6w
Regional development grants, Scotland 134w
Regional enterprise grants, Scotland 133-4w
Regional selective assistance, Scotland 133w
Scottish Development Agency, Expenditure 340-3w
Scottish Development Agency, Factories 343w
Scottish Parent Teacher Council 28w
Self-employed, Manpower 333-4w
Skill shortages 337w
Skill shortages, EC internal trade 337w
Training 330-2w
Training, Expenditure 29-30w, 42w, 301w, 363w
Unemployment 667-70w

McLeish, Mr Henry—continued
Unemployment, Ethnic minorities 353-62w
Vacancies 333-6w

Maclennan, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
"Charities White Paper" (16:05:89) 170
Questions
Museums & galleries, Building repairs 399w
Police, Recruitment 499-500w

McLoughlin, Mr Patrick
Debates etc.
Associated British Ports (No 2) Bill, 3R (23:05:89) 881
Basildon District Council, Rate increases (22:05:89) 723
Community Charge Regulations 1989 (23:05:89) 899, 901-4
Manufacturing industries (16:05:89) 255
Publicity, Government departments (16:05:89) 182, 209-11
Roads (18:05:89) 497
Questions
British Food & Farming Year 1989, Festivals & special occasions 739w
Community charge 323w
Community charge, Local authorities 496
Dock workers, Manpower 170w
Family doctors, Rural areas 477w
Official engagements 451w
Resettlement units, Next Steps initiative 449w
South East Thames Regional Health Authority, Public appointments 726w

McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Debates etc.
Human Organ Transplant Bill, Money res (22:05:89) 767-8, 771
Questions
Family doctors, Budgeting 479w
Short Brothers, Security 50w
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 458

McNamara, Mr Kevin
Debates etc.
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference (25:05:89) 1133-4
Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Bill, Rep & 3R (25:05:89) 1155-67 passim, 1186-7, 1199-200, 1205-8, 1211-2
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement, EC internal trade 462
Employment discrimination, Northern Ireland 456-7

Madden, Mr Max
Debates etc.
Roads (18:05:89) 494
Social security, Management (17:05:89) 326-7
Questions
Business statements 479, 1127
Community charge, Departmental leaflets 48w
Denis Wild houses 598w
Pakistan, Immigration applications 137w, 330w
Social Fund 665
Social Fund, North East region 550-2w
Social security benefits, Departmental leaflets 427w
USSR, Diplomatic service 1118

Madel, Mr David
Questions
European Commission, Single European Act 351-2w
Industrial relations, Electricity supply industry 158

MAFF
see Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food

Maginnis, Mr Ken
Questions
Nature conservation, Birds 364w

Magistrates' courts
Justices' clerks 319w
Remand in custody (25:05:89) 1226

Magistrates' Courts (Remands in Custody) Order 1989
Debates etc.
(25:05:89) 1226

Mahon, Mrs Alice
Debates etc.
Employment Bill, Rep (17:05:89) 378-9, 387-91, 396, 397, 405-6
Manufacturing industries (16:05:89) 248-50
Questions
Fish, River Humber 399w
Local government social services 421w
Organic farming, Agricultural research 300w
River Humber, Water pollution 205w
Tomography, NHS charges 153-4w
Wages Inspectorate, North West region 168w

Maidstone
121w

Mail order selling
Motor vehicle theft 321w

Major, Rt Hon John, Chief Secretary to the Treasury
Debates etc.
Publicity, Government departments (16:05:89) 190-8
Questions
Aggregates, Seabed resources 50w
Balance of payments 529w
Capital investment, Building industry 315w
Capital investment, Manufacturing industries 315w
Industrial investment, Manufacturing industries 807w
Industrial production, Scotland 440w
Manufacturing industries, Industrial production 439-40w
National income 316w
Overseas investment, National income 529w
Productivity, Group of Seven 810-2w

Malaysia
Air routes 25w
Arms exports 25w, 191w
Overseas aid 24w
Tornado aircraft 25w

Malins, Mr Humfrey
Questions
Council housing, Croydon 48w
Unemployment 164w

Mallon, Mr Seamus
Questions
Complaints against police, Northern Ireland 143-6w

Managers
Wages councils 157-8w

Managing agents
167-8w, 215-6w, 302w, 519w

Manchester
Poverty 199-200w

Manchester Airport
Railway network 11w

Mandatory student grants
Student grants 310w

Mans, Mr Keith
Debates etc.
Transport (15:05:89) 35, 44, 55-8
Questions
Electricity supply industry, Profit sharing 6
Empty housing, Lambeth 591w
Fishing vessels, EC grants & loans 736w
Roads, Telephones 114-5w

Manufactured exports
234w, 656w
Exchange rates 232-3w

Manufactured exports—continued
Scotland 520w

Manufactured goods
Balance of trade 116-7w, 307, 390-1w, 1118
Industrial production 655w
Manufactured imports 230w
Overseas trade 231w
UK trade with EC 116-7w

Manufactured imports
655w
Manufactured goods 230w

Manufacturing industries
Balance of trade 308
Capital investment 315w
EC internal trade 308-10
Employment 331-4w
Equipment 301
Foreign investment in UK 305
Import penetration 307
Industrial investment 807w
Industrial production 234w, 439-40w
Industry Act 1975 775w
Interest rates 233w
Opposition days (16:05:89) 224-66
Productivity 233-4w, 236w, 301-2, 307-8
Trade competitiveness 300

Maples, Mr John
Questions
"Community Charge (So-called Poll Tax)", Languages 673w
NHS internal market 789-90

Marek, Dr John
Debates etc.
Procurement, EC action (16:05:89) 274-8
Questions
Civil service unions, Dept of Social Security 676
Immunopathology, Hospital consultants 788-9w
Immunopathology, Wales 764w
Museums & galleries, Labour costs 398w
Sports, Schools 598w
Untreated milk 735-6w

Marginal tax rates
Social security benefits 270w, 441w

Marine animals
Moray firth 948
Sea pollution 385w

Marine nature reserves
597-8w

Marketing
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority 445w

Marlow, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
By election writs, Vauxhall (22:05:89) 699
EC law, House of Commons procedure (22:05:89) 692
European Communities (18:05:89) 507, 511, 513, 559
Income tax on investment incomes, EC action (15:05:89) 124-6, 131, 134-7
Mergers, EC action (17:05:89) 426-7, 429, 431
Questions
Business statements 1130-1
Ethnic monitoring 674
Government departments, Advertising 15-6
Water pollution, EC law 13

Marple Hall School Marple
(24:05:89) 1097-102

Married people
Prisoners 138w

Marshall, Mr Jim
Debates etc.
Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Bill, Rep & 3R (25:05:89) 1152, 1172-4, 1176, 1178, 1182-3
Financial Provisions (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 (22:05:89) 762-3

Marshall, Mr Jim—continued
Questions
Arms trade, Northern Ireland 458
Consumer protection, EC action 231-2w
Nature conservation, Birds 466w
Nature conservation, Sites of special scientific interest 465-6w
Sheep premiums 1110
Short Brothers, Privatisation 465

Marshall, Mr John
Questions
Church Commissioners, Women 13
Family doctors, Pay 284w
Gas masks, Israel 248-9w
Handicap benefits, Terminal care 71w
Nuclear power, Electricity generation 10
Nuclear power, Environment protection 104w
Nurses, Manpower 283w
Private Bills, House of Commons procedure 18-9
USSR, Emigration 455w
Voting rights, British residents abroad 97w

Marshall, Mr Michael
Questions
Rose Theatre, Archaeological sites 23-4

Martin, Mr David
Questions
Immigration, Council of Ministers 208w
Lead free petrol 933
National Farmers' Union 740w
Parking 210w

Martin, Mr Michael J
Debates etc.
Employment Bill, Rep (17:05:89) 363-6
Manufacturing industries (16:05:89) 255-6
Questions
Income support, Social security benefits uprating 425w

Martlew, Mr Eric
Questions
International trade, Overseas trade 230w

Maternity benefits
429w
EC countries 666-8
European Communities 435-6w

Maternity leave
Policewomen 526w

Maternity services
722w

Mates, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Gurkhas, Hong Kong (22:05:89) 685-6

Mathematics education
28w
Educational standards 28w, 403-4w
Scotland 28w, 403-4w

Maude, Mr Francis, Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs
Debates etc.
European Communities (18:05:89) 514, 559, 560, 568-73
Mergers, EC action (17:05:89) 425-31, 434-5, 445-6
Questions
Barlow Clowes 238w
Brewing industry, Landlord & tenant 390w
Brewing industry, Monopolies & Mergers Commission 232w
Building societies, Investor protection 391-2w
Civil servants' secondment, Business 239w
Companies, VAT 776w
Company liquidations, Mortgages 391w
Company registration 120w
Competition 238-9w
Consumer credit, Information 234w
Consumer credit, Interest rates 233w
EC internal trade, Government assistance to industry 237-8w

Maude, Mr Francis—continued
EC internal trade, Publicity 461w
EC internal trade, Scotland 238w
Financial Services Act 1986, Takeovers 118-20w
Manufacturing industries, EC internal trade 308-10
Manufacturing industries, Industry Act 1975 775w
Mergers, Monopolies & Mergers Commission 235w
Microelectronics industry, EC internal trade 309
Monopolies & Mergers Commission 310-1
Motor vehicles, Exports 524w
Net book agreement 777w
Observer, Newspaper Publishers' Association 231w
Plessey, Takeovers 311
Scottish & Newcastle Breweries, Takeovers 775w
Unichem, Monopolies & Mergers Commission 239-40w

Mawhinney, Dr Brian, Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Questions
Educational policy, Northern Ireland 459
Pupil-teacher ratios, Northern Ireland 462-3
Schools, Northern Ireland 459-60
Television advertising, Northern Ireland Office 281w, 368w, 649w

Maxwell-Hyslop, Mr Robin
Questions
Family doctors, Budgeting 786w
Family doctors, Rural areas 787w
Lead free petrol, Exhaust emission controls 934

May day bank holiday
160

Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick, Attorney-General
Questions
Crown Prosecution Service, Justices' clerks 397-8w
Divorce, Publicity 397w
Immigration appeals 189-90w
Immigration appeals, Political refugees 321w, 566w
Land registration, Rugeley 766w
Legal aid scheme, South Yorkshire 19w
Prosecutions, Police national computer 321w
Social Security Commissioners, Social security appeals 566-7w
"Who Framed Colin Wallace", Official secrets 19w

Meacher, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Dock Work Bill, Rep & 3R (24:05:89) 962-6, 969, 987, 1024-31
Questions
Building industry safety 573w
Employment Training 662w
Low pay, Wages councils 159-60
Minimum wage 151

Meale, Mr Alan
Debates etc.
Associated British Ports (No 2) Bill, 3R (23:05:89) 883-4
Community Charge Regulations 1989 (23:05:89) 894
Cruelty to children, Sexual offences (15:05:89) 142-3, 146
Questions
Coal mining, Subsidence 104w, 444-5w
Private rented housing, Landlord & tenant 942

Measurement
Aircraft noise 66w
Beer 117w
Wines 524w

Meat
Food exports 806-7w
Food imports 299w

Meat—continued
Food inspection 299w

Mechanical engineering
Exports 459w
Production 459w

Medical appeal tribunals
469-70w

Medical audit
NHS Review 475w
Regional health authorities 723w

Medical cards
Northern Ireland 470w

Medical education
NHS Review 486w

Medical ethics
Abortion 151-2w

Medical examinations
Handicap benefits 547-8w
Invalidity benefits 427w

Medical malpractice
Handicap benefits 546w
Insurance 514w
Professional misconduct 89-90w
Scotland 514w
Transplant surgery 488w

Medical Practices Committee
Wales 759-60w

Medical records
Disclosure of information (26:05:89) 1277-84
Navy 69w
Submarines 69w

Medical research
Benzodiazepines 5w, 88w
Cancer 85w, 126-7w, 281w
Radiation hazards 3-4w, 67w
Rodents 125-6w

Medical Research Council
125-6w, 281w

Medical treatments
Costs 283w
Snapethorpe Hospital 721w

Medicines Control Agency
558w
Drug industry 482w

Mellor, Mr David, Minister of State, Dept of Health
Questions
AIDS, Drugs 411w
AIDS, Health education 288-9w
Benzodiazepines, Medical research 88w
British Medical Association 483w
Cash limits, Dept of Health 726-7w
Cervical cancer, Screening 783
Child minding 155w
Community care, Voluntary work 283w
Community Care Review 484-5w
Consultants, Dept of Health 282w
Contraceptives, Standards specifications 723w
Cruelty to children, Sexual offences 89w
Deaf 484w
Dental charges 486w
Desiccated liver powder, Food imports 420-1w
District health authorities, Hospitals 478w
Doctors, Crown immunity 725w
Doctors' list of patients 81-2w
Drug abuse, Disposable syringes 419-20w
Drug industry, Sales promotions 418w
Drug labelling, EC action 88w
Drugs, Counterfeit manufacturing 560w
Drugs, EC action 558w
Drugs, Labelling 725w
Drugs, Parallel imports 560w
Drugs, Prices 411-3w
Drugs, Quality control 289w
Equal opportunities, Dept of Health 286w

Mellor, Mr David—continued
Eye tests, NHS charges 728w
Family doctors 480-1w
Family doctors, Budgeting 476w, 478-9w, 562w, 786w
Family doctors, Contracts of employment 792-3
Family doctors, Doctors' list of patients 479-80w
Family doctors, Home visits 413-4w
Family doctors, Pay 284w
Family doctors, Rural areas 787w
Family doctors, Training 89w
Family doctors, Women 480w
Family planning, Costs 87w
Family planning, Family doctors 87-8w
Family practitioner committees 478w
Family practitioner services, Homelessness 485w
Family practitioner services, Wakefield Family Practitioner Committee 422w
Gynaecology, Hospital consultants 151-2w
Gynaecology, Trent Regional Health Authority 421w
Handicapped, Expenditure 483w
Health Education Authority, Health for all 786w
Health Education Council, Expenditure 420w
Health for all, Local authorities 786w
Health service ancillary staff, Manpower 789-90w
Health service staff, Manpower 560w
Health service staff, Temporary staff 282w
Health services, Expenditure 148w
Hospital consultants, Dismissal 486w
Hospital doctors, Temporary staff 725-6w
Hospital waiting lists 88w
Hospital waiting lists, Information 410w
Huddersfield Health Authority, Contracts for services 560w
Huddersfield Health Authority, Pay beds 559w
Immunopathology, Hospital consultants 788-9w
Insulin, Imports 286-7w
Local government social services 421w
Medical malpractice, Professional misconduct 89-90w
Medicines Control Agency, Drug industry 482w
Mental Health Act Commission, Public administration 284w
Midwives 722w
Midwives, Career structure 484w
MMR vaccines, Take-up 285-6w
NHS, Expenditure 82w
NHS administration, Pay settlements 282w
NHS hospital trusts, Self-governing hospitals 86w
NHS Review 283-4w, 475-6w
NHS Review, Medical audit 475w
NHS Review, Supra-regional services 728w
NHS Review, Wakefield Family Practitioner Committee 421w
Nurses, Career structure 482w, 486-7w, 720w, 785w
Nurses, Manpower 283w, 720w
Nurses, Men 789w
Nurses, Oxfordshire Health Authority 482w
Nurses, Pay 787-8w
Nurses' training, Fees & charges 719w
Nurses' training, Technological change 218-9w
Pharmacists 284w
Prescription drugs, Budgeting 414w
Private patients, Bolton 285w, 728w
Publicity, Dept of Health 155-8w
Regional health authorities, Expenditure 785-6w
Regional health authorities, Medical audit 723w
Registered Homes Act 1984 485w
Self-governing hospitals 85w, 476w, 479w
Self-governing hospitals, Community health councils 285w
Self-governing hospitals, Hospital staff 153w
Mellor, Mr David—continued
Self-governing hospitals, North West region 284-5w
Self-governing hospitals, Performance related pay 285w
Self-governing hospitals, Public opinion 285w
Self-governing hospitals, Salop 479w
Self-governing hospitals, Secret ballot 153w
Self-governing hospitals, Voting methods 285w
Self-governing hospitals, Walsall Health Authority 86w
Self-governing hospitals, Yorkshire Regional Health Authority 152-3w
Social services, Homelessness 410w
Social workers' training, Mentally ill 724w
Speech therapy 413w
Television advertising, Dept of Health 89w
Tobacco advertising 484w
Tomography, NHS charges 153-4w
Wheelchairs 782, 786
Wheelchairs, Disablement Services Authority 781
"Working for Patients White Paper", Doctors 475w
Young offenders, Doncaster 153w

Members
Community charge 202w

Members' attendance
Prime Minister 199w

Members' conduct
Speaker's rulings & statements (17:05:89) 410, (18:05:89) 484, (25:05:89) 1221

Members' correspondence
Administrative delays 220-4w, 749w
Hazardous wastes 795w
Passports 97w

Members' dress
Speaker's rulings & statements (19:05:89) 621-2

Members' interests
Speaker's rulings & statements (17:05:89) 413, 415, (22:05:89) 712-3, (23:05:89) 873, 882, 883

Members' interventions
Speaker's rulings & statements (15:05:89) 90, (16:05:89) 190, (18:05:89) 482-3, (23:05:89) 835, 886, 890, 891, 927, (24:05:89) 1060, 1078, (25:05:89) 1230

Members' speeches
Speaker's rulings & statements (15:05:89) 87, 98-9, 104, (16:05:89) 224, (17:05:89) 431, (18:05:89) 504, 532, (22:05:89) 760, (23:05:89) 832, 911, 918, 919, 923, (24:05:89) 954, 1039, 1067

Men
Nurses 789w

Mental Health Act Commission
Public administration 284w

Mental health services
Expenditure 719-20w
Welsh Office 258w

Mental illness
Hull Prison 527w

Mentally disturbed offenders
758w
Risley Remand Centre 100w

Mentally ill
Prisoners on remand 94-5w
Social workers' training 724w

Merchant seamen
Community charge 303w

Mercury
River pollution 264-5w

Mergers
EC action (17:05:89) 425-46
Monopolies & Mergers Commission 235w

Merseyside Development Corporation
945

Metal industries
Cobalt 178w

Methane
Electricity generation 109w
Health hazards 384w

Methyl chloroform
Ozone layer 384w

Metropolitan Police
687w, 755-7w
Parking offences 253w

Mexborough
51w

Meyer, Sir Anthony
Debates etc.
European Communities (18:05:89) 526

MI5
98w

Michael, Mr Alun
Questions
Community charge, Departmental leaflets 45-6w
Community programme, Housing insulation 51w
Elephants, Nature conservation 489w
Empty property, Dept of the Environment 581w
HMS Cardiff, Weapons 397w
Hospital beds, Wales 453w
Housing insulation 103w
Housing insulation, Neighbourhood energy action scheme 103w, 454w
Navy, Emergency planning 397w
Navy, Nuclear accidents 347w
Wages councils 673w

Michie, Mr Bill
Questions
Manufactured goods, Overseas trade 231w
Metal industries, Cobalt 178w
Urban development corporations, Government grants 944-5

Michie, Mrs Ray
Questions
Common sheep meat regime 736w

Microelectronics industry
EC internal trade 309

Middle schools
School population 553-4w
Wales 553-4w

Midland Metro Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
3R* (23:05:89) 781

Midwives
722w
Career structure 218w, 484w
Manpower 648-9w
Wales 648-9w

Military aid
Philippines 352w

Military aircraft
Air accidents 551w
Aircrew 462w
Low flying 732w
Supersonic aircraft 66w

Military exercises
Low flying 462-4w

Military police
Low flying 463w

Milk
Co-responsibility levy 1107
Dioxins 63w
Production quotas 741-2w

Milk Marketing Board
451w

Miller, Sir Hal
Debates etc.
Exhaust emission controls, EC action (24:05:89) 1085-7
Questions
Organic farming, Food standards 738w

Mills, Mr Iain
Debates etc.
Tyres, Road safety (26:05:89) 1245-7, 1254
Questions
Water supply industry, Privatisation 268w

Mine accidents
High Moor colliery 51w

Minimum wage
151, 172w
EC action 150
EC countries 150-1

Minister for the Civil Service
Ethnic monitoring 673-4

Ministerial powers
37w

Ministerial statements
(25:05:89) 1138
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference (25:05:89) 1133-46
Charities (16:05:89) 167-77
Gurkhas (22:05:89) 683-90
Roads (18:05:89) 482-96
Social security (17:05:89) 318-32
Speaker's rulings & statements (17:05:89) 334, (18:05:89) 483-4, (25:05:89) 1135, (26:05:89) 1256

Ministers
Driving offences 138w

Ministers' domestic visits
Stirling 517-8w

Ministers of religion
Community charge 202-3w

Ministers' visits abroad
European Commission 642w

Ministry of Agriculture
see Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food

Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food
56w, 292w
Business 372w
Cash limits 473-4w
Departmental responsibilities 1115
Equipment 56w
Government buildings 55-6w
Next steps initiative 338w
Television advertising 64w

Ministry of Defence
Equal opportunities 396w
Student numbers 398w
Television advertising 69w, 398w

Ministry of Defence Staff Association
807w

"Mirage of Private Unemployment Insurance"
361w

Mitchell, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Transport (15:05:89) 29-34, 64
Questions
British Theatre Association, Libraries 399w
Civil service unions, Political impartiality 807w
District health authorities, Hospitals 478w
LINK programme 127-8w
Postal deliveries 651w
Queen's Medical Centre Nottingham, NHS hospital trusts 784-5
Unemployment, East Midlands 161w

Mitchell, Mr Austin
Questions
Agricultural subsidies, Expenditure 565w
Common agricultural policy, Expenditure 744w

Mitchell, Mr Austin—continued
Electrical technology, Production 459w
Family doctors 480-1w
Family doctors, Budgeting 562w
Health services, Expenditure 148w
Hospitals, Operating costs 148-9w
Manufactured exports 656w
Manufactured goods, Industrial production 655w
Mechanical engineering, Production 459w
Motor vehicles, Exports 524w
Motor vehicles, Production 459w
Trade competitiveness 229w
Water supply industry, Foreign investment in UK 791-2w

Mitchell, Sir David
Questions
Public footpaths, Motor vehicles 584w

MMC
see Monopolies & Mergers Commission

MMR vaccines
Take-up 285-6w

MNR
see RENAMO

Mobility allowance
Northern Ireland 469-70w
Social security appeals 469-70w

MOD
see Ministry of Defence

Modernisation
Fishing vessels 736w
Lance missiles 731w

MODSA
see Ministry of Defence Staff Association

Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Debates etc.
Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Bill, Rep & 3R (25:05:89) 1157-8, 1163, 1168-9, 1170, 1173, 1181

Monktonhall Colliery
110w

Monnet, Jean
Video recordings 444w

Monopolies & Mergers Commission
28w, 310-1, 390w, 445-7w, 563w, 587w, 1111-2
Brewing industry 232w
British Gas 106w
Mergers 235w
Unichem 239-40w

Monro, Sir Hector
Questions
Roads, Scotland 305-8w
Scottish Office, Cash limits 659w

Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Debates etc.
Drug crimes, Proceeds of crime (22:05:89) 704-7
Questions
Elephants 796

Montserrat
Banks 772w

Moonie, Dr Lewis
Questions
British Coal Corporation 108w
Consumer protection, EC action 232w

Moore, Rt Hon John, Secretary of State for Social Security
Debates etc.
Social security, Ministerial statements (17:05:89) 318-32
Questions
Child benefit 664
Child benefit, EC countries 663-4
Family benefits, EC countries 662-3
Income support, Social security benefits uprating 425w

Moore, Rt Hon John—continued
Low incomes 664
Pensioners, Low incomes 663
Resettlement units, Next steps initiative 449w
Social Fund 665
Social security benefits, EC countries 664
Social security benefits, Public expenditure 668
Social security reform 665-6

Moray firth
Dolphins 948
Marine animals 948

Morgan, Mr Rhodri
Debates etc.
Manufacturing industries (16:05:89) 260
Oral question time intervention (15:05:89) 8
Questions
Business statements 1132
Economic policy 1119
Empty property, Government departments 582w
Energy conservation, Air pollution control 7-8
Family doctors, Contracts of employment 793
Irradiated food 1105
Plessey, Takeovers 311

Morley, Mr Elliot
Questions
Brewing industry, Competition 1112
Combined heat & power 110w

Morris, Rt Hon Alfred
Questions
Handicap benefits 428w
Handicapped, Employment discrimination 153
Handicapped, Expenditure 483w
Handicapped, Parents 669
Local government staff, Handicapped workers 793w
Wheelchairs 782

Morris, Rt Hon John
Questions
Business statements 1123
Crown Prosecution Service, Justices' clerks 397-8w
Crown Prosecution Service, Pay 121-2w
Justices' clerks, Pay 393w
Magistrates' courts, Justices' clerks 319w

Morris, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
"Charities White Paper" (16:05:89) 175
Questions
Drugs, Quality control 289w
Set-aside schemes, Costs 299w

Morrison, Sir Charles
Debates etc.
"Charities White Paper" (16:05:89) 172
Questions
Family planning, Joint funding scheme 249-50w
Family planning, UK contributions 251w
Family planning, Voluntary organisations 249-52w
Overseas aid, Population 774w
Police, Manpower 394w

Morrison, Rt Hon Peter, Minister of State for Energy
Questions
British Gas, Monopolies & Mergers Commission 106w
Combined heat & power 110w
Cormorant Alpha platform, Offshore accidents 193w
Cormorant Alpha platform, Petroleum production 193w
EC Energy Council 447w
Energy conservation 107w
Energy conservation, Building regulations 103w
Gas tariffs, Pensioners 314w
Housing insulation 193w

Morrison, Rt Hon Peter—continued
Housing insulation, Energy conservation 103w
Housing insulation, Neighbourhood energy action scheme 103w
Nuclear power, Brazil 386w
Office of Gas Supply 106w
Piper Alpha Inquiry, Disclosure of information 193w
Piper Alpha platform, Offshore safety 192-3w
UK Offshore Operators' Association 110w

Mortgage defaulters
Homelessness 940
Repossession orders 940-1

Mortgage relief
13w
Tax yields 16w

Mortgages
Company liquidations 391w

Mosaic Holidays
99w

Moss, Mr Malcolm
Questions
Co-responsibility levy 742w
NHS, Health insurance 166

Motor industry
Foreign investment in UK 235w

Motor vehicle theft
Mail order selling 321w

Motor vehicles
Exports 459w, 524w
Northern Ireland Office 470-2w
Procurement 470-2w
Production 459w
Public footpaths 584w

Motorway service areas
Planning inquiries 492w

Motorways
Lighting 11w
Road works 10w

Mowlam, Ms Marjorie
Debates etc.
Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Bill, Rep & 3R (25:05:89) 1167-8, 1170-1, 1198
Questions
Civil service recruitment 675
Community care, Dept of Social Security local offices 754w
Energy conservation, Building regulations 103w
Maternity benefits, EC countries 667
Schools, Northern Ireland 460
Social Fund, Advertising 448-9w
Social Fund, Loans 221-2w
Social Fund, Redcar 683w
Social security benefits, Departmental leaflets 427w
Wages Inspectorate, Manpower 168w

Moynihan, Mr Colin, Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sport)
Debates etc.
Eastbourne Waterworks Company, Water charges (26:05:89) 1288-91
Questions
Football 679w
Football, Identity cards 384w, 594w, 673-4w
Football grounds, Government assistance 490w
Football grounds, Safety 203w
Hazardous wastes, Members' correspondence 795w
Playgrounds, Safety standards 491w
Playing fields, Land use 379w
Recreation spaces 597w
River Humber, Water pollution 205w
River pollution, Brodsworth 182w
Sports, Drug abuse 596-7w
Sports, Private investment 597w

Moynihan, Mr Colin—continued
Sports, Schools 598w
Sports facilities, Privatisation 595w
Sports facilities, Urban areas 592w

Mozambique National Resistance
see RENAMO

MRC
see Medical Research Council

Mullin, Mr Chris
Debates etc.
Employment Bill, Rep (17:05:89) 413-5
Questions
Albany Prison, Segregation of prisoners 394w
Arms exports, Nigeria 68w
Defence contracts, Short Brothers 272w
Nicaragua, Human rights 23-4w
Nuclear weapons policy 798
Ortega, Daniel, Official visits 23w
Ships, Design 398w
Water supply industry, Privatisation 587w

Mumbles railway
453w

Murphy, Mr Paul
Debates etc.
Community Charge Regulations 1989 (23:05:89) 911-3
Questions
Electricity tariffs, Industrial energy prices 109w
Higher education administration, Pay 369w
Polytechnic of Wales, Finance 257-8w
Rents to mortgages scheme, Wales 129w
Untreated milk 735-6w
Wales Advisory Body, Public appointments 312w
Wales Advisory Body, Welsh Joint Education Committee 312w

Museum of Welsh Antiquities
Arts finance 195w

Museums & galleries
670
Building repairs 398-9w
Conservation 530w
Education 398w, 439w
Expenditure 398-9w
Income 400w
Labour costs 398w
Recruitment 530w
Repairs & maintenance 670, 673
Stock control 439w

Museums & Galleries Commission
398-9w

NAO
see National Audit Office

National Association of Corrosion Engineers
192-3w

National Association of Port Employers
171w, 174w

National Audit Office
15
Advertising 14-5

National Board for Nursing Midwifery & Health Visiting in England
see English National Board for Nursing Midwifery & Health Visiting

National Coal Board
see British Coal Corporation

National Council for Civil Liberties
194w

National Curriculum Council
Special education 2w

National Deaf Children's Society
2w

National Dock Labour Board
(24:05:89) 962-1075

National Engineering Laboratory
Privatisation 240-1w, (25:05:89) 1227-34
Standing Order No 20 applications (17:05:89) 333

National Farmers' Union
740w
Dairy farming 740w
Summertime 116w
Wales 761w

National finance
see Treasury

National fruit collection
473w

National Garden Festival 1988
Land use 520w

National Girobank
Privatisation 229-30w
Takeovers 302-4

National income
316w
Overseas investment 529w

National Institute of Agricultural Botany
Pay settlements 733-4w

National insurance contributions
433-4w
Dept of Social Security local offices 434w
Expenditure 549w
Social security claims 434w

National Insurance Fund
Occupational pensions 682w
Personal pensions 682w

National Maritime Museum
(22:05:89) 742-9

National Maritime Museum Bill (HL) 1988/89
Debates etc.
Rep* & 3R (22:05:89) 742-9
Royal assent (25:05:89) 1149

National Museum of Wales
Finance 347w

National Office of Animal Health
211w

National parks
Planning authorities 939

National Plastics
191w

National Playing Fields Association
936

National Power
109-10w, 191-2w

National Radiological Protection Board
67w, 326w

National savings
809w

National Savings Bank
Personal savings 566w

National savings gift tokens
Premium bonds 808w

National security
Nuclear safeguards 634w

National Sheep Association
337w

National Technology Centre
240-1w, (25:05:89) 1227-34

National Theatre
Arts finance (18:05:89) 576-84

National Union of Civil & Public Servants
400w

National Union of Mineworkers
South Wales 761w

NATO
273-4w, 632w, 731w
Yorkshire & Humberside 730w

Nature Conservancy Council
493w, 948

Nature conservation
795
Africa 631w
Birds 121w, 364w, 466w, 678w
EC action 678-9w
Elephants 489w, 641w, (22:05:89) 728-9, 794w, (26:05:89) 1292-300
Import controls 810w
Import of live animals 809-10w
International conferences 676w
Ivory 677w
Northern Ireland 465-6w
Puffins 182-3w
Seals 321w
Sites of special scientific interest 465-6w
Whales 1109

Nature Conservation & Amenity Lands (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 1988.
Questions
465-6w

Navy
Emergency planning 397w
Medical records 69w
Nuclear accidents 347w
Shipping accidents 732w

Nazi war crimes
210w

NCB
see British Coal Corporation

NCC
see Nature Conservancy Council

NCCL
see National Council for Civil Liberties

Neale, Mr Gerrard
Questions
Road humps 503w

***Needham, Mr Richard**, Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland*
Questions
Attendance allowance, Social security appeals 469w
Exceptional needs payments, Northern Ireland 466-8w
Handicap benefits, Age 467-9w
Handicap benefits, Social security recipients 467w
Health service staff, Northern Ireland 364-6w
Health services, Northern Ireland 368w
Hospital beds, Northern Ireland 465w
Hospital closures, Northern Ireland 365-6w
Hospital waiting lists, Northern Ireland 468
Hospitals, Construction 365-7w
Income support, Children 464-5w
Medical cards, Northern Ireland 470w
Mobility allowance, Social security appeals 469-70w
Nature conservation, Birds 364w, 466w
Nature conservation, Sites of special scientific interest 465-6w
NHS Review, Northern Ireland 281w
Northern Ireland Housing Executive, House renovation grants 363w
Taxis, Castlereagh 364w

Neighbourhood energy action scheme
51w, 660w
Housing insulation 102-3w, 105-6w, 454w

NEL
see National Engineering Laboratory

Nellist, Mr Dave
Debates etc.
Community Charge Regulations 1989 (23:05:89) 896, 898, 911, 914, 915, 916, 922-3

***Nellist, Mr Dave**—continued*
Employment Bill, Rep (17:05:89) 366-71, 383
Questions
Defence contracts, Arms exports 191w
Defence contracts, Expenditure 190-1w
Defence contracts, International cooperation 190w
Gummer, John Selwyn, Publishing 488-9w
Low pay, Wages councils 150-1
Social Fund, West Midlands 683w
Tomography, West Midlands Regional Health Authority 488w
Vagrancy, Young people 141w
Wages councils, Youth employment 506-7w
Youth clubs, Voluntary work 246w

Nepal
Gurkhas 771w

Net book agreement
777w

Netherlands
Animal feed 806-7w
Irradiated food 805w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 759w

***Neubert, Mr Michael**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces*
Debates etc.
Armed forces reserves (19:05:89) 642-6
RAF Upper Heyford, Aircraft noise (26:05:89) 1313-6
Questions
721 Signals Unit, Air force 66w
Air force, Aircrew 462w
Aircraft noise, Measurement 66w
Aircraft noise, Sound insulation 729-30w
Armed forces desertion, Queen's Own Hussars 325-6w, 730w
Armed forces discharges, Army 396w
Armed forces housing 731w
Armed forces recruitment, Age 64w
Armed forces retirement, Army 275-6w
Armed forces training, Iraq 67w
Defence land, Foulness Island 731-2w
Defence land, Land acquisition 551w
Jaguar aircraft, Air accidents 66-7w
Low flying 732w
Low flying, Air safety 65-6w
Low flying, Aircraft noise 65w
Low flying, Don valley 729w
Low flying, Lockerbie 65w
Low flying, Military aircraft 732w
Low flying, Military exercises 462-4w
Low flying, Military police 463w
Low flying, Night flying 551-2w
Low flying, Scotland 65w
Low flying, Skyguard radar 729w
Low flying, Yorkshire & Humberside 65w
Military aircraft, Air accidents 551w
Military aircraft, Supersonic aircraft 66w
RAF Greenham Common, Arrests 65w
RAF Upper Heyford 730w
Television advertising, Ministry of Defence 69w, 398w
Upper Heyford, F111 aircraft 274w
Victoria Barracks Windsor, Construction 274w

New businesses
Derbyshire 506w
Scotland 552w
VAT registration 174w, 506w

"New Roads by New Means Consultation Paper"
422-3w, 647w, 761-2w

New towns
588w
Greenbelt 588w
Property transfer 262w

New Zealand
Dioxins 63w

Newport Hospital
(22:05:89) 701-2

Newspaper press
Community charge 184w
Official secrets 756w

Newspaper Publishers' Association
Observer 231w

Newsprint
188w

***Newton, Rt Hon Tony**, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster & Minister of Trade & Industry*
Debates etc.
Inner city areas (23:05:89) 811-21
Manufacturing industries (16:05:89) 230-4
Questions
British Shipbuilders 237w
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 12-3
Dept of Trade & Industry, Cash limits 650-1w
Foreign investment in UK 306
Foreign investment in UK, Scotland 305-6
Integrated circuits, Government assistance to industry 656-7w
Manufacturing industries, Foreign investment in UK 305
National Engineering Laboratory, Privatisation 240-1w
National Girobank, Privatisation 229-30w
National Girobank, Takeovers 302-4
Overseas trade, Air transport 656-7w
Post Office 311-2
Post Office, Competition 311
Postal deliveries 651w
Shipbuilding, Government assistance to industry 777w
Shipbuilding, Port Glasgow 777w
Trade competitiveness 229w, 300-1
Trade competitiveness, Manufacturing industries 300
Water pollution, EC law 13

Next Steps initiative
(17:05:89) 318-32
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 338w
Resettlement units 449w

NFU
see National Farmers' Union

NHS
Capital investment 415-6w
Compensation 727w
Contracts for services 484w
Expenditure 41w, 82w
Health insurance 166
Income 324w
Land ownership & tenure 344-5w
Northumberland (26:05:89) 1235-44
Salop 289-90w, (22:05:89) 701-2
Wales 41w
Welsh language 195w

NHS administration
Pay settlements 282w
Public appointments 418-9w

NHS & private practice
793-4

NHS charges
Eye tests 728w
Foreign patients 46w
North Devon Health Authority 417w
Tomography 153-4w

NHS charges exemptions
Agency Benefits Unit 155w

NHS complaints
785w
Wales 259w

NHS finance
481-2w
North West region 484w
Wales 42w, 259w
Westminster & Chelsea Hospital 153w

NHS hospital trusts
85-6w, 284-5w, 475-6w, 479w, 646w, (22:05:89) 718-21
Public sector assets 86w
Queen's Medical Centre Nottingham 784-5

NHS hospital trusts—continued
Self-governing hospitals 86w

NHS internal market
789-90

NHS Management Executive
418-9w

NHS Policy Board
418-9w, 783-6

NHS Review
283-4w, 469-70, 475-6w, 479w, 518w, 646w, 783-4, 786w, 791, 795, (26:05:89) 1235-44
British Medical Association 472, 761w, 785-9, 797
Capital 153-4w
Clwyd Health Authority 646-7w
Family doctors 468, 790-1
Family practitioner committees 646w
Kent 788
Medical audit 475w
Medical education 486w
Northern Ireland 281w
Patients 477w
Royal College of Nursing 761w
Scotland 27w
Supra-regional services 728w
Trade unions 761w
Transplant surgery 779-81w
Wakefield Family Practitioner Committee 421w
Wales 761w

NIAB
see National Institute of Agricultural Botany

Nicaragua
Human rights 23-4w

Nicholls, Mr Patrick, Under-Secretary of State for Employment
Debates etc.
Dock Work Bill, Rep & 3R (24:05:89) 995-1000, 1005, 1014-6
Employment Bill, Rep (17:05:89) 339, 340, 347-52
Questions
Action for Community Employment, Housing insulation 660w
Agricultural Inspectorate, Civil service manpower 571-4w
Building industry safety 573w
Child minding, Employment Training 179-80w
Community programme, Housing insulation 51w, 660w
Construction Industry Training Board 165w
Contracts of employment, Redundancy 168w
Dock labour scheme 171w
Dock labour scheme, Age 170w
Dock labour scheme, Grimsby 171w
Dock labour scheme, Humberside 170w
Dock labour scheme, Industrial disputes 508-9w
Dock labour scheme, Liverpool 170w
Dock labour scheme, Port of London 169-70w
Dock labour scheme, Southampton 171w
"Dock Labour Scheme White Paper" 171w
Dock workers, Manpower 170w
Employment Training 167-8w, 214w, 331-2w, 581w, 662w
Employment Training, Economic regions 581w
Employment Training, Fees & charges 301-2w
Employment Training, Fraud 215-6w
Employment Training, Income support 508w
Employment Training, Remedial education 165w
Employment Training, South Yorkshire 167w
Employment Training, Training allowances 167w
Factory Inspectorate, Civil service manpower 572w

Nicholls, Mr Patrick—continued
High Moor Colliery, Mine accidents 51w
Holiday leave 160
Industrial accidents, Presses 571-2w
Industrial disputes 176w
Industrial health & safety, Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 361-2w
Industrial health & safety, Presses 572w
Industrial health & safety, Prosecutions 571w
Industrial training boards 569-70w
Low pay 165w
Low pay, Wages councils 159-60
Low pay, Yorkshire & Humberside 165-6w
Low pay, Youth employment 52w
Low Pay Unit 177w
Metal industries, Cobalt 178w
Minimum wage 172w
Non-statutory training organisations 570w
Passive smoking, Industrial health & safety 176w
Picketing 54w, 173w
Picketing, Law reform 166w
Ports 174w
Protein Fractionation Centre, Asbestos 177-8w
Public holidays 160
Public holidays, Wales 161
Release for training scheme, Employment schemes 574w
"Removing Barriers to Employment Consultation Paper" 172w
Smoking, Industrial health & safety 176w
Trades Union Congress, Industrial relations 172w
Trades Union Congress, Picketing 173w
Training allowances 214w
Wages councils 157w, 673w
Wages councils, Low pay 158w
Wages councils, Managers 157-8w
Wages councils, Youth employment 506-7w
Wages Inspectorate, Manpower 168w
Wages Inspectorate, North West region 168w
Youth employment, Pay 173w

Nicholson, Mr David
Debates etc.
Gurkhas, Hong Kong (22:05:89) 690
Social security, Management (17:05:89) 327
Questions
Councillors' interests 492w
Drugs, Counterfeit manufacturing 560w
Drugs, Parallel imports 560w
Electricity distribution, Households 633w
Family benefits, EC countries 662-3
Family practitioner committees 478w
Kidnapping, Children 455-6w
National parks, Planning authorities 939
Student grants, Deeds of covenant 13w
Suckler cow premiums 734w
Youth training scheme 174w

Nicholson, Miss Emma
Questions
Community charge, Greenwich 472
Microelectronics industry, EC internal trade 309

Nigeria
Arms exports 68w
Democracy 23-4w
Overseas trade 315-6

Night flying
Low flying 551-2w

Nimrod aircraft
462w

NIREX
see Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive

Nitrate sensitive areas scheme
1115-6

Nitrates
30w, 564-5w
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service 748w

Nitrates—continued
Fertilisers 738w
Land pollution 1115-6

Noise control
Codes of practice 675-6w
M25 11w

Non-departmental public bodies
695w
Northern Ireland 193w
Overseas aid 641-2w

Non-governmental organisations
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 631-2w

Non-metropolitan counties
Pre-school education 442w

Non-statutory training organisations
570-1w

Non-teaching staff
Local education authorities 124-5w

Norris, Mr Steve
Debates etc.
City of London (Various Powers) Bill, 2R & Money res (15:05:89) 73, 117-20

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
see NATO

North Devon
Sea pollution 474w

North Devon Health Authority
NHS charges 417w

North Devon Hospital
417w
Hospital closures 416-7w

North Devon link road
Road accidents 689w

North Down
Local government elections 461
Surgery 468

North East region
306
British Coal Corporation 108w
Road works 278w
Social Fund 548-52w

North Sea
Research 496w

North Sea oil
Oil reserves 3
Petroleum exploration 3

North South dialogue
International conferences 455w

North Tyneside
Employment Training 302w

North Wales
Valleys initiative 760w

North West region
Average earnings 52w
Employment 163w
Industrial training 174w
NHS finance 484w
Self-governing hospitals 284-5w
Tourism 166-7w
Wages Inspectorate 168w

Northern Ballet Theatre
Arts finance 400w, 671

Northern College of Education
403-4w

Northern Ireland
Arms trade 458
Attendance allowance 469w
Baton rounds 467
Broadleaved woodland grant scheme 649-50w
Broadleaved woodlands 451w
Complaints against police 143-6w

Northern Ireland—continued
Demonstrations 193-4w
Educational policy 459
Elections 146w, 791w, 1117-8
Electoral reform 464
Employment discrimination 143w, 181w, 281w, 455-7, (25:05:89) 1151-226
Exceptional needs payments 466-8w
Handicap benefits 467-9w
Health service staff 364-6w
Health services 368w
Hospital beds 465w
Hospital closures 365-6w
Hospital waiting lists 468
Hospitals 365-7w
Local government 466
Local government elections 470
Medical cards 470w
Mobility allowance 469-70w
Nature conservation 465-6w
NHS Review 281w
Non-departmental public bodies 193w
Personal social services 368w
Prisoners' transfers 636w
Public finance (22:05:89) 762-6
Pupil-teacher ratios 462-3
Schools 459-60
Security 458
Special protection areas 364w
Supplementary benefits 466-8w
Terrorism 457-8
Weapons 457
Women 281w, 463
Working mothers 463

Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund
(22:05:89) 762-6

Northern Ireland Electricity
(22:05:89) 762-6

Northern Ireland Health & Social Services Boards
364-7w, 465w

Northern Ireland Housing Executive
(22:05:89) 762-6
House renovation grants 363w
Repair grants 363w

Northern Ireland Office
Motor vehicles 470-2w
Television advertising 281w, 368w, 649w

Northern region
Collections 670-1
Employment 163w

Northop bypass
Road construction 764w

Northumberland
Agriculture 740w
NHS (26:05:89) 1235-44
Tourism 166w

Notifiable diseases
Creutzfeldt-Jakob dementia 289w

Nottingham
Community charge 184w, 489-90w
Defective housing 185w
Social security recipients 425-6w

NPFA
see National Playing Fields Association

NRPB
see National Radiological Protection Board

Nuclear accidents
Cardiff 397w
Fire services 273w
Navy 347w
Nuclear submarines 273w

Nuclear fuel cycle
Disclosure of information 634w

Nuclear fuel reprocessing
Advanced gas-cooled reactors 800-1w
Sellafield 801w

Nuclear fusion
Government grants 11-2

Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive
228-9w
Radioactive waste disposal 185w

Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty
Italy 758w
Luxembourg 759w
Netherlands 759w
Non-governmental organisations 631-2w

Nuclear power
8-9, (22:05:89) 750-61
Air pollution control 9
Brazil 386w
Electricity generation 10, 104w
Environment protection 104w

Nuclear power stations
Druridge bay 192w
Electricity generation 105w
Electricity supply industry 633w
Potassium iodate 386w
Radioactive wastes 12

Nuclear safeguards
National security 634w

Nuclear submarines
68-9w, 273w, 464w
Fires 272-3w
Nuclear accidents 273w
Zirconium 273w

Nuclear weapons
759w
Arms control 1119
Radioactive waste disposal 464w
Road accidents 730w

Nuclear weapons policy
451w, 693w, 796, 798

Nuclear weapons tests
Australia 68w
Bone marrow disorders 67w
Compensation 67-8w, 551w, (22:05:89) 702-4
Death 326w
Exservicemen 67w
Radiation hazards 142w, 464w
War pensions 73w

NUCPS
see National Union of Civil & Public Servants

NUM
see National Union of Mineworkers

Nurseries & Childminders Regulation Act 1948
Questions
155w

Nursery schools
School population 647-8w
Wales 647-8w

Nurses
Career structure 452w, 482w, 486-7w, 720w, 785w, 786-7
Leicestershire Health Authority 786-7
Manpower 283w, 720w
Men 789w
Oxfordshire Health Authority 482w
Pay 787, 787-8w
Rates & rating 593w
Recruitment 789w
Wales 43-4w, 452w

Nurses' training
Fees & charges 719w
Technological change 218-9w
Welsh language 257w

Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Debates etc.
Dock Work Bill, Rep & 3R (24:05:89) 1004-7

Objects in lieu of tax
Scotland 339-40w

O'Brien, Mr William
Questions
EC grants & loans, South Yorkshire 325w
Family practitioner services, Homelessness 485w

O'Brien, Mr William—continued
Family practitioner services, Wakefield Family Practitioner Committee 422w
Income support, Leeds 425w
NHS Review, Wakefield Family Practitioner Committee 421w
Pontefract General Infirmary, Geriatric patients 154w
Town & country planning, Enforcement notices 938

Obscenity
Telephones 497w

Observer
Newspaper Publishers' Association 231w

Occupational pensions
National Insurance Fund 682w
Severe disablement allowance 71w

Occupations
Employment 669-72w

ODA
see Overseas Development Administration

Offal
Food composition 290w, 474w

Office of Electricity Regulation
387-8w

Office of Gas Supply
106w

Office of Population Censuses & Surveys
545-6w, 723w, 784w
Cash limits 727-8w
Companies 723-4w
Royalties 723w

Office of Telecommunications
457-8w
Annual reports 650w
Telephone services 656w

Office of the Minister for the Civil Service
see Minister for the Civil Service

Office of the President of Social Security & Medical Appeals
see Social security appeal tribunals

Office of the Social Security Commissioners
see Social Security Commissioners

Office workers
Pay 257w
Wales 257w

Offices
HM Inspectorate of Pollution 381-2w

Official engagements
123-4w, 246w, 343w, 451w, 695w
Higher education 608-10w

Official secrets
Newspaper press 756w
"Who Framed Colin Wallace" 19w

Official Secrets Act 1989
Questions
756w

Official visits
Ortega, Daniel 23w

Offshore accidents
Cormorant Alpha platform 193w

Offshore safety
Health & Safety Executive 10-1
Offshore structures 10
Piper Alpha platform 192-3w
Safety standards 192-3w

Offshore structures
Offshore safety 10

OFGAS
see Office of Gas Supply

OFTEL
see Office of Telecommunications

Oil pollution
Ports 686-7w

Oil reserves
North Sea oil 3

OMCS
see Minister for the Civil Service

One parent families
Community charge 323w
Employment Training 179-80w

Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Questions
Environment protection 795
Freshwater fish, Fish diseases 805w
Salmon, Licensing 805w
Salmon Advisory Committee 805w
Shellfish, Fish diseases 805w

OPCS
see Office of Population Censuses & Surveys

Open University
189w, 246w, 368-70w
Environment 126w
Postgraduate education 309-10w

Open University Visiting Committee
246w

Operating costs
City technology colleges 606w
Hospitals 148-9w

Oppenheim, Mr Phillip
Debates etc.
Publicity, Government departments (16:05:89) 184, 201-2
Questions
Antidumping duties, EC action 231w
Cabinet Office, Cash limits 525w
Information technology, EC internal trade 307
New businesses, Derbyshire 506w
New businesses, VAT registration 174w
Owner occupied housing 592-3w
Salmon, Fish farming 742w
Severn-Trent Water Authority, Capital investment 495w
Unemployment, Derbyshire 506w

Opposition days
Inner city areas (23:05:89) 804-58
Manufacturing industries (16:05:89) 224-66
Publicity (16:05:89) 181-223

Opposition parties
Expenditure 410w
Finance 765-6w

Optical charges
486w

Oral contraceptives
Cancer 87-8w

Oral questions
Speaker's rulings & statements (15:05:89) 15, (17:05:89) 301

Orange badge scheme
692w
Handicapped drivers 113w

Order of business
Speaker's rulings & statements (24:05:89) 953-4

Ordination of women
13

Organ donor cards
488w
Languages 783w

Organ donors
Transplant surgery (22:05:89) 767-71

Organic farming
Agricultural research 300w
Food standards 738w

Organic farming—continued
Prices 1108

Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Debates etc.
Associated British Ports (No 2) Bill, 3R (23:05:89) 860, 864-70
Manufacturing industries (16:05:89) 234-6
Questions
Domestic electrical appliances, Import penetration 236w
Wembley Stadium, London Underground 799-800w

Ortega, Daniel
Official visits 23w

Osman, Lorrain Esme
Arrests 248w
Custodial treatment 255w
Extradition 255w, 756w
Liberia 248w, 771w

Oswestry Hospital
(22:05:89) 701-2

"Our Business is Service"
749-50w

Overseas aid
Africa 641w
Malaysia 24w
Non-departmental public bodies 641-2w
Population 774w
Yemen 207w
Zambia 111-2w

Overseas development
see Foreign & Commonwealth Office

Overseas Development Administration
111-2w, 194w

Overseas investment
National income 529w

Overseas trade
230w
Air transport 656-7w
Ghana 315-6
International trade 230w
Ivory 677w, 794w
Manufactured goods 231w
Nigeria 315-6
Rhinoceros products 794w

Owner occupied housing
592-3w

Ownership
Aveley Methane 493-4w
Broadcasting 317-9w

Oxfam
15w

Oxford
Community charge 203w
Health service ancillary staff 560-1w

Oxfordshire Health Authority
Nurses 482w

Ozone layer
Air pollution control 1119-20
Carbon tetrachloride 384w
Methyl chloroform 384w

PAC
see Public Accounts Committee

Packaging
Plastics 595w

Page, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Exhaust emission controls, EC action (24:05:89) 1077, 1083, 1084
Questions
Greyhound racing, Betting 253-4w
Greyhound racing, Finance 254w
Lead free petrol 586w
Manufacturing industries, EC internal trade 309

Paice, Mr James
Debates etc.
Dock Work Bill, Rep & 3R (24:05:89) 1008
Take Away Food (Biodegradable Packaging) Bill, 1R (23:05:89) 801-3
Questions
Armed forces recruitment, Age 64w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Research 802-3w
British Food & Farming Year 1989, Festivals & special occasions 1114
Community charge, Pensioners 585w
Forestry Commission 741w
NHS Review, Medical audit 475w
Paper, Recycling 943
Parole Board 139w
Skillcentres, Privatisation 152
Trades Union Congress, Industrial relations 172w
Training & enterprise councils 505w

Pain
83w

Pain Relief Foundation
Walton Hospital 725w

Paisley, Rev Ian
Debates etc.
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference (25:05:89) 1135-7, 1146
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference, Standing Order No 20 applications (25:05:89) 1146-7
Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Bill, Rep & 3R (25:05:89) 1159, 1169, 1174, 1180, 1190-1, 1217-9
Questions
Business statements 1123-4
Common sheep meat regime 1110

Pakistan
Immigration applications 137w, 330w

Palace of Westminster
497w, 602-4w, 945-6

Paper
Recycling 187-8w, 943-6

Parallel imports
Drugs 560w

Parental contributions
Student grants 310-1w

Parents
Handicapped 668-9

Parking
210w
Handicapped drivers 692w

Parking Enforcement Working Party
210w

Parking offences
Metropolitan Police 253w

Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil, Secretary of State for Energy
Debates etc.
Oral question time intervention (15:05:89) 2
Questions
Advanced gas-cooled reactors, Electricity generation 9
Advanced gas-cooled reactors, Nuclear fuel reprocessing 800-1w
British Coal Corporation, Investment 445-7w
Carbon dioxide 105-6w
Cash limits, Dept of Energy 634-5w
Director General of Electricity Supply, Public appointments 387-8w
Electricity supply industry, Coal 9-10
Electricity supply industry, Industrial democracy 6-7
Electricity supply industry, Privatisation 6, 107w
Electricity supply industry, Profit sharing 6
Energy conservation 106w
Energy conservation, Air pollution control 106w

Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil—continued
Energy consumption 104w
Gas supply industry, Gas tariffs 11
North Sea oil, Petroleum exploration 3
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Sellafield 801w
Nuclear power 8-9
Nuclear power, Air pollution control 9
Nuclear power, Electricity generation 10
Nuclear power, Environment protection 104w
Offshore safety, Health & Safety Executive 10-1
Offshore structures, Offshore safety 10
Television advertising, Dept of Energy 110-1w, 387w
Torness power station 9

Parkinson houses
Building repairs 264w

Parliament Square
Road traffic control 797-8w

Parliamentary agents
Personal Bills 510w

Parliamentary broadcasting
Television 796-7

Parliamentary constituencies
Electoral register 487-8w
Electorate 487w, 514w

Parliamentary privilege
Dagnan, Anthony (18:05:89) 499-503
Speaker's rulings & statements (17:05:89) 317, (24:05:89) 955-8

Parliamentary sovereignty & European Community
694w

Parole Board
139w

Parry, Mr Robert
Questions
Manufacturing industries, Productivity 234w
Wages councils 157w

Part-time education
Central institutions 407-8w
Student grants 246-7w

Part-time employment
Availability for work 568-9w
Cleveland County Council 182w
EC law 361w
Economic regions 578-80w
Scotland 577-8w

Passengers
British Airways (22:05:89) 716-7

Passive smoking
Industrial health & safety 176w

Passport Office
393-4w, 753w
Glasgow 754-5w
Liverpool 753-4w

Passports
Administrative delays 256w, 393-4w, 636-8w, 753w
Liverpool 637w
Members' correspondence 97w

Patchett, Mr Terry
Debates etc.
Associated British Ports (No 2) Bill, 3R (23:05:89) 874, 878-80
Questions
Hillsborough Stadium Inquiry 96w
Income support, Social security benefits uprating 425w
Mergers, Monopolies & Mergers Commission 235w
Planning appeals 601-2w

Patients
NHS Review 477w

Patnick, Mr Irvine
Debates etc.
Publicity, Government departments (16:05:89) 213-4
Questions
Civil servants' secondment, Business 239w

Patnick, Mr Irvine—continued
Environment, Research finance 597w
Invalid care allowances 430w
Local enterprise agencies, Government grants 175w
Self-governing hospitals 479w
Sheffield Development Corporation 945

Patten, Mr Chris, Minister of State for Overseas Development
Debates etc.
Rain forests, Environment protection (23:05:89) 928-32
Questions
Africa, Elephants 641w
Africa, Overseas aid 641w
Bophuthatswana, Development aid 642w
Commonwealth Development Corporation 388w
Cyprus, United Nations 388w
Elephants, Nature conservation 641w
Family planning, Bilateral aid 251-3w
Family planning, Joint funding scheme 249-50w
Family planning, UK contributions 251w
Family planning, Voluntary organisations 249-52w
Lome Convention 642w
North South dialogue, International conferences 455w
Overseas aid, Non-departmental public bodies 641-2w
Overseas aid, Population 774w
Rain forests, Development aid 21-2w
Rain forests, EC aid 20w
Rain forests, Forest protection 22w, 641w
Yemen, Development aid 207w
Yemen, Overseas aid 207w
Zambia, Overseas aid 111-2w

Patten, Mr John, Minister of State at the Home Office
Questions
Accommodation agencies, Prosecutions 209w
Bail 92w
Bail hostels 91-2w
Bingo 498w
Capital punishment 498w
Criminal Justice Act 1988 639w
Cruelty to children, Research finance 98-9w
Domestic violence, Government grants to voluntary organisations 142w
Drug crimes, Proceeds of crime 319w
Ethnic minorities, Brent 96-7w
Football, Public order offences 96w
Football grounds 210w
Greyhound racing, Betting 253-4w
Greyhound racing, Finance 254w
Homosexuality, Age of consent 640w
Justices' clerks, Pay 393w
Litter, Fines 528w
Magistrates' courts, Justices' clerks 319w
Motor vehicle theft, Mail order selling 321w
Osman, Lorrain Esme, Extradition 255w
Prisoners on remand 95-6w
Probation officers, Manpower 527w
Telephones, Obscenity 497w
Television licences, Prosecutions 500-1w
Wallace, Colin, Convictions 98w
War Crimes Inquiry 497w

Pawsey, Mr James
Questions
Organic farming, Food standards 738w
Schools, Northern Ireland 459
Self-governing hospitals 475w
Town & country planning, Law reform 495w
Unemployment, East Midlands 161w

Pay
Ambulance services 787w
Church Commissioners 14
Clergy 14
Crown Prosecution Service 121-2w
Family doctors 284w
Fishing crews 515w
Higher education administration 369w

Pay—continued
Justices' clerks 121-2w, 393w
Nurses 787, 787-8w
Office workers 257w
Scotland 130w
Technicians 218w
Universities 4w
University teachers 126w
Youth employment 173w

Pay beds
Huddersfield Health Authority 559w

Pay incentives
Primary education 6w
Property Services Agency 529-30w
Secondary education 5-6w
Teachers 5-6w, 247w
Water authorities 680w

Pay settlements
National Institute of Agricultural Botany 733-4w
NHS administration 282w
Teachers 127w, 369-70w, 797w

Payroll deduction scheme
Dept of Social Security 543w

PCFC
see Polytechnics & Colleges' Funding Council

Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Questions
Bridge Street underpass, Dept of the Environment 384w
National Savings Bank, Personal savings 566w

Peak Park Joint Planning Board
939-40

Peat
Horticulture 745w

Pendry, Mr Tom
Questions
Football, Arrests 138w
Football grounds 210w
Football grounds, Safety 203w
Football Spectators Bill (HL) 1988/89 585w
Tax yields, Football pools 13w

Pensioner price index
329w

Pensioners
Capital rules 270w
Community charge 585w
Earnings rules 544w, 660
EC countries 685w
Electricity tariffs 314w
Fylde 426w
Gas tariffs 314w
Low incomes 663
Personal income 77-8w, 222w, 750-1w
Social security finance 426w
Social security reform 426w
Telephone charges 241w
Water charges 383w

Pensions
326-7w
Crown Suppliers 186w
Retail price index 681w

Pentonville Prison
255w

Per capita costs
Defence expenditure 729w
Family doctors 218w
Handicap benefits 546-7w

Performance related pay
Self-governing hospitals 285w

Performing arts
Touting (22:05:89) 707-8

Perinatal mortality
Wales 259-60w

Personal sets
509-10w

Personal Bills
509-10w
Parliamentary agents 510w

Personal Community Charge (Exemptions) Order 1989
Debates etc.
(23:05:89) 898-927

Personal Community Charge (Students) Regulations 1989
Debates etc.
(23:05:89) 898-927

Personal income
13-5w
Community charge benefit 327-8w
Family credit 71w
Income tax 17-8w
Pensioners 77-8w, 222w, 750-1w

Personal pensions
447w, 681-2w
National Insurance Fund 682w

Personal savings
National Savings Bank 566w

Personal social services
Expenditure 82w
Northern Ireland 368w
Scotland 26w

Personal tax allowances
15-8w

Personnel management
Employment opportunities 156

Perth
Press releases 520-2w

Pest control
Sheep 297w

Pesticide residues
Health hazards 212w
Wild animals 266w

Pesticides
63-4w
Food labelling 211-2w
Food standards 1113-4
Safety 743-5w

Petrol
Lead pollution 594-5w

Petroleum exploration
North Sea oil 3

Petroleum production
Cormorant Alpha platform 193w

Pharmacists
284w

Philippines
Armed forces training 352w
Military aid 352w

Picketing
54w, 173w, 796
Law reform 166w
Trades Union Congress 173w

Pike, Mr Peter L
Debates etc.
Community Charge Regulations 1989 (23:05:89) 911, 913, 919
Roads (18:05:89) 492
Social security, Management (17:05:89) 328
Transport (15:05:89) 32, 44-7
Questions
Average earnings, North West region 52w
Business statements 1127
Carbon dioxide 105w
Electricity supply industry, Industrial democracy 6-7
Empty property, Homelessness 491w
Hazardous wastes, Waste disposal 383-4w
Hospital waiting lists, Information 410w

Pike, Mr Peter L—continued
Manufacturing industries, EC internal trade 308
Official engagements 124w, 451w, 695w
Sheep premiums 734w
Social security appeals, Administrative delays 436w
Water supply industry, Privatisation 383w

Piper Alpha inquiry
Disclosure of information 193w

Piper Alpha platform
193w
Offshore safety 192-3w

Planning appeals
601-2w

Planning authorities
National parks 939

Planning inquiries
Motorway service areas 492w
Private Bills 17-8

Planning permission
Allotments 598w
Archaeological sites 598-9w
Disclosure of information 204w
Stokeham 602w

Plastics
Packaging 595w

Playgrounds
Safety standards 491w

Playing fields
Land acquisition 936-8
Land use 379w

Plessey
Takeovers 311

Plumstead
Listed buildings 186w

Plutonium
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority 110w

Points of order
Speaker's rulings & statements (17:05:89) 412, (18:05:89) 507, 511, 515, (24:05:89) 979

Poland
Sikorski, Wladyslaw 523-4w

Police
499w
Basildon 497-8w
Community charge 139w
Disclosure of information 394w
Electronic surveillance 756-7w
Equal opportunities 499-500w
Manpower 394w, 497-8w
Recruitment 499-500w
Surveillance 755w

Police civilians
635w

Police deaths on duty
255w
Robbery 525w
Royal Ulster Constabulary 470w
Scotland 339w

Police firearms
Policewomen 346w, 499w
Republic of Ireland 790-1w
Royal Ulster Constabulary 791w
Scotland 346w

Police national computer
209w
Prosecutions 321w

Police raids
Guard dogs 757-8w

Policewomen
Firearms 801w
Maternity leave 526w

Policewomen—continued
Police firearms 346w, 499w
Scotland 801w
South Yorkshire 526w

Political impartiality
Civil service 675
Civil service unions 807w

Political prisoners
South Africa 20w

Political refugees
756w
Departmental correspondence 210w
Harmonisation of legislation 317w
Immigration appeals 321w, 566w
Immigration applications 316-7w, 500w
Immigration controls 317w
Kurdistan 97w, (26:05:89) 1257-66

Polling stations
Access to buildings 254w

Pollution control
Energy conservation 186w
Fertilisers 738w
HM Inspectorate of Pollution 380-1w
River pollution 49w
Waste disposal 186w
Water pollution 592w

Pollution Inspectorate
see HM Inspectorate of Pollution

Pollution monitoring
Estuaries 948
River Humber 399w
River pollution 946-7
Water pollution 30w

Polyester silk plants
Imports 315-6w
Production 458-9w

Polytechnic of Wales
Finance 257-8w

Polytechnics' & Colleges' Funding Council
189w

Pontefract General Infirmary
Geriatric patients 154w

Population
Overseas aid 774w

Population distribution
Elderly 149-50w

Population projection
Elderly 216w

Porcine somatotropin
Licensing 377w

Pornography
253w

Port Glasgow
81w
Shipbuilding 777w
Social Fund 328w

Port of London
Dock labour scheme 169-70w

Porter, Mr David
Questions
Fish, Iceland 59-60w, 377w
Fishing catches, Iceland 59w
Teachers, Pay settlements 369-70w, 797w

Portillo, Mr Michael, Minister for Public Transport
Debates etc.
Transport (15:05:89) 67-71
Tyres, Road safety (26:05:89) 1251-4
Questions
Bright, Keith, Resignations 422w
British Rail, Costs 115w
British Rail, Privatisation 201w
Channel tunnel, Kent 556w
Channel tunnel, Railway freight transport 113w, 200w

Portillo, Mr Michael—continued
Channel tunnel, Railway network 114w
Level crossings, Accidents 501w
London Underground, Automatic ticketing systems 114w
London Underground, Equal opportunities 316w
Manchester Airport, Railway network 11w
Ports, Coal 278w
Ports, Special constables 278-9w
River Thames, Water transport 113w
Settle-Carlisle railway, Private sector 313w
Shipping, Balance of payments 114w
Shipping, Kilbrannan sound 424w
Transport infrastructure, EC grants & loans 313w

Ports
174w
Coal 278w
Land acquisition (23:05:89) 859-93
Oil pollution 686-7w
Special constables 278-9w
Yorkshire & Humberside 691w

Post Office
230w, 311-2, 651w
Competition 311

Post Office Users' National Council
651w

Post offices
East Sussex 775w

Postal deliveries
651w

Postgraduate education
Open University 309-10w

Potassium iodate
Nuclear power stations 386w

Potato Marketing Board
737w

Potato Processors' Association
740w

Poultry
Salmonella 212-3w

POUNC
see Post Office Users' National Council

Poverty
(22:05:89) 731-4, 734-6
Manchester 199-200w
Scotland 163-4

Powell, Charles
25-6w

Powell, Mr Ray
Questions
Housing insulation, Energy conservation 103w
Public libraries 8w
Public libraries, Fees & charges 8w
Spoil heaps, Garw valley 275w

Powell, Mr William
Questions
Electorate, Parliamentary constituencies 487w
New towns, Property transfer 262w
Regional aid, Corby 458w
Water supply industry, Privatisation 587w

Power industry
Air pollution control 106w

Power station closures
12, 633w, 800-1w

Power stations
Air pollution 634w

PowerGen
191-2w

PPA
see Potato Processors' Association

Pregnant women
Social Fund 429w

Premium bonds
315w, 629w, 807-8w
National savings gift tokens 808w

Pre-school education
Non-metropolitan counties 442w
Wales 130w

Prescott, Mr John
Debates etc.
Associated British Ports (No 2) Bill, 3R (23:05:89) 883-7
Exhaust emission controls, EC action (24:05:89) 1078
Roads (18:05:89) 484-6, 495
Questions
Roads, Capital investment 798w

Prescription charges
217w

Prescription drugs
Budgeting 414w

Prescriptions
284w
Family doctors 477w

Preservation orders
Tree conservation 188w

Press releases
Community charge 183w
Perth 520-2w

Presses
Industrial accidents 571-2w
Industrial health & safety 572w

Prestwick Airport
200w
Finance 691-2w
Road works 227-8w
Scotland 691w

Price, Sir David
Debates etc.
"Charities White Paper" (16:05:89) 172
Social security, Management (17:05:89) 321
Questions
NHS Review, Supra-regional services 728w
Polling stations, Access to buildings 254w
Productivity, Group of Seven 811-2w
USSR, Diplomatic service 681
Wines, Measurement 524w

Prices
Drugs 411-3w
Organic farming 1108

Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Debates etc.
Dock Work Bill, Rep & 3R (24:05:89) 1032, 1045-8
Inner city areas (23:05:89) 829
Questions
Domestic electrical appliances, Import penetration 236w
Mortgage defaulters, Homelessness 940
River pollution, South West Water Authority 935

Primary education
Dyfed 763w
Pay incentives 6w
School population 554w
Wales 554w

Prime Minister
Members' attendance 199w

Prime Minister's Office
see Prime Minister

Prison accommodation
Hull Prison 527w
Prison population 392w

Prison medical services
Manpower 100-2w
Risley Remand Centre 99w

Prison medical services—continued
Training 99-100w

Prison overcrowding
Prisoners' release 392w

Prison population
Prison accommodation 392w
Prisoners on remand 94-5w

Prison staff
Firearms 517w
Footwear 517w
Glenochil Prison 517w
Scotland 517w

Prisoners
247-8w
"Community Charge (So-called Poll Tax)" 322w
Diplomatic service 248w
Married people 138w
Prisons 96w
Risley Remand Centre 526w

Prisoners on remand
93w, 95-6w
Administrative delays 95w
Death 94w
Doncaster 638w
Ethnic minorities 92-4w
Hull Prison 638w
Mentally ill 94-5w
Prison population 94-5w
Prisoners' rights 93-4w
Psychiatry 94w
Suicide 94w
Women 755w

Prisoners' release
Leeman, John 147-8w
Prison overcrowding 392w

Prisoners' rights
Prisoners on remand 93-4w

Prisoners' transfers
Northern Ireland 636w

Prisons
Food poisoning 102w
Prisoners 96w
Private sector 392-3w
Suicide 755w
Woolwich 525-6w

Private Bills
House of Commons procedure 17-20
Land acquisition 18
Planning inquiries 17-8

Private health services
Advertising controls 457w

Private hospitals
Clydebank 801-2w
Transplant surgery 781w

Private investment
City technology colleges 606-7w
Sports 597w

Private Members' Bills
House of Commons procedure 16-7

Private Members' motions
(17:05:89) 334, (18:05:89) 497, (24:05:89) 958
Armed forces reserves (19:05:89) 638-50
Broadcasting (19:05:89) 585-637
Transport (15:05:89) 29-71

Private Members' time
House of Commons procedure 509w

Private notice questions
Speaker's rulings & statements (15:05:89) 25, (22:05:89) 682

Private patients
Bolton 285w, 728w

Private prosecutions
River pollution 935

Private rented housing
943
Landlord & tenant 942

Private Residential Special Schools (Registration) Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
1R (16:05:89) 178-80

Private sector
Industrial training 507-8w
Prisons 392-3w
Remand centres 210w
Roads 422-3w
Screening 783
Settle-Carlisle railway 313w
Unemployment benefits 550w

Privatisation
British Rail 201w, 692w
Electricity generation 105w
Electricity supply industry 6, 107w, 191-2w
Harland & Wolff 143w
Income 385w
National Engineering Laboratory 240-1w, (25:05:89) 1227-34
National Girobank 229-30w
Remand centres 392-3w
Short Brothers 464-5
Skillcentres 151-2, 169w
Sports facilities 595w
Water supply industry 268w, 383w, 587-9w, 591-2w

Privileges Select Committee
(18:05:89) 499-503

Probation officers
Manpower 527w

"Problems of Long-serving Ambulancemen"
787w

Procedure Select Committee
509w

Proceeds of crime
Drug crimes 319w, (22:05:89) 704-7

Processed food
Fish 516w

Procurement
EC action (16:05:89) 267-91
Motor vehicles 470-2w

Production quotas
Milk 741-2w

Productivity
Group of Seven 810-2w
Manufacturing industries 233-4w, 236w, 301-2, 307-8

Professional misconduct
Medical malpractice 89-90w

Profit sharing
Electricity supply industry 6

Programming languages
Computers in Government departments 462w

Proof of identity
Elections 146w, 791w

Property development
Archaeological sites 602w
County Hall 941-2
Town & country planning 593-4w, 938

Property Services Agency
49w
Pay incentives 529-30w

Property transfer
Bradbury Wilkinson 118w
County Hall 942
Harts Hospital 286w
New towns 262w

Prosecutions
Accommodation agencies 209w
Employers' contributions 433w

Prosecutions—continued
Handicapped workers 576w
Industrial health & safety 571w
Low pay 159
Police national computer 321w
Television licences 500-1w

Prosthetics
Disablement Services Authority 781

Prostaglandin
Abortion 147w

Protection of Residents in Retirement Homes Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
2R order read (19:05:89) 651

Protective clothing
Horse riding (23:05:89) 798-800

Protein Fractionation Centre
Asbestos 177-8w

Provident societies
239-40w

Provisional IRA
see IRA

PSA
see Property Services Agency

Psychiatry
Prisoners on remand 94w

Public access
Water authorities 584w

Public Accounts Commission
14-5
Public appointments 765w

Public Accounts Committee
15

Public administration
Mental Health Act Commission 284w

Public appointments
Clyde River Purification Board 338-40w
Defence Export Services Organisation 395-6w
Director General of Electricity Supply 387-8w
Firearms Expert Consultative Committee 637-8w
Higher education administration 609-28w
NHS administration 418-9w
Public Accounts Commission 765w
South East Thames Regional Health Authority 726w
Wales Advisory Body 312w

Public buildings
Induction loops 776w

Public expenditure
Social security benefits 668
Wales 196w

Public finance
Northern Ireland (22:05:89) 762-6

Public footpaths
Motor vehicles 584w

Public holidays
160
EC countries 456w
Wales 161

Public houses
Landlord & tenant 28w
Rural areas 1112
Scotland 28w
Tenancy agreements 338w

Public inquiries
Public service vehicles 202w

Public libraries
8w
Fees & charges 8w

Public opinion
Self-governing hospitals 285w

Public order
Blood sports 140w

Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1981
Questions
193-4w

Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1987
Questions
193-4w

Public order: offences
Alcoholic drinks 343-4w
Elderly 96w
Football 96w

Public order policing
Hillsborough Stadium 639-40w

Public petitions
Identity cards (23:05:89) 924
Wheeler, Gerald (18:05:89) 575

Public relations
Scottish Office 228w

Public Safety Information Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
2R order read (19:05:89) 651

Public sector assets
NHS hospital trusts 86w
Scottish health boards 344-5w

Public sector debt
15w

Public sector housing
Empty housing 583w
Warrington & Runcorn Development Corporation 267w

Public sector housing sales
Scotland 343w

Public service vehicles
Public inquiries 202w

Public transport
Industrial disputes 468

Public utilities
Road works 424w

Public Utilities Street Works Act 1950 Review
424w

Publicity
Dept of Health 155-8w
Dept of Social Security 752-3w
Divorce 397w
EC internal trade 461w
Expenditure (16:05:89) 181-223
Opposition days (16:05:89) 181-223
Scottish Office 308w
Social security benefits 426w
Transplant surgery 782-4w
Welsh Office 196w

Publishing
Gummer, John Selwyn 488-9w

Puffins
Nature conservation 182-3w

Punjab
456w

Pupil records
Disclosure of information 797w
Scotland 658w

Pupil-teacher ratios
Northern Ireland 462-3

Quakers
Community charge 202-3w

Quality control
Drugs 289w

Queen's Medical Centre Nottingham
NHS hospital trusts 784-5

Queen's Own Hussars
Armed forces desertion 325-6w, 730w

Quin, Ms Joyce
Debates etc.
Mergers, EC action (17:05:89) 430-3
Questions
EC Consumer Affairs Council 305

Quota of handicapped workers
Handicapped workers 575-6w

Radiation
Cancer 67w
Hepatitis 806w

Radiation hazards
Cancer 3-4w, 84-5w
Genetics 151w
Medical research 3-4w, 67w
Nuclear weapons tests 142w, 464w

Radice, Mr Giles
Debates etc.
European Communities (18:05:89) 538, 540-2
Questions
Playing fields, Land acquisition 936

Radio Authority
317-9w

Radio frequencies
524-5w

Radio programmes
Interviews 1119

Radioactive waste disposal
Dounreay 228w
Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive 185w
Nuclear weapons 464w
Scotland 229w

Radioactive wastes
Bold power station 387w
Nuclear power stations 12

Radioactivity
Goat meat 409-10w
Scotland 409w
Venison 409-10w

RAF Greenham Common
Arrests 65w

RAF Lakenheath
Low flying 729-30w

RAF Upper Heyford
730w
Aircraft noise (26:05:89) 1308-16

Railway freight transport
Channel tunnel 113w, 200w

Railway Inspectorate
502-3w

Railway network
Channel tunnel 114w, 268w
Manchester Airport 11w

Rain forests
Brazil 600w
Development aid 21-2w
Droughts 55w
EC aid 20w
Environment protection 314, 693w, (23:05:89) 925-32
Forest protection 22w, 55w, 450w, 641w
Wood 314-5

Ramblers' Association
587w

Randall, Mr Stuart
Debates etc.
"Charities White Paper" (16:05:89) 168-9
Questions
"Community Charge (So-called Poll Tax)" 183-4w
Sports, Drug abuse 596-7w

Rate increases
Basildon District Council (22:05:89) 721-3

Rate support grants
Basildon (26:05:89) 1301-7
Cruelty to children 379w

Rates & rating
Nurses 593w

Rathbone, Mr Tim
Questions
British Medical Association 483w
Official engagements 451w

RCN
see Royal College of Nursing

Recess motions
(22:05:89) 701-41

Recreation spaces
597w
Town & country planning (22:05:89) 772-80

Recruitment
Museums & galleries 530w
Nurses 789w
Police 499-500w

Recycling
Cans 596w
Departmental leaflets 269w
Domestic wastes 187w
Government departments 943
Paper 187-8w, 943-6

Redbridge London Borough Council Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
2R order read (18:05:89) 455, (25:05:89) 1103

Redcar
Social Fund 683w

Redmond, Mr Martin
Debates etc.
Associated British Ports (No 2) Bill, 3R (23:05:89) 859, 866, 867-8, 870-1, 877, 880, 881, 882
Questions
Adoption, Disclosure of information 785w
Allotments, Planning permission 598w
Central Electricity Generating Board 109-10w
Coal, Imports 633w
Electricity generation, Water power 633w
Employment discrimination, Northern Ireland 181w
Fertilisers, Safety 564-5w
Hull Prison, Mental illness 527w
Hull Prison, Prison accommodation 527w
Hull Prison, Prisoners on remand 638w
Hull Prison, Young offenders 755w
"Insurance for Unemployment" 361w
Legal aid scheme, South Yorkshire 19w
Low flying, Don valley 729w
Low flying, Skyguard radar 729w
Low flying, Yorkshire & Humberside 65w
"Mirage of Private Unemployment Insurance" 361w
NATO, Yorkshire & Humberside 730w
North South dialogue, International conferences 455w
Part-time employment, EC law 361w
Police 499w
Police firearms, Policewomen 346w
Policewomen, Firearms 801w
Policewomen, Maternity leave 526w
Policewomen, Police firearms 499w
Polyester silk plants, Imports 315-6w
Polyester silk plants, Production 458-9w
Ports, Yorkshire & Humberside 691w
Premium bonds 315w
Prison medical services, Manpower 100-2w
Prisoners, Risley Remand Centre 526w
Prisons, Food poisoning 102w
RAF Upper Heyford 730w
River pollution, Brodsworth 182w
Roads, South Yorkshire 503w
Segregation of prisoners, Women 499w
Settle-Carlisle railway, Private sector 313w
Social security appeals, Attendance allowance 433w

Redmond, Mr Martin—continued
Taxation, Ferries 385-6w
Town & country planning, Enforcement notices 938
Trent Regional Health Authority, Land values 784w
Trent Regional Health Authority, Surgery 778-80w
UN Environment programme 380w
Unemployment benefits, Private sector 550w
Village schools, Yorkshire & Humberside 535w
Water pollution, South Yorkshire 674w
Water pollution, Yorkshire Water Authority 492w
Youth training scheme, Ethnic monitoring 51w

Redundancy
335-6w
British Aerospace 54w
Contracts of employment 168w

Redwood, Mr John
Debates etc.
By election writs, Vauxhall (22:05:89) 698
European Communities (18:05:89) 516, 563-4
Social security, Management (17:05:89) 323
Questions
Minimum wage, EC action 150
Paper, Recycling 944

Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Debates etc.
Social security, Management (17:05:89) 322
Questions
Offshore safety, Health & Safety Executive 11
Rose Theatre, Archaeological sites 23
USSR, Diplomatic service 679-80

Refrigerators
Chlorofluorocarbons 489w

Refugees
Kurdistan (15:05:89) 26-7
Standing Order No 20 applications (15:05:89) 26-7

Reg(EEC)3626/82
809-10w

Regional aid
Corby 458w
EC grants & loans 120-2w
European Regional Development Fund 460w

Regional development grants
Scotland 134w
Wales 259w

Regional enterprise grants
Scotland 133-4w

Regional health authorities
Expenditure 785-6w
Medical audit 723w

Regional selective assistance
458w
Scotland 133w
Wales 258w

Registered dock workers
169-71w

Registered Homes Act 1984
Questions
485w

Rehabilitation centres
Employment rehabilitation 576w

Reid, Dr John
Debates etc.
Publicity, Government departments (16:05:89) 186, 188, 192
Questions
Fluidised bed combustion, Energy research 386w

Reid, Dr John*—*continued
Foreign investment in UK, Scotland 305-6
Marine nature reserves 597w
NHS Review, Family doctors 791
Pay, Scotland 130w

Reinstatement grants
764w

Release for training scheme
Employment schemes 574w

"Releasing Enterprise White Paper"
239w

Remand centres
Private sector 210w
Privatisation 392-3w

Remand in custody
92w, 254w
Magistrates' courts (25:05:89) 1226

Remarriage
Widows 435w

Remedial education
Employment Training 165w

"Removing Barriers to Employment Consultation Paper"
172w

RENAMO
631w

Rent arrears
Council house rents 185w

Rent increases
Council house rents 47-8w

Renton, Mr Tim, Minister of State at the Home Office
Debates etc.
Broadcasting (19:05:89) 589-90, 594-6, 598-9, 613-4, 617-8, 626-37
Computer privacy (19:05:89) 656-8
Political refugees, Kurdistan (26:05:89) 1262-6
Questions
Deportation, Immigration officers 320-1w
Deportation, Tamils 138-9w
Fiore, Roberto, Extradition 257w
Gaelic language, Broadcasting 91w
Horse racing, Broadcasting programmes 527-8w
Human rights 392w
Immigration, Airports 498-9w
Immigration, Deportation 207-8w
Immigration controls, Homosexuality 638-9w
Passport Office, Glasgow 754-5w
Passport Office, Liverpool 753-4w
Passports, Administrative delays 256w, 393-4w, 636-8w, 753w
Passports, Members' correspondence 97w
Political refugees 756w
Political refugees, Departmental correspondence 210w
Political refugees, Harmonisation of legislation 317w
Political refugees, Immigration applications 316-7w, 500w
Political refugees, Immigration controls 317w
Political refugees, Kurdistan 97w
Pornography 253w
Trevi Group 139w
Visas, Indian subcontinent 392w

Rents to mortgages scheme
Scotland 343w
Wales 129w

Repair grants
Northern Ireland Housing Executive 363w

Repairs & maintenance
Museums & galleries 670, 673
Severn bridge 504w
Warships 142w

Repossession orders
Mortgage defaulters 940-1

Republic of Ireland
Air routes 275-6w
Police firearms 790-1w

Research
Analgesics 217w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 802-3w
Climate 694w
Cruelty to children (15:05:89) 141-8, 797-8
Electoral register 253w
Irradiated food 733w
North Sea 496w
River pollution 935
Transmissible encephalopathies 370w, 804w

Research councils
Biology 796-7w

Research finance
Agricultural research 562-4w
British Council 195w
British Geological Survey 370w
Cancer 444w
Cruelty to children 98-9w
Environment 597w
Higher education 189w
LINK programme 242w

Resettlement units
Next steps initiative 449w

Resettlement Units Executive Agency
449w

Residential care
661-2
Fees & charges 661
Income support 74w, 221-4w, 544w
Social security benefits 430-1w, 660-2
Supplementary benefits 74w

Residential care of children
Special education (16:05:89) 178-80

Resignations
Bright, Keith 422w
Teachers 443w, 514w

Resistencia Nacional Mocambica
see RENAMO

Restart programme
53w, 178-9w
Disclosure of information 53w

Retail price index
329w
Pensions 681w

Retail trade
Foetal tissue 482-3w

Retirement
Clyde Submarine Base 325w

Retirement pensions
(22:05:89) 716-7
Earnings rules 427w
Social security benefits rules 329w

Rhinoceros products
Overseas trade 794w

Rhodes James, Mr Robert
Questions
Veterinary services, College closures 1120

Richardson, Ms Jo
Debates etc.
Employment Bill, Rep (17:05:89) 339-44, 350-1, 402-3
Questions
Aveley Methane, Ownership 493-4w
Calibre, Government grants to voluntary organisations 786w
Desiccated liver powder, Food imports 420-1w
Divorce, Publicity 397w
Local government finance, Barking & Dagenham 494w
Maternity benefits, EC countries 667-8
RAF Greenham Common, Arrests 65w
Risley Remand Centre, Suicide 755w
School discipline 607-8w

RICS
see Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors

Riddick, Mr Graham
Debates etc.
Associated British Ports (No 2) Bill, 3R (23:05:89) 870
Dock Work Bill, Rep & 3R (24:05:89) 1041
Employment Bill, Rep (17:05:89) 413, 414, 415, 420-1
Questions
Common farm prices, Farm incomes 739w
Employment Training, Yorkshire & Humberside 156-7
Family credit, Personal income 71w
Family doctors, Doctors' list of patients 480w
Huddersfield Health Authority, Contracts for services 560w
Huddersfield Health Authority, Pay beds 559w
Local income tax 594w

Riders of Equine Animals Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
1R (23:05:89) 798-800

Riders of Equine Animals (Wearing of Protective Headgear) Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
2R order read (19:05:89) 651

Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas, Secretary of State for the Environment
Questions
Chlorofluorocarbons, Air pollution control 585w
Community charge, Ministers of religion 202-3w
Community charge, Pensioners 585w
Competition, Complaints against local government 50w
County Hall, Property development 941-2
County Hall, Property transfer 942
Dept of the Environment, Cash limits 795w
Dept of the Environment, Departmental leaflets 679-80w
Dolphins, Moray Firth 948
Domestic rates, London boroughs 600-1w
Environment, Research finance 597w
Equipment, Dept of the Environment 47w
Football Spectators Bill (HL) 1988/89 585w
Government buildings, Dept of the Environment 47w, 49w
Greenhouse effect, Energy 678w
Gummer, John Selwyn, Publishing 488-9w
Landlord & tenant 942-3
Marine animals, Moray Firth 948
National parks, Planning authorities 939
Peak Park Joint Planning Board 939-40
Private rented housing 943
Private rented housing, Landlord & tenant 942
Rose theatre, Archaeological sites 21-5
Solicitors, Dept of the Environment 49w
Television advertising, Dept of the Environment 45-6w, 603-4w
Town & country planning, West Midlands 674-5w
Water authorities, Pay incentives 680w
Water authorities, Public access 584w
Water pollution, House of Commons 602-4w
Water supply disconnections, Water authorities 204-5w

Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Questions
Hong Kong, China 1117

Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm, Secretary of State for Scotland
Debates etc.
Inner city areas (23:05:89) 850-2
Questions
European Commission, Scottish Office 658w
Ministers' domestic visits, Stirling 517-8w

Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm—continued
Objects in lieu of tax, Scotland 339-40w
Official engagements 343w
Press releases, Perth 520-2w
Roads, Scotland 305-8w
Scottish Office, Advertising 29w
Scottish Office, Cash limits 659w
Scottish Office, Public relations 228w
Tax evasion, Scotland 513w
Television advertising, Scottish Office 660w

Right to buy
Housing associations 585w

Rights of way
47w

Risley Remand Centre
Mentally disturbed offenders 100w
Prison medical services 99w
Prisoners 526w
Suicide 755w

River Humber
Fish 399w
Pollution monitoring 399w
Water pollution 205w

River pollution
Brodsworth 182w
Mercury 264-5w
Pollution control 49w
Pollution monitoring 946-7
Private prosecutions 935
Research 935
River Rother 947
River Wye 946-7
River Yare 264-5w
South West Water Authority 935-6
Wales 763w
Yorkshire Water Authority 947

River Rother
River pollution 947

River Severn
Toll bridges 686w

River Thames
Water transport 113w

River Wye
River pollution 946-7

River Yare
River pollution 264-5w

RNID
see Royal National Institute for the Deaf

Road accidents
Costs 12w
Deaf 277w
Death 12w
Forfar bypass 659-60w
North Devon link road 689w
Nuclear weapons 730w
Road works 12-3w
Wales 129-30w

Road construction
Environmental impact assessment 557-8w
Felinheli Port Dinorwic bypass 555w
Investment returns 280w
Northop bypass 764w
Road safety 557-8w

Road finance
Scotland 131w, 303w
Wales 648w

Road humps
503w

Road safety
Cellular phones (24:05:89) 959-61
Road construction 557-8w
Severn bridge 201w
Tyres (26:05:89) 1245-54

Road tolls
East London river crossing 115w
Erskine bridge 553w
Severn bridge 504w, 556w

Road tolls—continued
Wales 762w

Road traffic
200-1w
A1 201w
M25 11w

Road Traffic (Carriage of Explosives) Regulations 1989
Debates etc.
(18:05:89) 497

Road traffic control
Electronic equipment 688-9w
Parliament Square 797-8w

Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984
Questions
202w

Road works
A1 113-4w, 201-2w, 276w
A19 201-2w
A47 503w
Bypasses 686w
EC grants & loans 519-20w
M11 690w
M25 6889-90w
Motorways 10w
North East region 278w
Prestwick Airport 227-8w
Public utilities 424w
Road accidents 12-3w
Scotland 31-7w
Severn bridge 556w

Roads
Capital investment 280w, 798w
Lighting 557w
Ministerial statements (18:05:89) 482-96
Private sector 422-3w
Scotland 305-8w
Sewers 557w
South Yorkshire 503w
Telephones 114-5w
Wales 647w, 761-2w

"Roads for Prosperity White Paper"
(18:05:89) 482-96

Robbery
Police deaths on duty 525w

Roberts, Mr Allan
Questions
Lead free petrol, Exhaust emission controls 934
National Girobank, Privatisation 230w
National Girobank, Takeovers 303

Roberts, Mr Wyn, Minister of State for Wales
Questions
Ambulance services, Gwynedd 555w
Bypasses, Wales 260w
Clwyd Education Authority, Educational finance 348w
Clwyd Education Authority, Teachers 348w
European Tourism Year, Wales 42w
Felinheli Port Dinorwic bypass, Road construction 555w
Higher education admission, Wales 195-6w
Middle schools, School population 553-4w
Mumbles railway 453w
Museum of Welsh Antiquities, Arts finance 195w
National Museum of Wales, Finance 347w
Polytechnic of Wales, Finance 257-8w
Pre-school education, Wales 130w
Primary education, School population 554w
Road accidents, Wales 129w
St Etholwold's School Shotton, School buildings 348w
Secondary education, School population 554w
Shotton County Infants' School, Cost per pupil 347-8w
Venerable Edward Morgan School Shotton, School administration 348w

Roberts, Mr Wyn—continued
Wales Advisory Body, Public appointments 312w
Wales Advisory Body, Welsh Joint Education Committee 312w

Robertson, Mr George
Debates etc.
European Communities (18:05:89) 512-21, 566
Inner city areas (23:05:89) 847

Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
Questions
Balance of trade, Manufactured goods 1118
Manufacturing industries, Productivity 236w

Robinson, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference (25:05:89) 1135, 1140-1
Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Bill, Rep & 3R (25:05:89) 1152-3, 1209-12, 1224

Rodents
Medical research 125-6w

Roe, Mrs Marion
Questions
Lorries, Bridges 558w
Pensioners, Earnings rules 660

Rogers, Mr Allan
Debates etc.
Gurkhas, Hong Kong (22:05:89) 684
Questions
British Veterinary Association, Animal welfare 746w
Computers in Government departments, Programming languages 462w
Landing rights, Airlines 25w
Malaysia, Arms exports 25w
Malaysia, Overseas aid 24w
Malaysia, Tornado aircraft 25w
Manufacturing industries, Productivity 233-4w
Nepal, Gurkhas 771w

Rolls-Royce
190w

Romania
450w

Rooker, Mr Jeff
Debates etc.
Community Charge Regulations 1989 (23:05:89) 895
Questions
Community charge, Local authorities 323w
Local government constituencies, West Midlands 187w
Nurses, Career structure 486-7w
Pre-school education, Non-metropolitan counties 442w
Transport of hazardous materials, Explosives 277w

Rose theatre
Archaeological sites 21-5, 268w, 324w

Rosewarne experimental horticulture station
739w

Ross, Mr Ernie
Debates etc.
Dock Work Bill, Rep & 3R (24:05:89) 962, 979, 984-6, 1028, 1034
Questions
Business statements 1126
Empty property, Government departments 582w
Manufactured exports 234w
Office of Gas supply 106w

Ross, Mr William
Debates etc.
European Communities (18:05:89) 556-7
Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Bill, Rep & 3R (25:05:89) 1176-90 passim, 1191, 1201-2, 1219-20

Ross, Mr William—continued
Questions
Damages, Army in Northern Ireland 789-90w
Elections, Proof of identity 146w, 791w
Electoral reform, Northern Ireland 464
Local government elections, Northern Ireland 470
Medical cards, Northern Ireland 470w
Northern Ireland Housing Executive, House renovation grants 363w
Pupil-teacher ratios, Northern Ireland 462-3

Rossi, Sir Hugh
Debates etc.
Community Charge Regulations 1989 (23:05:89) 897, 898
Questions
Business statements 475
Litter, Fines 795-6

Rost, Mr Peter
Questions
Combined heat & power, Air pollution control 7

Rotherham & Sons
190w

Rowe, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
"Charities White Paper" (16:05:89) 176
Questions
Business statements 1124
Channel tunnel, Kent 556w
Drinking & driving 558w
Planning inquiries, Motorway service areas 492w
Private Bills, Land acquisition 18
Productivity, Group of Seven 811-2w
Self-employed, South East region 161

Royal College of Nursing
NHS Review 761w

Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
777-8w

Royal National Institute for the Deaf
484w

Royal Ulster Constabulary
143-6w, 193-4w, 272w, 539-43w, 789-91w
Police deaths on duty 470w
Police firearms 791w

Royalties
Office of Population Censuses & Surveys 723w

RUC
see Royal Ulster Constabulary

Ruddock, Mrs Joan
Debates etc.
City of London (Various Powers) Bill, 2R & Money res (15:05:89) 84
Exhaust emission controls, EC action (24:05:89) 1079, 1080, 1081-4, 1086, 1087, 1093-4
Questions
Bright, Keith, Resignations 422w
Defence expenditure, Per capita costs 729w
Deptford skillcentre, Land ownership & tenure 169w
London Underground, Safety measures 501w
Military aircraft, Air accidents 551w
Navy, Shipping accidents 732w
Nuclear weapons, Road accidents 730w
Shipping accidents 504w

Rugeley
Land registration 766w

Rumbold, Mrs Angela, Minister of State for Education and Science
Questions
Bushloe High School Leicester, Education Reform Act 1988 370-1w
Education, Training grants 128w
Educational records, Disclosure of information 535w
Equipment, Dept of Education & Science 3w
Examinations, Security 443-4w
Government buildings, Dept of Education & Science 4w
HM Inspectorate of Schools, Curriculum 369w
Pre-school education, Non-metropolitan counties 442w
School governors, Codes of practice 536w
Schools, Economic regions 532-6w
Teachers 535w
Teachers, Bolton Education Authority 246w
Teachers, Further education colleges 247w
Teachers, Pay incentives 5-6w, 247w
Teachers, Pay settlements 369-70w
Youth clubs, Voluntary work 246w

Rural areas
Family doctors 31w, 477w, 646w, 787w
Housing for Wales 260-1w
Public houses 1112

Rural development areas
949

Rural planning
949

Ryder, Mr Richard, Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Questions
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service, Experimental farms 60-1w
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service, Government laboratories 60-1w
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service, Nitrates 748w
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service, Wales 61w
Agricultural land, Land use 743-4w
Agricultural research, Research finance 562-4w
Agriculture, Northumberland 740w
Alar, Advisory Committee on Pesticides 745w
Brewing industry, Competition 1112
Brewing industry, Landlord & tenant 1111-2
Council for the Protection of Rural England 1115
Country Landowners' Association 734w
Countryside, Environment protection 737w
Daminozide, Advisory Committee on Pesticides 63w
Dioxins, Food contamination 63w
Dioxins, Milk 63w
Dutch elm disease, Agricultural research 292-3w
Eggs, Food standards 739-40w
Extensification schemes 737w
Extensification schemes, Environment protection 737w
Farm diversification scheme 740-1w
Farm diversification scheme, Government grants 293-4w
Farm diversification scheme, Land use 293-4w
Farms, Local government property 297w
Farms, Waste disposal 744w
Fertilisers 64w
Fertilisers, Nitrates 738w
Fertilisers, Safety 564-5w
Food, EC action 565w
Food composition, Offal 290w
Food contamination, Irradiation 62-3w
Food labelling, Food additives 290w
Food standards 741w
Food surpluses, Expenditure 211w
Hedges & ditches, Farmers 372w
Hedges & ditches, Government grants 733w
Hepatitis, Radiation 806w
Horticulture, Gas tariffs 563w
Intervention stocks 734w
Irradiated food 733w, 1105
Irradiated food, Food imports 805w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Departmental responsibilities 1115
National Institute of Agricultural Botany, Pay settlements 733-4w
Organic farming, Agricultural research 300w
Organic farming, Food standards 738w
Peat, Horticulture 745w
Pesticide residues, Health hazards 212w
Pesticides 63-4w
Pesticides, Food labelling 211-2w
Pesticides, Safety 743-5w
Potato Processors' Association 740w
Public houses, Rural areas 1112
Public houses, Tenancy agreements 338w
Rain forests, Droughts 55w
Rain forests, Forest protection 55w
Rosewarne experimental horticulture station 739w
Set-aside schemes 213w, 338w
Set-aside schemes, Costs 299w
Tobacco, Subsidies 372-4w
Tree planting, Agricultural land 746-8w

Safety
Fertilisers 564-5w
Food packaging 239w
Football grounds 203w
Pesticides 743-5w

Safety measures
London Underground 501-3w

Safety standards
Offshore safety 192-3w
Playgrounds 491w

Sainsbury, Mr Tim, Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement
Questions
Armed forces civilians, Teachers 766-7w
Arms exports, Malaysia 191w
Arms exports, Nigeria 68w
Clyde Submarine Base, Retirement 325w
Computers in government departments, Programming languages 462w
Defence contracts, Arms exports 191w
Defence contracts, Expenditure 190-1w
Defence contracts, International cooperation 190w
Defence Export Services Organisation 274w
Defence Export Services Organisation, Public appointments 395-6w
European fighter aircraft 552w
Military aircraft, Aircrew 462w
Ministry of Defence, Equal opportunities 396w
Nuclear submarines, Zirconium 273w
Nuclear weapons, Radioactive waste disposal 464w
Nuclear weapons tests, Australia 68w
Nuclear weapons tests, Bone marrow disorders 67w
Nuclear weapons tests, Compensation 67-8w, 551w
Nuclear weapons tests, Death 326w
Nuclear weapons tests, Radiation hazards 142w, 464w
Radiation, Cancer 67w
Service Children's Education Authority, Trade union recognition 396w
Ships, Design 398w
Warships, Repairs & maintenance 142w

St Etholwold's School Shotton
School buildings 348w

St Mungo's School Glasgow
Handicapped pupils 512w

St Thomas' Hospital
785w

Sales promotions
Drug industry 418w

Salmon
Fish farming 742w
Licensing 805w

Salmon Advisory Committee
805w

Salmond, Mr Alex
Questions
Fish, Food imports 471w
Fish, Processed food 516w
Fisheries, EC action 471w
Fisheries, Finance 471w
Fisheries, Interest charges 515-6w
Fisheries, Licensing 515w
Fishing crews, Pay 515w
Fishing vessels 471w
Fishing vessels, Decommissioning grants 472w
Fishing vessels, Licensing 472w
Fishing vessels, Shipping registration 472w
Total allowable catches, Scotland 515w

Salmonella
Eggs 291w
Poultry 212-3w
Sea pollution 265w
Veterinary services 292w

Salop
NHS 289-90w, (22:05:89) 701-2
Self-governing hospitals 479w

Satellite broadcasting
(19:05:89) 585-637

Sayeed, Mr Jonathan
Debates etc.
"Charities White Paper" (16:05:89) 177
Recreation spaces, Town & country planning (22:05:89) 772-4
Questions
Drugs, Prices 411-3w
Family doctors, Contracts of employment 792
Labour force survey 161-2
Low flying, Night flying 551-2w
Minimum wage 151

Schizophrenia
Expenditure 719-20w

School administration
Special education 1w
Venerable Edward Morgan School Shotton 348w

School admission
Stockport Education Authority (24:05:89) 1097-102

School buildings
St Etholwold's School Shotton 348w

School discipline
607-8w

School Discipline Inquiry
443w, 607-8w

School Examinations & Assessment Council
Special education 3-4w

School governors
Codes of practice 536w

School leaving
Civil service recruitment 674
Youth training scheme 155

School population
Middle schools 553-4w
Nursery schools 647-8w
Primary education 554w
Secondary education 554w

School Watch
Advertising 7w

Schools
City technology colleges 607w
Economic regions 532-6w
Fees & charges 796w
Northern Ireland 459-60
Sports 598w

Science & technology research
537-8w
Space technology 241-2w

Scope of debate
Speaker's rulings & statements (15:05:89) 91, 111, 121, (16:05:89) 192, 196, 219, 279, 286, (18:05:89) 499, 501, (22:05:89) 746, 756, 759, 769, (24:05:89) 973, 1024, 1062, 1064, (25:05:89) 1181, 1183, 1184, 1209, (26:05:89) 1262

Scotland
Air transport 279w
Airports 200w, 279w, 304-5w, 346w, 799w, 802w
Ambulance services 513-4w
British Coal Corporation 108w
Broadleaved woodland grant scheme 516w
Coal mining 164
Colleges of education 404-8w
Community charge 132-3w, 303w
Divorce 304w
Doctors' list of patients 27w
EC internal trade 238w
Electoral register 514w
Employment 577-8w
Employment Training 407-8w, 519w, 662w
Empty housing 516-7w
European Regional Development Fund 134-6w, 519-20w
European Social Fund 54-5w
Family doctors 26-7w, 30-1w, 518w
Fish 516w
Fisheries 515-6w
Fishing catches 516w
Fishing quotas 515w
Fishing vessels 515w
Foreign investment in UK 305-6
Forestry grant scheme 514-5w
Health service staff 225w
Health services 26w
Holiday lettings 517w
Hospital beds 226w
Hospital closures 225-6w
Hospitals 227-8w
Industrial production 440w, 658w
Licensing laws 343-4w
Local authorities 305w
Location of industry 340w
Low flying 65w
Manufactured exports 520w
Mathematics education 28w, 403-4w
Medical malpractice 514w
New businesses 552w
NHS Review 27w
Objects in lieu of tax 339-40w
Part-time employment 577-8w
Pay 130w
Personal social services 26w
Police deaths on duty 339w
Police firearms 346w
Policewomen 801w
Poverty 163-4
Prestwick Airport 691w
Prison staff 517w
Public houses 28w
Public sector housing sales 343w
Pupil records 658w
Radioactive waste disposal 229w
Radioactivity 409w
Regional development grants 134w
Regional enterprise grants 133-4w
Regional selective assistance 133w
Rents to mortgages scheme 343w
Road finance 131w, 303w
Road works 31-7w
Roads 305-8w
Smoking 29-30w
Social security abuse 513w
Tax evasion 513w
Teachers 514w, 657w
Total allowable catches 515w
Training 29-30w
Training allowances 519w
Tree planting 515w
Water pollution 30w
Weil's disease 304w

Scotsman
756w

Scott, Mr Nicholas, Minister of State, Dept of Social Security
Questions
Attendance allowance, Social security appeals 546w
Attendance Allowance Board, Civil servants 223-4w
Cash limits, Dept of Social Security 685w
Dept of Social Security, Payroll deduction scheme 543w
Handicap benefits 428w, 546w
Handicap benefits, Medical examinations 547-8w
Handicap benefits, Medical malpractice 546w
Handicap benefits, Per capita costs 546-7w
Handicap benefits, Terminal care 71w
Handicapped 545-6w, 548w
Handicapped, EC action 428w
Handicapped, Local government services 428w
Handicapped, Parents 668-9
Handicapped, Sports competitors 427-8w
Invalid care allowances 430w
Invalidity benefits, Dental services 750w
Invalidity benefits, Medical examinations 427w
Maternity benefits 429w
Maternity benefits, EC countries 666-8
Residential care 661-2
Residential care, Fees & charges 661
Residential care, Social security benefits 660-2
Severe disablement allowance, Occupational pensions 71w
Social security appeals, Attendance allowance 433w
Social security benefits, Expenditure 429w
Social security benefits, Residential care 430w
Social security benefits rules, Disasters 431w
Social security reform 430w, 432-3w

Scottish & Newcastle Breweries
310
Takeovers 775w

Scottish Council for Research in Education
403-4w

Scottish Development Agency
Expenditure 340-3w
Factories 343w
Health Care International 802w

Scottish Development Department
131w

"Scottish Health Authorities Review of Priorities for the Eighties & Nineties"
131-2w

Scottish health boards
Public sector assets 344-5w

Scottish Home & Health Department
see Scottish Home & Health Dept

Scottish Home & Health Dept
518w

Scottish Information Office
517-8w, 553w

Scottish Office
520-2w, 632w
Advertising 29w
British Medical Association 26w
Cash limits 659w
European Commission 658w
Public relations 228w
Publicity 308w
Television advertising 660w
Torness power station 657w

Scottish Parent Teacher Council
28w

Scrabster Harbour Order Confirmation Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
Royal assent (25:05:89) 1149

Scraple
373w, 802-4w

Screening
Cervical cancer 417-8w, 783
Private sector 783

SDA
see Scottish Development Agency

Sea pollution
Beaches 186-7w, 196w, 206w, 265w, 350w, 680w, 795-6w
Bristol Channel 325w
EC law 186-7w, 206w, 795-6w
Health hazards 205-6w
Irish Sea 323w, 378w
Marine animals 385w
North Devon 474w
Salmonella 265w
Sewage 759w
Wales 196w
Waste disposal 378-9w
Welsh Water Authority 350w

Sea rescue
Solent 690-1w

Seabed resources
Aggregates 50w, 185w

SEAC
see School Examinations & Assessment Council

Seals
Nature conservation 321w

Second homes
Wales 764w

Second reading committees
510-2w

Secondary education
Pay incentives 5-6w
School population 554w
Wales 554w

Secondary legislation
Speaker's rulings & statements (15:05:89) 124-5

Secret ballot
Self-governing hospitals 153w

Secure accommodation
Young offenders 153w

Security
Examinations 443-4w
Northern Ireland 458
Short Brothers 50w

Security Commission
525w

Security vetting
Territorial Army 272w
Ulster Defence Regiment 272w

Sedgemore, Mr Brian
Debates etc.
Political refugees, Kurdistan (26:05:89) 1261-2
Publicity, Government departments (16:05:89) 199-201
Refugees, Standing Order No 20 applications (15:05:89) 26-7
Social security, Management (17:05:89) 324
Questions
Political refugees, Kurdistan 97w
Tate Gallery 399w

Segregation of prisoners
320w
Albany Prison 394w
Women 499w

Select Committee reports
383-4w

Self-employed
159-60w
East Anglia 164w

Self-employed—continued
East Midlands 158-9w
Interest rates 161
Manpower 333-4w
South East region 161
South West region 159w

Self-governing hospitals
85w, 165-6, 475-6w, 479w
Accident & emergency departments 475w
Community health councils 285w
Greater London 475w
Hospital staff 153w
NHS hospital trusts 86w
North West region 284-5w
Performance related pay 285w
Public opinion 285w
Salop 479w
Secret ballot 153w
Voting methods 285w
Wales 646w
Walsall Health Authority 86w, (22:05:89) 718-21
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority 152-3w

Sellafield
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 801w

Sellindge Parish Council
114w

Service charges
Housing Act 1985 203w

Service Children's Education Authority
Trade union recognition 396w

Service industries
Employment 163w, 333-4w, 671-4w

Set-Aside (Amendment) Regulations 1989
Debates etc.
(24:05:89) 958

Set-aside schemes
213w, 338w
Costs 299w
Wales 555w

Settle-Carlisle railway
Private sector 313w

Severe disablement allowance
Occupational pensions 71w

Severn bridge
Debts 504w
Repairs & maintenance 504w
Road safety 201w
Road tolls 504w, 556w
Road works 556w

Severn-Trent Water Authority
Capital investment 495w
Water pollution 492w

Sewage
Bristol Channel 262w
Sea pollution 759w
Wales 199w, 759w
Waste disposal 199w
Water pollution 594-5w

Sewers
Roads 557w

Sexual harassment
497w

Sexual offences
Cruelty to children 89w

Shaw, Mr David
Questions
Community charge, Departmental leaflets 795w

Shaw, Sir Giles
Questions
River pollution, Yorkshire Water Authority 947

Shaw, Sir Michael
Questions
Agricultural support systems 742w

Sheep
Pest control 297w

Sheep premiums
734w, 1110

Sheerman, Mr Barry
Debates etc.
Inner city areas (23:05:89) 830
Questions
Mentally disturbed offenders 758w
Police, Surveillance 755w
Police deaths on duty, Robbery 525w
Prisons, Suicide 755w

Sheffield Development Corporation
945

Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Debates etc.
Roads (18:05:89) 487

Shellfish
Fish diseases 805w

Shephard, Mrs Gillian
Debates etc.
Private Residential Special Schools (Registration) Bill, 1R (16:05:89) 178-80
Transport (15:05:89) 51, 58-60
Questions
Council house rents, Lambeth 592w
Maternity benefits, EC countries 666-7
Mental Health Act Commission, Public administration 284w

Shepherd, Mr Colin
Questions
River pollution, Pollution monitoring 946-7
Suckler cow premiums 1112-3
Suckler cow premiums, Farm incomes 735w

Shepherd, Mr Richard
Questions
Business statements 1126

Shersby, Mr Michael
Questions
London Underground, Transport police 687w
Museums & galleries, Conservation 530w
Museums & galleries, Stock control 439w
Nurses, Career structure 785w
Police deaths on duty 255w
Police deaths on duty, Scotland 339w
Ports, Special constables 278-9w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Police deaths on duty 470w

Shipbuilding
Faslane 496-7w
Government assistance to industry 777w
Port Glasgow 777w

Shipping
Balance of payments 114w
Kilbrannan sound 424w

Shipping accidents
504w
Navy 732w

Shipping registration
Fishing quotas 1114
Fishing vessels 472w

Ships
Design 398w

Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Debates etc.
European Communities (18:05:89) 532-4

Short, Ms Clare
Debates etc.
By election writs, Vauxhall (22:05:89) 697, 698
Oral question time intervention (16:05:89) 150
Parliamentary privilege, Dagnan, Anthony (18:05:89) 499-500
Questions
Availability for work 180-1w

Short, Ms Clare—continued
Availability for work, Unemployment 568-9w
Bridging allowances 213w
Child minding, Employment Training 179-80w
Employment 352-4w
Employment by sector 53w
Employment discrimination, Northern Ireland 456
Employment schemes, Conditions of employment 53-4w
Employment schemes, Social security benefits reductions 54w
Employment Training 167-8w, 581w
Employment Training, European Social Fund 168w
Employment Training, Training allowances 167w
Income support, Young people 220w
Job start scheme 506w
Jobclubs 505w
Low pay, Manpower 168w
Pensioners, Low incomes 663
Restart programme 53w, 178-9w
Restart programme, Disclosure of information 53w
Social security appeals, Availability for work 224w
Take-up of employment, Education 303w
Tourist industry, Low pay 149-50
Unemployment, Availability for work 162-4w
Unemployment benefits, Availability for work 179w
Unemployment benefits, West Midlands 181w
Warships, Urban areas 70w
Youth employment 302w
Youth training scheme 175w, 214w
Youth training scheme, Contracts of employment 303-4w
Youth training scheme, Ethnic monitoring 51w
Youth training scheme, Industrial accidents 301-2w
Youth training scheme, Lodging allowances 174-5w

Short Brothers
50w
Defence contracts 272w
Privatisation 464-5
Security 50w

Shortage subjects
Teachers 605w

Shotton County Infants' School
Cost per pupil 347-8w

Shropshire Hospitals' League of Friends
289-90w

Sick pay
Departmental forms 72w

Sign language
677-8w

Sikorski, Wladyslaw
Poland 523-4w

Sillars, Mr Jim
Debates etc.
European Communities (18:05:89) 552-5
Questions
Community charge, Merchant seamen 303w
Council of Ministers 632w
Divorce, Scotland 304w
EC Presidency, EC accession 630w
EC Presidency, GATT 630-1w
Economic growth 628w
European Commission, Scottish Office 658w
Handicapped pupils, Deaf 512w
Manufacturing industries, Industry Act 1975 775w
Scottish & Newcastle Breweries, Takeovers 775w

Sims, Mr Roger
Questions
Employment 163w
Handicapped, EC action 428w
Passive smoking, Industrial health & safety 176w

Single European Act
166
European Commission 351-2w

Single people
Disclosure of information 320w

Singleton Hospital
Casualty units 452-3w

Sites of special scientific interest
Nature conservation 465-6w
Tree planting 493w

Sizewell B
Energy conservation 105w

Skill shortages
337w
EC internal trade 337w

Skillcentres
Privatisation 151-2, 169w

Skills Training Agency
169w

Skinner, Mr Dennis
Debates etc.
Associated British Ports (No 2) Bill, 3R (23:05:89) 860-1, 868, 873
"Charities White Paper" (16:05:89) 175
City of London (Various Powers) Bill, 2R & Money res (15:05:89) 86-8, 90-9, 103, 105, 107
Procurement, EC action (16:05:89) 270, 280
Social security, Management (17:05:89) 329
Questions
British Coal Corporation 108w
Business statements 477
Ozone layer, Air pollution control 1119-20
Private Bills, House of Commons procedure 17-8
Single European Act 166
USSR, Diplomatic service 682
Water supply industry, Privatisation 587w

Skyguard radar
Low flying 729w

Slaughterhouses
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 211w
Cattle 56-7w
Food hygiene 376-7w
Food inspection 57-8w
Veterinary services 734w

Small businesses
British Venture Capital Association 177w
Confederation of British Industry 177w
EC action 213w

Smith, Mr Andrew
Questions
British Aerospace, Redundancy 54w
Community charge, Oxford 203w
Electricity supply industry, Privatisation 107w
Health service ancillary staff, Oxford 560-1w
Higher education, Official engagements 608-10w
Motorways, Road works 10w
Museums & galleries, Education 398w
Nurses, Oxfordshire Health Authority 482w
Student grants, Mandatory student grants 310w
Student grants, Parental contributions 310-1w
Student grants, Part-time education 246-7w
Teachers, Further education colleges 247w
Universities, Pay 4w
Universities, Statistics 247w
Upper Heyford, F111 aircraft 274w

Smith, Mr Chris
Smith, Mr Chris—continued
Debates etc.
Income tax on investment incomes, EC action (15:05:89) 128-30
Questions
AIDS, Drugs 411w
Community charge, Departmental leaflets 48w
Disclosure of information, Computer privacy 784w
Immigration controls, Homosexuality 638-9w
Income support, Children 464-5w
Licensing, Companies 723w
Office of Population Censuses & Surveys, Companies 723-4w
Social Fund, Social security recipients 436w

Smith, Mr John P
Questions
Beef premiums 736w
Empty property, Dept of the Environment 582-4w
Recreation spaces 597w
Vale of Glamorgan 450w

Smith, Mr Tim
Questions
Civil service agencies, Civil service manpower 400-2w
Community charge 490w
Company registration 120w
Export Credits Guarantee Department 243-4w
Family doctors 480w
M25, Noise control 11w
M25, Road traffic 11w
Motorways, Lighting 11w
Public Accounts Commission 15

Smoking
Industrial health & safety 176w
Scotland 29-30w
Young people 29-30w

Smyth, Rev Martin
Debates etc.
Financial Provisions (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 (22:05:89) 763-4, 765
Human Organ Transplant Bill, Money res (22:05:89) 770
Questions
Demonstrations, Northern Ireland 193-4w
Family doctors, Contracts of employment 793
NHS Review, Northern Ireland 281w

Snape, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Transport (15:05:89) 30, 32, 49, 52, 57, 63-7

Snaepthorpe Hospital
Hospital closures 414-5w, 721w
Hospital patients 414-6w
Housing construction 414w, 721-2w
Land use 415w, 721w
Land values 414w
Medical treatments 721w

Soames, Mr Nicholas
Questions
Residential care, Fees & charges 661

Social class
Students 7w

Social Fund
665
Advertising 448-9w
Bradford 550-2w
Community care 544w
Funerals 269w
Liverpool 544w
Loans 221-2w
North East region 548-52w
Port Glasgow 328w
Pregnant women 429w
Redcar 683w
Social security benefits disqualification 78-80w, 328w

Social Fund—continued
Social security claims 544-5w
Social security recipients 436w
Training 545w
Tyne & Wear 548-50w
West Midlands 683w

Social Policy Management Services
417w

Social security
Management (17:05:89) 318-32
Ministerial statements (17:05:89) 318-32

Social security abuse
Scotland 513w
Wales 684w

Social Security Act 1975
Questions
223-4w

Social Security Act 1986
Questions
549w

Social Security Advisory Committee
71w

Social Security Appeal Tribunals
74-8w

Social security appeals
74-8w
Administrative delays 436w
Attendance allowance 433w, 469w, 546w
Availability for work 224w
Mobility allowance 469-70w
Social Security Commissioners 566-7w
War pensions 434-5w

Social security benefits
73w
Departmental leaflets 427w
EC countries 664
Expenditure 429w
Low incomes 665
Marginal tax rates 270w, 441w
Public expenditure 668
Publicity 426w
Residential care 430-1w, 660-2
Social security reform 682w

Social security benefits disqualification
Social Fund 78-80w, 328w

Social security benefits reductions
Employment schemes 54w

Social security benefits rules
Disasters 431w
Retirement pensions 329w
Widows' benefits 685-6w

Social security benefits uprating
Income support 424-5w

Social security claims
Age 684-5w
Civil service manpower 73w
Family credit 271-2w
Family income supplements 271-2w
Housing benefits 271w, 448w
National insurance contributions 434w
Social Fund 544-5w

Social Security Commissioners
Social security appeals 566-7w

Social Security (Contributions) Regulations 1979
Questions
434w

Social security finance
Community charge 223w
Pensioners 426w

Social Security Miscellaneous Provisions Regulations 1989
Debates etc.
(18:05:89) 575

Social security payments
72w
Cash dispensing 425w

Social security recipients
Family credit 429-30w
Handicap benefits 467w
Income support 425w
Nottingham 425-6w
Social Fund 436w

Social security reform
430w, 432-3w, 665-6
Homelessness 544w
Housing benefits 271w
Pensioners 426w
Social security benefits 682w
Young people 79w

Social services
Homelessness 410w

Social Services Select Committee
218w

Social workers' training
Mentally ill 724w

Soil erosion
1115

Solent
Sea rescue 690-1w

Soley, Mr Clive
Debates etc.
Community Charge Regulations 1989 (23:05:89) 894-901, 918
Questions
Defence land, Foulness Island 731-2w
Housing action trusts, Consultants 599-600w
Housing action trusts, Lambeth 599w
Landlord & tenant 942-3
Mortgage defaulters, Repossession orders 941
Police, Community charge 139w
Rose Theatre, Archaeological sites 25
"Tenants' Choice", Costs 204w

Solicitors
Dept of the Environment 49w

Sound insulation
Aircraft noise 729-30w

South Africa
Arms trade 280-1w
Emergency powers 19-20w
Political prisoners 20w
Sports boycotts (22:05:89) 708-13

South East region
Homelessness 940
Self-employed 161
Training & enterprise councils 505w
Unemployment 164w

South East Thames Regional Health Authority
Public appointments 726w

South of Scotland Electricity Board
Torness power station 657-8w

South Wales
National Union of Mineworkers 761w

South West region
Self-employed 159w

South West Water Authority
River pollution 935-6

South Western Hospital
785w

South Western Regional Health Authority
Hospital beds 85w
Test tube babies 82w, 422w, 485w

South Yorkshire
EC grants & loans 165, 325w
Employment Training 167w
Legal aid scheme 19w
Policewomen 526w
Roads 503w
Water pollution 674w

Southampton
Dock labour scheme 171w

Southwood Committee
see Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy Working Party

Space technology
Science & technology research 241-2w

Speaker and his deputies, For rulings & statements see separate heading
Speaker's rulings & statements
Debates etc.
Amendments & new clauses (16:05:89) 181, 224, 267, (17:05:89) 339-40, 342, 355, (18:05:89) 504, (23:05:89) 804, (24:05:89) 962, 1011, (25:05:89) 1156, 1171, 1172, 1176, 1178, 1185, 1199, 1201
Disallowed questions (23:05:89) 798
EC documents motions (16:05:89) 177
Private Members' Bills, 2R order read (19:05:89) 652
Procedure (15:05:89) 72, (17:05:89) 355, (18:05:89) 482, (23:05:89) 860, 862, 853, 877, 886, 887, 889, 891, 892
Royal assent notified (25:05:89) 1149
Standing Order No 20 applications, Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference (25:05:89) 1146-7
Standing Order No 20 applications, Community charge rebates (25:05:89) 1148-9
Standing Order No 20 applications, Drug abuse (24:05:89) 951-2
Standing Order No 20 applications, East West relations (24:05:89) 952
Standing Order No 20 applications, Interest rates (24:05:89) 953
Standing Order No 20 applications, Kurdistan (15:05:89) 26-7
Standing Order No 20 applications, National Engineering Laboratory (17:05:89) 333

Speaker's rulings & statements
(25:05:89) 1138
Adjournment debates (23:05:89) 927, (25:05:89) 1230
Business questions (18:05:89) 474, (25:05:89) 1132
By election writs (22:05:89) 659
Calling of Members (25:05:89) 1142
Deposited papers (25:05:89) 1138
Early day motions (15:05:89) 28, (25:05:89) 1150
EC action (17:05:89) 391
EC law (17:05:89) 425
House of Commons debates (23:05:89) 892, 894, (24:05:89) 1019, 1076
House of Commons division of time (18:05:89) 488, 492, 496-8
House of Commons divisions (18:05:89) 575
House of Commons procedure (22:05:89) 692, (23:05:89) 897-8
Members' conduct (17:05:89) 410, (18:05:89) 484, (25:05:89) 1221
Members' dress (19:05:89) 621-2
Members' interests (17:05:89) 413, 415, (22:05:89) 712-3, (23:05:89) 873, 882, 883
Members' interventions (15:05:89) 90, (16:05:89) 190, (18:05:89) 482-3, (23:05:89) 835, 886, 890, 891, 927, (24:05:89) 1060, 1078, (25:05:89) 1230
Members' speeches (15:05:89) 87, 98-9, 104, (16:05:89) 224, (17:05:89) 431, (18:05:89) 504, 532, (22:05:89) 760, (23:05:89) 832, 911, 918, 919, 923, (24:05:89) 954, 1039, 1067
Ministerial statements (17:05:89) 334, (18:05:89) 483-4, (25:05:89) 1135, (26:05:89) 1256
Oral questions (15:05:89) 15, (17:05:89) 301
Order of business (24:05:89) 953-4
Parliamentary privilege (17:05:89) 317, (24:05:89) 955-8
Points of order (17:05:89) 412, (18:05:89) 507, 511, 515, (24:05:89) 979, (25:05:89) 1155

Speaker's rulings & statements—continued
Private notice questions (15:05:89) 25, (22:05:89) 682
Scope of debate (15:05:89) 91, 111, 121, (16:05:89) 192, 196, 219, 279, 286, (18:05:89) 499, 501, (22:05:89) 746, 756, 759, 769, (24:05:89) 973, 1024, 1062, 1064, (25:05:89) 1181, 1183, 1184, 1209, (26:05:89) 1262
Secondary legislation (15:05:89) 124-5
Standing Order No 20 applications (15:05:89) 27
Supplementary questions (25:05:89) 1109
Ten minutes rule (18:05:89) 504
Third reading (23:05:89) 859-64
Unparliamentary expressions (23:05:89) 894, 897, (24:05:89) 983
Written questions (22:05:89) 691, (24:05:89) 955

Spearing, Mr Nigel
Debates etc.
European Communities (18:05:89) 514-5, 532, 535, 537-9, 572
Exhaust emission controls, EC action (24:05:89) 1077-8
Inner city areas (23:05:89) 807
Mergers, EC action (17:05:89) 425, 432, 442
Procurement, EC action (16:05:89) 281-2, 285-8
Questions
Doctors' list of patients 81-2w
East London river crossing, Road tolls 115w
Medical malpractice, Professional misconduct 89-90w
Nurses' training, Fees & charges 719w
"Our Business is Service" 749-50w
Private Bills, House of Commons procedure 18

Special aids to employment scheme
Government grants 574w

Special constables
Ports 278-9w

Special education
531w
Appeals 3w
Cheshire 605w
Curriculum 1-2w
Departmental circulars 2w
National Curriculum Council 2w
Residential care of children (16:05:89) 178-80
School administration 1w
School Examinations & Assessment Council 3-4w
Teacher training 2w

Special protection areas
466w
Northern Ireland 364w

Speech therapy
413w

Speller, Mr Tony
Questions
Bophuthatswana, Development aid 642w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Refrigerators 489w
Energy conservation 107w
Motor vehicle theft, Mail order selling 321w
National Office of Animal Health 211w
North Devon link road, Road accidents 689w
Overseas trade, Nigeria 315-6
Sea pollution, Bristol Channel 325w
Sea pollution, North Devon 474w
Sewage, Bristol Channel 262w
Social security benefits rules, Disasters 431w
Students, Community charge 442-3w
Test tube babies, South Western Regional Health Authority 82w, 422w, 485w

Spicer, Sir Jim
Questions
USSR, Diplomatic service 679

Spicer, Mr Michael, Under-Secretary of State for Energy
Debates etc.
Atomic Energy Bill (HL), 3R (22:05:89) 750, 755, 757-60
Questions
Alternative energy, Energy research 147w
Association of Independent Electricity Producers 110w
Bold power station, Radioactive wastes 387w
British Coal Corporation 108w
British Coal Corporation, North East region 108w
British Coal Corporation, Scotland 108w
British Nuclear Fuels 109w
Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, Departmental correspondence 147w
Carbon dioxide, Air pollution control 108-9w
Central Electricity Generating Board 109-10w
Coal, Imports 633w
Coal fired power stations, Air pollution control 8
Coal fired power stations, Carbon dioxide 7
Coal fired power stations, West Burton 4-5
Coal mining, Scotland 110w
Coal mining, Subsidence 104w, 444-5w
Combined heat & power, Air pollution control 7
Electricity distribution, Households 633w
Electricity generation, Costs 104-5w
Electricity generation, Nuclear power stations 105w
Electricity generation, Privatisation 105w
Electricity generation, Water power 633w
Electricity supply industry, Coal consumption 5
Electricity supply industry, Nuclear power stations 633w
Electricity supply industry, Privatisation 107w, 191-2w
Electricity tariffs, Industrial energy prices 109w
Electricity tariffs, Pensioners 314w
Energy, Environment protection 146-7w
Energy conservation, Air pollution control 7-8
Energy conservation, Building regulations 1-2
Energy conservation, Double glazing 2
Energy conservation, EC countries 2
Energy conservation, Sizewell B 105w
Fluidised bed combustion, Energy research 386w
Fluidised bed combustion, Grimethorpe 103w
Hinkley Point C, Inquiries 104w
Housing insulation, Neighbourhood energy action scheme 102-3w, 105-6w
Methane, Electricity generation 109w
National Power 109-10w
Nuclear fuel cycle, Disclosure of information 634w
Nuclear fusion, Government grants 11-2
Nuclear power, Electricity generation 104w
Nuclear power stations, Druridge bay 192w
Nuclear power stations, Radioactive wastes 12
Nuclear safeguards, National security 634w
Plutonium, United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority 110w
Potassium iodate, Nuclear power stations 386w
Power industry, Air pollution control 106w
Power stations, Air pollution 634w
Spoil heaps, Garw valley 275w
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, Marketing 445w
Uranium, Imports 314w

Spoil heaps
Garw valley 275w

Sports
Drug abuse 596-7w
Private investment 597w
Schools 598w

Sports—continued
Touting (22:05:89) 707-8

Sports boycotts
South Africa (22:05:89) 708-13

Sports competitors
Handicapped 427-8w

Sports facilities
Privatisation 595w
Urban areas 592w
VAT 809w

Squire, Mr Robin
Questions
Mortgage defaulters, Repossession orders 941

SSEB
see South of Scotland Electricity Board

Staffordshire North
Head lice 217w

Stanbrook, Mr Ivor
Questions
Business statements 478

Standard of living
Low pay 684w

Standards specifications
Contraceptives 723w

Standing Conference on Regional Policy in South Wales
761-2w

Standing Order No 20 applications
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference (25:05:89) 1146-7
Community charge rebates (25:05:89) 1148-9
Drug abuse (24:05:89) 951-2
Interest rates (24:05:89) 953-4
National Engineering Laboratory (17:05:89) 333
Refugees (15:05:89) 26-7
Speaker's rulings & statements (15:05:89) 27
USSR (24:05:89) 952

Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Questions
Overseas aid, Non-departmental public bodies 641-2w

Starter homes
Local authority powers 760w
Wales 760w

Steel, Rt Hon David
Questions
Premium bonds 807-8w

Steen, Mr Anthony
Debates etc.
Transport (15:05:89) 58
Questions
Planning permission, Stokeham 602w
War pensions, Social security appeals 434-5w

Steinberg, Mr Gerry
Questions
Untreated milk 735-6w

Stern, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Roads (18:05:89) 493
Questions
Airbuses, Aerospace industry 299
Educational visits, Fees & charges 607w
Family doctors, Home visits 413-4w
Hinkley Point C, Inquiries 104w
Housing Act 1985, Service charges 203w
Nurses' training, Technological change 218-9w
Official engagements 246w, 451w
Parkinson houses, Building repairs 264w
Pensions 326-7w

Stevens, Mr Lewis
Debates etc.
Manufacturing industries (16:05:89) 241-3
Social security, Management (17:05:89) 324-5

Stevens, Mr Lewis—continued
Questions
NHS Review, Medical audit 475w
Social security reform 432-3w

Stewart, Mr Allan
Questions
Air transport, Scotland 279w
Airports, Scotland 200w, 279w, 304-5w, 346w, 799w, 802w
Health Education in Scotland Review 131-2w
Local authorities, Direct labour departments 305w
National Garden Festival 1988, Land use 520w
Road works, Prestwick Airport 227-8w

Stewart, Mr Andy
Debates etc.
Associated British Ports (No 2) Bill, 3R (23:05:89) 880-3
Questions
Cash limits, Dept of Social Security 685w
Coal fired power stations, West Burton 4
Employment, East Midlands 164w
Family doctors, Budgeting 476w
Overseas investment, National income 529w

Stewart, Rt Hon Ian, Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office
Debates etc.
Financial Provisions (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 (22:05:89) 762, 764-6
Questions
Arms trade, Northern Ireland 458
Baton rounds, Northern Ireland 467
Complaints against police, Northern Ireland 143-6w
Damages, Army in Northern Ireland 789-90w
Demonstrations, Northern Ireland 193-4w
Elections, Proof of identity, 146, 791w
International Fund for Ireland 467
Motor vehicles, Northern Ireland Office 470-2w
Non-departmental public bodies, Northern Ireland 193w
Police firearms, Republic of Ireland 790-1w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Police deaths on duty 470w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Police firearms 791w
Security, Northern Ireland 458
Short Brothers, Security 50w
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 457-8
Weapons, Northern Ireland 457

Stirling
Ministers' domestic visits 517-8w

Stock control
Libraries 439w
Museums & galleries 439w

Stockport Education Authority
School admission (24:05:89) 1097-102

Stocks & shares
Lloyd's of London 386w

Stokeham
Planning permission 602w

Strang, Mr Gavin
Debates etc.
Dock Work Bill, Rep & 3R (24:05:89) 991-5, 996, 1069-70
Employment Bill, Rep (17:05:89) 355-60, 383-4
Questions
Agricultural Inspectorate, Civil service manpower 571-4w
Factory Inspectorate, Civil service manpower 572w
Industrial accidents, Presses 571-2w
Industrial health & safety, Presses 572w
Industrial health & safety, Prosecutions 571w
Industrial relations, Dock workers 158-9

Stratford station
London Underground 800w

Strathclyde
Jobclubs 176w

Straw, Mr Jack
Questions
Brogdale experimental horticulture station 473w

Street lighting
557w

Structure plans
Kent 267-8w

Student grants
Deeds of covenant 13w
Mandatory student grants 310w
Parental contributions 310-1w
Part-time education 246-7w

Student numbers
Central institutions 405-8w
Higher education 368-70w, 644-5w
Ministry of Defence 398w
Universities 5-7w
Wales 644-5w
Women 5-7w

Students
Community charge 442-3w
Ethnic minorities 7w
Social class 7w

Submarines
Fires 273w
Fishing vessels 450w
Health surveys 68-9w
Industrial health & safety 68w
Medical records 69w

Subsidence
Coal mining 104w, 444-5w

Subsidies
Tobacco 372-4w

Suckler cow premiums
734w, 742w, 1110-3
Farm incomes 735w

Suicide
Prisoners on remand 94w
Prisons 755w
Risley Remand Centre 755w

Sulphur dioxide
Air pollution control 183w

Sumberg, Mr David
Questions
Business statements 481
Irradiated food 1105-6
Tourism, North West region 166-7w
Water Bill 1988/89, European Commission 496w

Summer Time Order 1989
Debates etc.
(17:05:89) 446

Summerson, Mr Hugo
Debates etc.
City of London (Various Powers) Bill, 2R & Money res (15:05:89) 81-2, 121-2
Employment Bill, Rep (17:05:89) 412, 414
Questions
Estate agents, Codes of practice 777-8w
NHS, Contracts for services 484w
Pensioners, Social security finance 426w

Summertime
National Farmers' Union 116w

Sunderland
Housing action trusts 48w, 595w

Supersonic aircraft
Military aircraft 66w

Supervision of Charities Efficiency Scrutiny
(16:05:89) 167-77

Supplementary benefits
Northern Ireland 466-8w
Residential care 74w
Women 79w

Supplementary questions
Speaker's rulings & statements (25:05:89) 1109

Supra-regional services
NHS Review 728w

Surgery
North Down 468
Trent Regional Health Authority 778-80w

Surveillance
Police 755w

Swansea City Council (Tawe Barrage) Act 1986
Questions
261w

Sweden
Double taxation (24:05:89) 1096

Swimming pools
186w

Sylvan School Croydon
607w

Take Away Food (Biodegradable Packaging) Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
1R (23:05:89) 801-3

Takeovers
Financial Services Act 1986 118-20w
National Girobank 302-4
Plessey 311
Scottish & Newcastle Breweries 775w
Wales 37w

Tamils
Deportation 138-9w

Tate Gallery
399w
Manpower 400w

Tax allowances
Tree planting 746-8w

Tax evasion
Scotland 513w

Tax free income
Tax thresholds 18w

Tax harmonisation
VAT 440-1w

Tax officers
VAT 529w

Tax rates & bands
Income tax 17-20w

Tax thresholds
Tax free income 18w

Tax yields
Alcoholic drinks duties 441w
Football pools 13w
Mortgage relief 16w

Taxation
Ferries 385-6w

Taxis
Castlereagh 364w

Taylor, Mrs Ann
Questions
Middle schools, School population 553-4w
Primary education, School population 554w
Schools, Economic regions 532-6w
Secondary education, School population 554w
Water supply industry, Financial Services Act 1986 264w

Taylor, Mr Ian

Taylor, Mr Ian—continued
Debates etc.
European Communities (18:05:89) 535-7
Income tax on investment incomes, EC action (15:05:89) 136
Mergers, EC action (17:05:89) 431
Questions
Competition 238-9w
Council house sales, Lambeth 591w
Drug abuse, Disposable syringes 419-20w
Self-governing hospitals 476w

Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Questions
Non-departmental public bodies, Northern Ireland 193w
Taxis, Castlereagh 364w

Taylor, Mr Matthew
Questions
Accommodation agencies, Prosecutions 209w
Business statements 476
European Social Fund, Cornwall 167w
Housing, Young people 590w
Industry, Interest rates 233w
Medical education, NHS Review 486w
Nuclear power, Environment protection 104w
River pollution, South West Water Authority 935-6
Rosewarne experimental horticulture station 739w

Taylor, Mr Teddy
Debates etc.
Business questions intervention (25:05:89) 1128
European Communities (18:05:89) 508, 514, 516-7, 536
Exhaust emission controls, EC action (24:05:89) 1019, 1076
Income tax on investment incomes, EC action (15:05:89) 124, 127, 130
Mergers, EC action (17:05:89) 428-9, 434-8
Procurement, EC action (16:05:89) 269-70, 283-5
Questions
Birds, Nature conservation 678w
Blood sports, EC action 637w
Business statements 1127
Common farm prices 290w
Court of Auditors 245w
EC law 122w, 199w
EC Social Charter, EC action 507w
Employment, EC countries 161-2w
European monetary system 245w
Firearms certificates, EC action 635-6w
Food surpluses, Expenditure 211w
Football, Identity cards 384w
Game, EC law 745-6w
Harland & Wolff, Privatisation 143w
Manufactured goods, UK trade with EC 116-7w
Nature conservation, EC action 678-9w
NHS Review 284w
Tobacco, Subsidies 372-4w
UK contributions to EC budget 158w
VAT, Tax harmonisation 440-1w
Water meters, Government buildings 206w

Taylor Inquiry
see Hillsborough Stadium Inquiry

Teacher training
Special education 2w

Teachers
535w
Armed forces civilians 766-7w
Bolton Education Authority 246w
Clwyd Education Authority 348w
Educational exchanges 444w
Ethnic monitoring 657w
Further education colleges 247w
Manpower 124-5w
Pay incentives 5-6w, 247w
Pay settlements 127w, 369-70w, 797w
Resignations 443w, 514w
Scotland 514w, 657w
Shortage subjects 605w

Teachers—continued
Vacancies 246w
Welsh language 643-4w
West Germany 766-7w

Teachers' pensions
Local education authorities 535-6w
Women 536w

Teachers' Superannuation (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1989
Debates etc.
(18:05:89) 497

Technicians
Pay 218w

Technological change
Nurses' training 218-9w

Telecommunications Act 1984
Questions
457-8w, 497w, 650w

Telephone charges
Pensioners 241w

Telephone services
457w
Independent Committee for Supervision of Telephone Services 457w
Office of Telecommunications 656w
USA 457w

Telephones
Obscenity 497w
Roads 114-5w

Televising Proceedings of the House Select Committee
(26:05:89) 1307

Television
Parliamentary broadcasting 796-7

Television advertising
Dept of Employment 52w, 362-3w
Dept of Energy 110-1w, 387w
Dept of Health 89w
Dept of Social Security 71w, 437-8w
Dept of the Environment 45-6w, 603-4w
Dept of Trade & Industry 121w
Dept of Transport 12w, 424w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 20w
Home Office 98w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 64w
Ministry of Defence 69w, 398w
Northern Ireland Office 281w, 368w, 649w
Scottish Office 660w
Treasury 245w
Welsh Office 45w, 349-50w

Television licences
Prosecutions 500-1w

Temple-Morris, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference (25:05:89) 1139
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 539-43w
Food poisoning, Untreated milk 736w
Untreated milk 735-6w

Temporary staff
Health service staff 282w
Hospital doctors 725-6w

10 Downing Street
Water meters 206w

Ten minutes rule
Speaker's rulings & statements (18:05:89) 504

"Ten Years On"
177w

Tenancy agreements
Public houses 338w

"Tenants' Choice"
Costs 204w

Tenants' choice
Housing estates 592w

Terminal care
Handicap benefits 71w

Territorial Army
(19:05:89) 638-50
Security vetting 272w

Terrorism
Northern Ireland 457-8

Test tube babies
South Western Regional Health Authority 82w, 422w, 485w

Textile industry
EC Consumer Affairs Council 314
Industrial production 237w

Textiles
Trade barriers 775-6w
Turkey 775-6w

Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret, Prime Minister, First Lord of the Treasury and Minister for the Civil Service
Questions
Airports, Scotland 200w
Armilla patrol 164-5
Balance of trade 1116
Balance of trade, Manufactured goods 1118
Birds, Nature conservation 121w
Broadleaved woodlands, Tree felling 451w
Cabinet Office, Cash limits 525w
Civil service, Disciplinary proceedings 121w
Civil service, Disclosure of information 245w
Climate, Research 694w
Coal mining, Scotland 164
Community charge, Greenwich 472
Community charge, Local authorities 496
Court of Auditors 245w
Crown Prosecution Service, Pay 121-2w
Cruelty to children, Research 797-8
Drug abuse 1118, 1120
EC grants & loans, South Yorkshire 165, 325w
EC integration 162, 164
EC integration, European monetary union 470
EC law 122w, 199w
EC law, Environmental health 163
Economic policy 1116-7, 1119
Elections, Northern Ireland 1117-8
Elections, USSR 471
Elephants 796
Environment protection 795
European monetary system 796
European Parliament elections 162
Family doctors, Contracts of employment 388w
Fishing vessels, Submarines 450w
Fletcher, Eric 794
Football, Hooliganism 162-3
Government achievements 695-719w
Government grants to voluntary organisations, Government departments 122-3w
Government information services, Civil service manpower 24w
Guy's Hospital, Baby care units 468
Hong Kong, China 1117
Inflation 794-5, 798, 1120
Information officers, Ethics 388-9w
Intelligence services, History 23w
Interest rates 1116
Interviews, Radio programmes 1119
Ivory, International trade 694w
Landing rights, Airlines 25w
Languages education 471
Litter, Fines 795-6
Local government elections, Northern Ireland 470
Lord Chancellor 1116
Maidstone 121w
Malaysia, Arms exports 25w
Malaysia, Overseas aid 24w
Malaysia, Tornado aircraft 25w

Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret—continued
NHS, Health insurance 166
NHS Review 469-70, 795
NHS Review, British Medical Association 472, 797
NHS Review, Family doctors 468
Nicaragua, Human rights 23-4w
Non-departmental public bodies 695w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty, Italy 758w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty, Luxembourg 759w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty, Netherlands 759w
Nuclear weapons 759w
Nuclear weapons, Arms control 1119
Nuclear weapons policy 451w, 693w, 798
Official engagements 123-4w, 246w, 451w, 695w
Ortega, Daniel, Official visits 23w
Ozone layer, Air pollution control 1119-20
Parliamentary broadcasting, Television 796-7
Parliamentary sovereignty & European Community 694w
Picketing 796
Poverty, Manchester 199-200w
Poverty, Scotland 163-4
Powell, Charles 25-6w
Prime Minister, Members' attendance 199w
Public transport, Industrial disputes 468
Rain forests, Environment protection 693w
Rain forests, Forest protection 450w
Romania 450w
Sea pollution, Bristol Channel 325w
Self-governing hospitals 165-6
Single European Act 166
Transport of hazardous materials, Treaties 693w
UK contributions to EC budget 471-2
USSR, Diplomatic service 525w, 1118
Vale of Glamorgan 450w
VAT zero rated goods 471
Veterinary services, College closures 1120
Water Bill 1988/89 163
Welsh Office 797
Westland Helicopters, Disclosure of information 693w
"Who Framed Colin Wallace" 1117

Third reading
Speaker's rulings & statements (23:05:89) 859-64

Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Questions
Air force, Aircrew 462w
Harrier aircraft 462w
Languages education, EC action 309w
Low flying 732w
Low flying, Military aircraft 732w
Low flying, Military exercises 462-4w
Low flying, Military police 463w
Military aircraft, Aircrew 462w
Plutonium, United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority 110w

Thompson, Mr Donald, Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture
Debates etc.
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy (17:05:89) 452-4
Questions
Agricultural subsidies, Expenditure 565w
Agricultural support systems 742w
Animal diseases, Animal products 804w
Animal feed, EC action 295w
Animal feed, Food exports 294-5w, 806w
Animal products, Drugs 376w
Animal welfare, EC internal trade 742w
Beef 1113
Beef, Food imports 90w
Beef, Imports 61-2w
Beef premiums 298w, 736w, 1112
Beef premiums, Cattle 298w
Bovine somatotropin, Licensing 740w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 291w, 373-5w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Animal experiments 291-2w

Thompson, Mr Donald—continued
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Animal feed 375w, 804w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Animal products 804w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Cattle 292w, 375-6w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Civil service manpower 292w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Compensation 375w, 741w, 804w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Council of Ministers 291w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Disease control 56w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, EC countries 376w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Food contamination 56w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Research 802-3w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Slaughterhouses 211w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, USA 375w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Veterinary services 741w
Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy Research Committee 373w
Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy Working Party 474w
British Veterinary Association, Animal welfare 746w
Brogdale experimental horticulture station 473w
Cattle, Animal feed 375w, 377w
Common agricultural policy, Expenditure 744w
Common sheep meat regime 337w, 736w, 1110
Co-responsibility levy, Dairy farming 297w
Dioxins, New Zealand 63w
Eggs, Salmonella 291w
Equipment, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 56w
Farm incomes 297w
Fish, Food imports 471w
Fish, Iceland 59-60w, 377w
Fish, River Humber 399w
Fisheries, Dock labour scheme 737w
Fisheries, EC action 471w
Fisheries, Finance 471w
Fishing catches, Iceland 59w
Fishing quotas 1114-5
Fishing quotas, Shipping registration 1114
Fishing vessels 471w
Fishing vessels, Decommissioning grants 372w, 472w
Fishing vessels, EC grants & loans 736w
Fishing vessels, Licensing 472w
Fishing vessels, Shipping registration 472w
Food composition, Offal 474w
Food poisoning, Untreated milk 736w
Freshwater fish, Fish diseases 805w
Game, EC law 745-6w
Government buildings, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 55-6w
Meat, Food exports 806-7w
Meat, Food inspection 299w
Milk, Production quotas 741-2w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Business 372w
National Farmers' Union, Dairy farming 740w
National Office of Animal Health 211w
Porcine somatotropin, Licensing 377w
Poultry, Salmonella 212-3w
Salmon, Fish farming 742w
Salmon, Licensing 805w
Salmon Advisory Committee 805w
Sea pollution, North Devon 474w
Sheep, Pest control 297w
Sheep premiums 734w, 1110
Shellfish, Fish diseases 805w
Slaughterhouses, Cattle 56-7w
Slaughterhouses, Food hygiene 376-7w
Slaughterhouses, Food inspection 57-8w
Slaughterhouses, Veterinary services 734w
Suckler cow premiums 734w, 1112-3

Thompson, Mr Donald—continued
Suckler cow premiums, Farm incomes 735w
Summertime, National Farmers' Union 116w
Television advertising, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 64w
Transmissible encephalopathies, Agricultural research 298-9w, 804w
Transmissible encephalopathies, Animal experiments 803-4w
Transmissible encephalopathies, Diagnosis 373-4w
Untreated milk 290w, 735-6w
Veterinary services, Disease control 295w
Veterinary services, EC internal trade 295-7w
Veterinary services, Expenditure 296w
Veterinary services, Manpower 296w, 739w, 745w
Veterinary services, Salmonella 292w
Veterinary services, Vacancies 378w
Whales, Elephants 1109-10
Whales, Nature conservation 1109
White fish, Common fisheries policy 743w

Thompson, Mr Jack
Questions
British Coal Corporation 108w
Domestic electrical appliances, Import penetration 236w
Minimum wage 172w

Thompson, Mr Patrick
Debates etc.
Gurkhas, Hong Kong (22:05:89) 690
Questions
Air pollution control, Treaties 590w
Central Statistical Office, Expenditure 630w
Civil service recruitment 675
Education, EC action 536-7w
Machine tools industry 239w
Training & enterprise councils, East Anglia 166w

Thorne, Mr Neil
Debates etc.
Armed forces reserves (19:05:89) 642-4
Gurkhas, Hong Kong (22:05:89) 687

Thurnham, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Basildon District Council, Rate increases (22:05:89) 723
Community care (22:05:89) 730-1
Inner city areas (23:05:89) 835
Manufacturing industries (16:05:89) 226, 232
Social security, Management (17:05:89) 322
Questions
Community care, Voluntary work 283w
Dental charges 486w
Electricity supply industry, Privatisation 6
Family credit, Social security recipients 429-30w
Food labelling, Food additives 290w
Hospital beds, Heart diseases 559w
Hospital patients, Bolton Health Authority 410-1w
Industry, Chlorofluorocarbons 237w
Inflation 807w
Maternity benefits, EC countries 667
MMR vaccines, Take-up 285-6w
Personal pensions 447w
Private patients, Bolton 285w, 728w
Property development, Town & Country planning 593-4w
School governors, Codes of practice 536w
Speech therapy 413w
Teachers, Bolton Education Authority 246w
Urban programme, Bolton Borough Council 674w
Visas, Indian subcontinent 392w
Wheelchairs 786

Tibet
Human rights 771-2w

Tied housing
Community charge 516-7w

Tinsley Park
Airports 596w

Tobacco
Subsidies 372-4w

Tobacco advertising
484w

Tobacco duties
441w

Toll bridges
River Severn 686w

Tomography
NHS charges 153-4w
West Midlands Regional Health Authority 488w

Tornado aircraft
Malaysia 25w

Torness power station
9
Ceremonies 657-8w
Scottish Office 657w
South of Scotland Electricity Board 657-8w

Total allowable catches
Scotland 515w

Touche Ross
240-1w

Tourism
North West region 166-7w
Northumberland 166w

Tourist attractions
Advertising controls 491w

Tourist industry
Industrial training 149
Low pay 149-50
Manpower 167w

Touting
Performing arts (22:05:89) 707-8
Sports (22:05:89) 707-8

Town & country planning
598w
Enforcement notices 938
Greenbelt 589w
Law reform 495w
Property development 593-4w, 938
Recreation spaces (22:05:89) 772-80
West Midlands 674-5w

Town & Country Planning Act 1971
Questions
600w

Townend, Mr John
Debates etc.
Dock Work Bill, Rep & 3R (24:05:89) 1031-4

Townsend, Mr Cyril D
Debates etc.
Lebanon (16:05:89) 292-4

Tracey, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Broadcasting (19:05:89) 603-6
Questions
British Venture Capital Association, Small businesses 177w
Playing fields, Land acquisition 936-7

Trade barriers
Textiles 775-6w

Trade competitiveness
229w, 300-1
Manufacturing industries 300

Trade union recognition
Service Children's Education Authority 396w

Trade unions
NHS Review 761w

Trades Union Congress
173w
Industrial relations 172w

Trades Union Congress—continued
Picketing 173w

Trading accounts
(22:05:89) 762-6

Trading standards departments
636w

Training
330-2w
Expenditure 29-30w, 42w, 301w, 363w
Family doctors 89w
Prison medical services 99-100w
Scotland 29-30w
Social Fund 545w
Wales 42w

Training Agency
174-5w, 179-80w, 215w

Training allowances
214w, 508w
Employment Training 167w
Scotland 519w

Training & enterprise councils
504-5w
Chambers of commerce 166w
East Anglia 166w
South East region 505w
Tyne & Wear 508w
Youth training scheme 155

Training Commission
174w, (17:05:89) 338-424

Training grants
Education 128w

Transmissible encephalopathies
373w, 802-3w
Agricultural research 298-9w
Animal experiments 803-4w
Diagnosis 373-4w
Research 370w, 804w

Transplant surgery
Conferences 782w
EC countries 781w
Ethnic minorities 783w
Foreign patients 782w
Heart diseases 488w
Hospital waiting lists 781-2w
Kidney patients 643w, 782w
Libraries 783w
Medical malpractice 488w
NHS Review 779-81w
Organ donors (22:05:89) 767-71
Private hospitals 781w
Publicity 782-4w

Transport
Private Members' motions (15:05:89) 29-71

Transport & Road Research Laboratory
558w

Transport infrastructure
EC grants & loans 313w

Transport of hazardous materials
Explosives 277w
Treaties 693w

Transport of radioactive materials
8-10w

Transport police
London Underground 687w
Manpower 687w

Treasury
Television advertising 245w

Treasury & Civil Service Select Committee
(15:05:89) 140

Treaties
Air pollution control 590w
Transport of hazardous materials 693w

Tredinnick, Mr David
Debates etc.
Publicity, Government departments (16:05:89) 206-7
Questions
British Medical Association 483w

Tredinnick, Mr David—continued
Child benefit, EC countries 663-4
Fertilisers, Nitrates 738w
Lead free petrol 586-7w
M1, M69 504w
Monopolies & Mergers Commission 310-1
Nurses, Pay 787
Official engagements 246w

Tree conservation
Preservation orders 188w

Tree felling
Broadleaved woodlands 451w

Tree planting
Agricultural land 746-8w
Cambrian mountains 453w
Scotland 515w
Sites of special scientific interest 493w
Tax allowances 746-8w

Trent Regional Health Authority
Gynaecology 421w
Land values 784w
Surgery 778-80w

Trevi Group
139w
Immigration 208w

Trippier, Mr David, Under-Secretary of State for the Environment
Questions
Council house rents, Lambeth 592w
Council house rents, Rent increases 47-8w
Council house sales 591w
Council house sales, Administrative delays 588w
Council house sales, Greenwich 588-9w
Council house sales, Lambeth 591w
Council housing, Croydon 48w
Council housing finance 595-6w
Council tenants, House purchase 792w
Defective housing, Nottingham 185w
Denis Wild houses 598w
East Lancashire Railway 586w
Empty housing, Lambeth 591w
Empty housing, Public sector housing 583w
Factories, Construction 202w
Greenbelt, Housing 589w
Gypsies 182w
Homelessness 264w
Housing 675w
Housing, House prices 589-90w
Housing, Young people 590w
Housing Act 1985, Service charges 203w
Housing action trusts, Consultants 599-600w
Housing action trusts, Lambeth 599w
Housing action trusts, Sunderland 48w, 595w
Housing associations, Right to buy 585w
Housing estates 587w
Housing estates, Estate management boards 323-4w
Housing estates, Tenants' choice 592w
Housing standards, Greater Manchester 585-6w
Leasehold housing, Appeals 324w
Merseyside Development Corporation 945
Mortgage defaulters, Homelessness 940
Mortgage defaulters, Repossession orders 940-1
New towns 588w
New towns, Property transfer 262w
Owner occupied housing 592-3w
Parkinson houses, Building repairs 264w
Rent arrears, Council house rents 185w
Sheffield Development Corporation 945
"Tenants' Choice", Costs 204w
Urban development corporations, Expenditure 581w
Urban development corporations, Government grants 944-5
Urban programme, Accounting 203w
Urban programme, Bolton Borough Council 674w
Warrington & Runcorn Development Corporation, Public sector housing 267w

Trotter, Mr Neville

Trotter, Mr Neville—continued
Questions
Road works, North East region 278w

TRRL
see Transport & Road Research Laboratory

Trust funds
324w

Trustees of the National Maritime Museum
(22:05:89) 742-9

TUC
see Trades Union Congress

Turkey
Clothing 316w
Human rights (26:05:89) 1257-66
Textiles 775-6w

Turner, Mr Dennis
Questions
Carbon dioxide, Air pollution control 108w
EC Consumer Affairs Council 304
Health services, Wolverhampton 785
Rate support grants, Cruelty to children 379w
Social Fund, Funerals 269w
Teachers' pensions, Local education authorities 535-6w

Twinn, Dr Ian
Questions
Cervical cancer, Screening 783
Dept of Education & Science, Cash limits 610w

Tyne & Wear
Social Fund 548-50w
Training & enterprise councils 508w

Tyne & Wear Passenger Transport Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
Rep* (23:05:89) 781

Tyres
Road safety (26:05:89) 1245-54

Tyrrell Committee
see Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy Research Committee

UDR
see Ulster Defence Regiment

UFC
see Universities' Funding Council

UGC
see University Grants Committee

UK Offshore Operators' Association
110w

UKAEA
see United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority

Ulster Defence Regiment
Compensation 789-90w
Security vetting 272w

UN
see United Nations

UN Environment programme
380w, 600w

UN Fund for Population Activities
251w

Unemployment
163-4w, 175w, 667-70w
Availability for work 162-4w, 568-9w
Derbyshire 506w
East Anglia 161w
East Midlands 161w
Economic regions 353-62w
Ethnic minorities 353-62w
South East region 164w

Unemployment benefit offices
181w
Job centres 156

Unemployment benefits
Availability for work 179w
Enterprise allowance scheme 52w
Private sector 550w
West Midlands 181w

UNEP
see UN environment programme

Unichem
Monopolies & Mergers Commission 239-40w

Uniform business rate
Lambeth 182w
Wales 41w

UNITA
631w

United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority
Marketing 445w
Plutonium 110w

United Nations
207w, 771-2w
Cyprus 388w
Human rights 137w

Universities
Pay 4w
Statistics 247w
Student numbers 5-7w

Universities' Funding Council
189w, 608w

University College
398w

University finance
Cost per student 608w

University Grants Committee
608w

University of Wales
644-5w

University teachers
Pay 126w
Working hours 126w

Unparliamentary expressions
Speaker's rulings & statements (23:05:89) 894, 897, (24:05:89) 983

Untreated milk
290w, 735-6w
Food poisoning 736w

Upper Heyford
F111 aircraft 274w

Uranium
Imports 314w

Urban areas
Sports facilities 592w
Warships 70w

Urban development corporations
Expenditure 581w
Government grants 944-5

Urban programme
Accounting 203w
Bolton Borough Council 674w

US senate
Judiciary 456w

USA
Animal feed 806w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 375w
EC external trade 236w
Telephone services 457w

USSR
Arms control 632w
Cruise missiles 730w
Diplomatic relations (22:05:89) 723-6, (24:05:89) 952
Diplomatic service 525w, 677-82, 1118
Elections 471

USSR—continued
Emigration 455w
Journalists 677-8
Standing Order No 20 applications (24:05:89) 952

Vacancies
333-6w
Teachers 246w
Veterinary services 378w

Vaccine Damage Payments Act 1979
Questions
751w

Vaccine damaged children
Compensation 327-8w, 751-2w

Vagrancy
Young people 141w

Vale of Glamorgan
450w

Valleys initiative
North Wales 760w

Valuation & community charge tribunals
(23:05:89) 898-927

Valuation & Community Charges Tribunals Regulations 1989
Debates etc.
(23:05:89) 898-927

Valuation & Community Charges Tribunals (Transfer of Jurisdiction) Regulations 1989
Debates etc.
(23:05:89) 898-927

Valuation for Rating (Plant & Machinery) Regulations 1989
Debates etc.
(23:05:89) 898-927

VAT
BAOR 245w
Caravans 528-9w
Charities 15w
Companies 776w
Games 189w
Sports facilities 809w
Tax harmonisation 440-1w
Tax officers 529w

VAT registration
New businesses 174w, 506w

VAT zero rated goods
471

Vauxhall
By election writs (22:05:89) 659, 693-700

Vaz, Mr Keith
Debates etc.
Inner city areas (23:05:89) 816, 819, 820, 821
Roads (18:05:89) 489
Questions
Drug crimes, Convictions 393w
Drug crimes, Proceeds of crime 319w
EC Environment Council 590-1w
Footwear, Imports 389-90w
Human rights, United Nations 137w
India, Human rights 456w
Methane, Health hazards 384w
Nurses, Career structure 786-7
Waste disposal, Leicester 384w

Venerable Edward Morgan School Shotton
School administration 348w

Venison
409-10w
Radioactivity 409-10w

Veterinary services
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 741w
College closures 1120
Disease control 295w
EC internal trade 295-7w
Expenditure 296w
Manpower 295-7w, 739w, 745w

Veterinary services—continued
Salmonella 292w
Slaughterhouses 734w
Vacancies 378w

Victoria Barracks Windsor
Construction 274w

Video recordings
Monnet, Jean 444w

***Viggers, Mr Peter**, Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland*
Debates etc.
Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Bill, Rep & 3R (25:05:89) 1151-2, 1158-9, 1161-4, 1166, 1168, 1170, 1171-2, 1173, 1176-8, 1181-2, 1185-6, 1190, 1198, 1200, 1201-5, 1224-5
Questions
Bombardier 465
Broadleaved woodland grant scheme, Northern Ireland 649-50w
Employment discrimination, Northern Ireland 143w, 181w, 281w, 455-7
Harland & Wolff, Privatisation 143w
Short Brothers 50w
Short Brothers, Privatisation 464-5
Women, Equal opportunities 463
Women, Northern Ireland 281w, 463

Village schools
Yorkshire & Humberside 535w

Viruses
Blood 418w

Visas
Indian subcontinent 392w

Voluntary organisations
Family planning 249-52w

Voluntary projects programme
29-30w

Voluntary schools
Capital investment 441w

Voluntary work
Community care 283w
Youth clubs 246w

Voting methods
Self-governing hospitals 285w

Voting rights
British residents abroad 97w

***Waddington, Rt Hon David**, Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury*
Debates etc.
Publicity, Government departments (16:05:89) 189

Wages Act 1986
Questions
173w

Wages councils
157w, 673w
Low pay 150-1, 158w, 159-60
Managers 157-8w
Youth employment 506-7w

Wages Inspectorate
159
Manpower 168w
North West region 168w

Wakefield
425w

Wakefield District Council
415w, 721w

Wakefield Family Practitioner Committee
Family practitioner services 422w
NHS Review 421w

Wakefield Health Authority
414-5w, 721-2w

***Wakeham, Rt Hon John**, Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons*
Debates etc.
By election writs, Vauxhall (22:05:89) 696

Wakeham, Rt Hon John—continued
Parliamentary privilege, Dagnan, Anthony (18:05:89) 502-3
Recess motions (22:05:89) 701-41
Written questions, House of Commons procedure (22:05:89) 691
Questions
Business statements 473-81, 1121-32
Opposition parties, Expenditure 410w
Opposition parties, Finance 765-6w
Palace of Westminster 497w
Personal Bills 509-10w
Personal Bills, Parliamentary agents 510w
Private Bills, House of Commons procedure 17-20
Private Bills, Land acquisition 18
Private Members' Bills, House of Commons procedure 16-7
Private Members' time, House of Commons procedure 509w
Second reading committees 510-2w

***Waldegrave, Mr William**, Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office*
Debates etc.
Cyprus, Foreign policy (26:05:89) 1271-6
Questions
Czechoslovakia, Human rights 351w
Czechoslovakia, Jirous, Ivan 351w
EC countries, Public holidays 456w
European Security Conference, Human rights 329w
European Security Conference, Information 329-30w
Gibraltar, Inquiries 194w
Nepal, Gurkhas 771w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty, Non-governmental organisations 631-2w
Osman, Lorrain Esme, Liberia 771w
Philippines, Armed forces training 352w
Philippines, Military aid 352w
Poland, Sikorski, Wladyslaw 523-4w
Tibet, Human rights 771-2w
USSR, Arms control 632w
USSR, Emigration 455w

Walden, Mr George
Debates etc.
Broadcasting (19:05:89) 597

Wales
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service 61w
Agricultural research 642-3w
Agricultural workers 452w
Bovine somatotropin 451w
Bracken 764-5w
Breast cancer 649w
Bypasses 260w
Caravan sites 645w
Cervical cancer 649w, 759w
Church schools 646w
Clinical wastes 647w
Community charge 45-6w
Community health councils 646w
Council housing finance 196-8w
Council of Ministers 760w
Defective housing 764w
Defence land 551w
Dental services 258w
District health authorities 348-9w
Doctors 43-4w
EC Agriculture Council 642w
Employment Training 581w
European Tourism Year 42w, 762w
Family doctors 388w, 646w, 760w
Family practitioner committees 646w
Farm incomes 261w
Foreign patients 46w
Health service staff 37-8w
Higher education admission 195-6w
HM Inspectorate of Schools 643w
Homelessness 452w
Hospital beds 38-40w, 453w
Hospital closures 128-9w
Hospital waiting lists 44w
Hospitals 39-41w, 43w, 260w, 350w
Housing associations 258w
Housing capital allocations 196-8w

Wales—continued
Housing insulation 454w
Immunopathology 764w, 788-9w
Industrial production 439-40w
Kidney patients 643w
Local government finance 197-9w
Medical Practices Committee 759-60w
Middle schools 553-4w
Midwives 648-9w
National Farmers' Union 761w
NHS 41w
NHS complaints 259w
NHS finance 42w, 259w
NHS Review 761w
Nursery schools 647-8w
Nurses 43-4w, 452w
Office workers 257w
Perinatal mortality 259-60w
PRC Homes 764w
Pre-school education 130w
Primary education 554w
Public expenditure 196w
Public holidays 161
Regional development grants 259w
Regional selective assistance 258w
Rents to mortgages scheme 129w
River pollution 763w
Road accidents 129-30w
Road finance 648w
Road tolls 762w
Roads 647w, 761-2w
Sea pollution 196w
Second homes 764w
Secondary education 554w
Self-governing hospitals 646w
Set-aside schemes 555w
Sewage 199w, 759w
Social security abuse 684w
Starter homes 760w
Student numbers 644-5w
Takeovers 37w
Training 42w
Uniform business rate 41w
Water pollution 199w
Woodland grant scheme 349w

Wales Advisory Body
Public appointments 312w
Welsh Joint Education Committee 312w

Wales Epilepsy Association
Government grants to voluntary organisations 762w

Wales Tourist Board
42w

Walker, Mr Bill
Questions
Alcoholic drinks, Public order offences 343-4w
Anglo-Irish Agreement 462
Chlorofluorocarbons, Aerosols 584w
Confederation of British Industry, Small businesses 177w
European Social Fund, Scotland 54-5w
Forfar bypass, Road accidents 659-60w
Higher education, Student numbers 644-5w
Local government, Northern Ireland 466
NHS Review, Family doctors 790-1
Road works, Scotland 31-7w
Trade competitiveness 301

Walker, Peter
797

***Walker, Rt Hon Peter**, Secretary of State for Wales*
Questions
Agricultural research, Wales 642-3w
Agricultural workers, Wales 452w
Bovine somatotropin, Clwyd 648w
Bovine somatotropin, Wales 451w
Bracken, Health hazards 764-5w
Caravan sites, Alyn & Deeside District Council 645w
Church schools, Capital investment 646w
Council of Ministers, Wales 760w
EC Agriculture Council, Wales 642w
European Commission, Ministers' visits abroad 642w

Walker, Rt Hon Peter—continued
European Tourism Year, EC grants & loans 762w
Farm incomes, Wales 261w
HM Inspectorate of Schools, Curriculum 643w
HM Inspectorate of Schools, Wales 643w
National Farmers' Union, Wales 761w
National Union of Mineworkers, South Wales 761w
Navy, Nuclear accidents 347w
Northop bypass, Road construction 764w
Nursery schools, School population 647-8w
Office workers, Pay 257w
Primary education, Dyfed 763w
Public expenditure, Wales 196w
Regional development grants, Wales 259w
Regional selective assistance, Wales 258w
Rents to mortgages scheme, Wales 129w
Road finance, Wales 648w
Road tolls, Wales 762w
Roads, Wales 647w, 761-2w
Set-aside schemes, Wales 555w
Takeovers, Wales 37w
Television advertising, Welsh Office 45w, 349-50w
Training, Expenditure 42w
Tree planting, Cambrian mountains 453w
Uniform business rate, Wales 41w
Valleys initiative, North Wales 760w
Welsh Development Agency, Dyfed 762-3w
Welsh language, Teachers 643-4w
Welsh Office, Cash limits 453w
Welsh Office, Mental health services 258w
Welsh Office, Publicity 196w
Welsh plant breeding station 555w
Woodland grant scheme, Wales 349w

Wall, Mr Pat
Debates etc.
Associated British Ports (No 2) Bill, 3R (23:05:89) 887-92
Questions
Arms trade, South Africa 280-1w
Social security benefits, Residential care 430w

Wallace, Colin
19w, 1117
Convictions 98w

Wallace, Mr James
Debates etc.
Employment Bill, Rep (17:05:89) 344-5, 349, 360-2, 414, 418-9
Publicity, Government departments (16:05:89) 194, 202-6
Questions
Action for Community Employment, Housing insulation 660w
British Nuclear Fuels 109w
British Rail, Privatisation 692w
Coal fired power stations, West Burton 4-5
Community programme, Housing insulation 660w
Company law, EC law 160w
EC internal trade, Government assistance to industry 237-8w
Lead free petrol 586-7w
Nurses, Men 789w

Waller, Mr Gary
Debates etc.
Defamation Bill, 1R (17:05:89) 335-7
Questions
Business statements 1131-2
Untreated milk 735-6w

Walley, Ms Joan
Questions
Air pollution control 380w
Air pollution control, Air pollution 380w
Archaeological sites, Planning permission 598-9w
Archaeological sites, Property development 602w
Archaeology, Government grants 598w
Head lice, Educational health services 217w
HM Inspectorate of Pollution, Civil service manpower 382-3w

Walley, Ms Joan—continued
HM Inspectorate of Pollution, Local authorities 491w
HM Inspectorate of Pollution, Offices 381-2w
HM Inspectorate of Pollution, Pollution control 380-1w
Paper, Recycling 944
Pollution control, Energy conservation 186w
Pollution control, Waste disposal 186w
Water supply industry, Privatisation 383w

Walsall Health Authority
Self-governing hospitals 86w, (22:05:89) 718-21

Waltham Forest Health Authority
286w

Walton Hospital
Pain Relief Foundation 725w

War Crimes Inquiry
210w, 497w

War pensions
Nuclear weapons tests 73w
Social security appeals 434-5w

Ward, Mr John
Questions
Director General of Electricity Supply, Public appointments 387-8w
Energy consumption 104w

Wardell, Mr Gareth
Questions
Beaches, Sea pollution 186-7w, 196w, 206w, 680w, 795-6w
Bovine somatotropin, Licensing 740w
Family doctors, Contracts of employment 388w
Higher education admission, Wales 195-6w
Housing capital allocations, Wales 196-8w
Local government finance, Capital investment 197-9w
Ports, Coal 278w
Public expenditure, Wales 196w
Sewage, Waste disposal 199w
Social Security Commissioners, Social security appeals 566-7w
Swansea City Council (Tawe Barrage) Act 1986 261w
Water pollution, EC law 204w
Water pollution, Wales 199w
Welsh Office, Publicity 196w
Welsh Water Authority, Sea pollution 350w

Wardle, Mr Charles
Debates etc.
Eastbourne Waterworks Company, Water charges (26:05:89) 1287
Manufacturing industries (16:05:89) 246-8
Questions
Fruit, Common agricultural policy 1109
Ground water, Greater London 496w
Milk, Production quotas 741-2w
Trade competitiveness 300

Wareing, Mr Robert N
Debates etc.
Dock Work Bill, Rep & 3R (24:05:89) 971, 1020, 1032, 1033, 1034-7
Questions
Dept of Social Security local offices, Computers in government departments 545w
Employment rehabilitation, Rehabilitation centres 576w
Employment schemes, Blind 574w
Empty property, Dept of the Environment 582w
Handicapped 548w
Handicapped, Expenditure 483w
Handicapped, Local government services 428w
Handicapped workers, Dept of Employment 577w
Handicapped workers, Employment discrimination 152-3

Wareing, Mr Robert N—continued
Handicapped workers, Government grants 575w, 577w
Handicapped workers, Prosecutions 576w
Handicapped workers, Quota of handicapped workers 575-6w
Job introduction scheme, Government grants 569w
National Girobank, Privatisation 230w
Release for training scheme, Employment schemes 574w
Social Fund, Community care 544w
Social Fund, Liverpool 544w
Social Fund, Social security claims 544-5w
Social Fund, Training 545w
Special aids to employment scheme, Government grants 574w
Tate Gallery, Manpower 400w

Warren, Mr Kenneth
Questions
Business statements 1123
Integrated circuits, Government assistance to industry 656-7w
Overseas trade, Air transport 656-7w

Warrington
500-1w

Warrington & Runcorn Development Corporation
Public sector housing 267w

Warsaw Pact
632w

Warships
Repairs & maintenance 142w
Urban areas 70w

Waste biodegradability
Food packaging (23:05:89) 801-3

Waste disposal
Clinical wastes 289w
Farms 744w
Hazardous wastes 383-4w, 794w
Leicester 384w
Pollution control 186w
Sea pollution 378-9w
Sewage 199w

Water authorities
Capital 268w
Debts 947
Fords 45w
Land acquisition 385w
Pay incentives 680w
Public access 584w
Water supply disconnections 204-5w

Water Bill 1988/89
Questions
163, 261w, 935
European Commission 496w

Water charges
Eastbourne Waterworks Company (26:05:89) 1285-91
Fire services 46w
Pensioners 383w

Water (Fluoridation) Act 1985
Questions
561w

Water meters
Government buildings 206w
10 Downing Street 206w

Water pollution
Barnsley 593w
EC law 13, 204w
Fertilisers 738w
House of Commons 602-4w
Inland waterways 265w
Pollution control 592w
Pollution monitoring 30w
River Humber 205w
Scotland 30w
Severn-Trent Water Authority 492w
Sewage 594-5w
South Yorkshire 674w

Water pollution—continued
Wales 199w
Yorkshire Water Authority 492w

Water power
Electricity generation 633w

Water Research Centre
205-6w

Water supply
Fluoridation 561w
Lead pipes 680-1w

Water supply disconnections
Water authorities 204-5w

Water supply industry
Financial Services Act 1986 264w
Foreign investment in UK 791-2w
Privatisation 268w, 383w, 587-9w, 591-2w

Water transport
River Thames 113w

Water treatment
Cryptosporidia 186w

Watts, Mr John
Questions
Family doctors, Doctors' list of patients 480w
Foreign investment in UK 235w
Rates & rating, Nurses 593w

WDA
see Welsh Development Agency

Weapons
HMS Cardiff 397w
Northern Ireland 457

Weights & Measures Act 1985
Questions
117w

Weil's disease
Death 287-8w, 304w
Scotland 304w

Wells, Mr Bowen
Debates etc.
European Communities (18:05:89) 509
Mergers, EC action (17:05:89) 434

Welsh, Mr Andrew
Questions
Foreign companies in UK 118w
Industrial production, Scotland 658w

Welsh, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Associated British Ports (No 2) Bill, 3R (23:05:89) 869
Questions
Hull Prison, Young offenders 140w
Human rights 392w
Young offenders, Doncaster 153w

Welsh Development Agency
Dyfed 762-3w

Welsh districts
Caravan sites 645-6w

Welsh Joint Education Committee
Wales Advisory Body 312w

Welsh language
NHS 195w
Nurses' training 257w
Teachers 643-4w

Welsh Office
797
Cash limits 453w
Empty property 452w
Mental health services 258w
Publicity 196w
Television advertising 45w, 349-50w

Welsh plant breeding station
555w

Welsh Water Authority
453w
Advertising 763w

Welsh Water Authority—continued
Capital 648w
Land ownership & tenure 763w
Land values 763w
Sea pollution 350w

Wembley Stadium
London Underground 799-800w

Wentworth Estate Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
2R order read (18:05:89) 455
2R* (25:05:89) 1103

West Burton
Coal fired power stations 4-5

West Germany
Teachers 766-7w

West Lancashire Health Authority
District health authorities 218w
Hospital patients 411w

West Midlands
Employment 163w
Engineering industries 173w
Industrial training 173-4w
Local government constituencies 187w
Social Fund 683w
Town & country planning 674-5w
Unemployment benefits 181w

West Midlands Regional Health Authority
Tomography 488w

Western Europe
Conventional weapons 273-4w

Westland Helicopters
Disclosure of information 693w

Westminster & Chelsea Hospital
NHS finance 153w

Westminster City Council
671-2

Whales
Elephants 1109-10
Japan 1109
Nature conservation 1109

Wheelchairs
782, 786
Disablement Services Authority 781

Wheeler, Gerald
Public petitions (18:05:89) 575

Wheeler, Mr John
Debates etc.
Broadcasting (19:05:89) 599-603
Questions
London Underground, Safety measures 502-3w
Prisoners 247-8w
Prisoners, Diplomatic service 248w
Road traffic control, Parliament Square 797-8w

White fish
Common fisheries policy 743w

Whitney, Mr Ray
Debates etc.
European Communities (18:05:89) 538-40
Social security, Management (17:05:89) 323

WHO
see World Health Organisation

"Who Framed Colin Wallace"
98w, 1117
Official secrets 19w

Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Debates etc.
Financial Provisions (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 (22:05:89) 762
Gypsies, Caravan sites (22:05:89) 726-8
Human Organ Transplant Bill, Money res (22:05:89) 768-70
Questions
Business statements 477

Widdecombe, Miss Ann—continued
Cruise missiles, USSR 730w
Enterprise allowance scheme 158w
Family doctors, Kent 789
Maidstone 121w
Museums & galleries 670
Women's Farmers' Union 740w

Widows
Community charge 322w
Remarriage 435w

Widows' benefits
Social security benefits rules 685-6w

Wigley, Mr Dafydd
Questions
Ambulance services, Gwynedd 555w
Caernarfon Eye & Cottage Hospital, Hospital closures 762w
Caernarfon Eye & Cottage Hospital, Hospital patients 347w
Council of Ministers, Wales 760w
Dental services, Wales 258w
European Parliament elections, Electoral register 526w
European Tourism Year 52-3w
European Tourism Year, EC grants & loans 762w
European Tourism Year, Wales 42w
Felinheli Port Dinorwic bypass; Road construction 555w
Hospital closures 485w
Housing associations, Cash limits 258w
Medical Practices Committee, Wales 759-60w
Mortgage relief 13w
Museum of Welsh Antiquities, Arts finance 195w
NHS, Welsh language 195w
NHS administration, Pay settlements 282w
Nurses' training, Welsh language 257w
Office workers, Pay 257w
Passport Office, Liverpool 753-4w
Sea pollution, Irish Sea 323w, 378w
Takeovers, Wales 37w
Uniform business rate, Wales 41w
Valleys initiative, North Wales 760w
VAT, Caravans 528-9w
VAT, Charities 15w
Wales Epilepsy Association, Government grants to voluntary organisations 762w
Welsh Office 797
Wheelchairs 782
Zambia, Overseas aid 111-2w

Wild animals
Pesticide residues 266w

Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981
Questions
678w

Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Questions
Government information services, Civil service manpower 24w
International trade 231w
Mumbles railway 453w
Singleton Hospital, Casualty units 452-3w

Williams, Mr Alan W
Debates etc.
Atomic Energy Bill (HL), 3R (22:05:89) 753-5, 759
Questions
Electricity generation, Privatisation 105w
Food standards, Pesticides 1113-4
Irradiated food 733w
Primary education, Dyfed 763w
Sewage, Sea pollution 759w
Welsh Development Agency, Dyfed 762-3w

Wilshire, Mr David
Questions
Business statements 478-9
Information Network Focus on Religious Movements, Government grants to voluntary organisations 395w
Picketing 796